

1 Timothy 6:3-5

Instructions to Timothy
Fight, Keep Fighting, Finish!

An Unhealthy Interest!



➤ It is true that there are a certain percentage of people that seem to interested in things that most people are not interested in. For instance, a small percentage of people seem to be interested in death. To most people, skulls and bones give them the creeps, and they want nothing to do with such things, but others are actually drawn to death symbols. They **surround** themselves with symbols of death. I think that at the root of this obsession they are afraid of death, and immersing themselves in its symbols helps convince themselves that they aren't! It makes me sad to see them. They need Jesus so they don't have to be afraid, but they are so dark in their soul that they almost always don't want Him. Darkness is a choice! Jesus said so in **John 3:19** – He said, and I quote, "**Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness, rather than light, because their deeds were evil**". When people make a hard choice to move into the dark, they aren't interested in Jesus. He is the Light of the World. When they encounter Him, they have not only the fear of death holding them back, but shame and guilt besides – either from being victimized or from victimizing others! They don't want to admit to any of it, or that they did wrong, so they double down and become even hostile to Jesus or His representatives!



- Another group of people come alive when they are risking their life and well-being. They free-climb cliffs (with no safety measures! They jump off of high mountain cliffs with only a body suit on that allows them to glide through the air at breakneck speeds! They are **test pilots** that love the extreme risks and dangers of their job, or **astronauts** whose ride up into space sitting on top of tons of highly explosive fuel is their greatest joy ride – what really makes them feel alive! Or they are storm chasers that search for **tornados** and drive right **to** them, rather than **away** from them. Or there are cowboys that ride **angry bulls**, or powerful bucking and thrashing stallions that want to kill them! This is not normal, folks!
- Another group of people are entirely experiential. If it is **New Years Eve**, they have to **be there** in Times Square to see the ball drop, or if the **Olympics** are being held, they have to **be at** the Olympics **in person**, not just seeing it on TV. Or if there is a **celebrity at a premier** of their movie, they have to be there and see them! The same with a big politician - they have to be **AT** the rally – be a part of what might be a historical event! If there is a big **disaster**, they have to drive there to see it! They are wired to want to be there, wherever anything “big” is happening!

There is another small-percentage grouping of people that have an interest in **controversy**. Even in Paul's day, he calls attention to it. They seem to get stimulated, keyed up, really interested – actually the most happy when they are arguing, or when others are arguing and fighting and they can contribute. The more intensity, the more fun they are having! While most people seek to avoid controversy and hostilities, the unpleasantness of such confrontations do not phase these types of people in the least! They are gremlins at heart! Their favorite game is to play Devil's advocate – to argue for issues they don't even believe in, simply because they want to stir the pot. Or, another ploy I have seen this kind of person do is to adopt controversial viewpoints and make them their own – because, of course, then he or she can argue with EVERYONE! I think maybe it is a need for attention, attention that perhaps they didn't get from their parents when they were 3, and then they just never outgrow the need for attention. So it is a good possibility that as an adult, they are acting out, in the same way angry, naughty children are often acting out when their parents ignore them! Adults that are acting out, never feel so alive as when they are stirring the pot, upsetting people, and seeing what kind of spiritual, emotional, mental trauma they can create.



This happens a lot in business. It is amazing to me how many of these people rise to management levels, or it is common that they become CEOs of companies. Do they hide this ruthless quality until they get to the higher levels and then start abusing their subordinates and undermining their equals in the company? It would make an interesting research project. They are definitely clever sociopaths and they have wormed their way into position where they can enjoy bringing hurt and ruin to a wider part of their world.

But look! This also happens in the church! These abnormal people can be very clever people with a natural instinct on how to look and sound normal among people in a given church, and how to become respected and influential in the congregation. They are not normal, but they pass themselves off as normal – at least for a time. They often actively seek to engender a shallow friendship, trust, and loyalty! Eventually though, who and what they are leaks out from under their nice veneer – and their contempt of others, their arrogance, their interest in causing trouble, controversy, and hurt in the church is exposed for what it is, and people eventually begin to catch on and see them for the truth of who they are!

Paul talks to Timothy a lot about this pestilence in the church – a pestilence of false teachers and false teaching! They seemed to have infiltrated just about every church. They were always trying to take over the place! God actually used this, because most of the New Testament was written out of a need for the apostles to address emergencies in churches created by false teachers who had gone into these churches and were ripping them apart! It forced them to **unify, clarify, and codify** it in the scriptures they wrote! So they opposed apostolic teachings and brought up alternative teachings/counterpoints. Some went after Paul specifically, contending that that Paul wasn't a "real" apostle. They were saying that way back in Paul's day, and I know there are still people saying that today! Paul felt that he had to defend his record and his apostleship quite extensively in some of his writings. AND - if you remember, **Peter** refers in an offhand way to Paul's writings as **scripture**, so it is a needless argument! He had the support of the other apostles!



So, in this letter to Timothy, Paul is so exasperated with these types that he is not holding back anymore – no more Mr. Nice Guy! He is exposing them for the hard truth of who they actually were and for a clear portrayal of the damage that they were trying to do to the work of God, and what an encumbrance they were to the purposes of God in the church! I mean, Christians are generally tolerant and kindhearted. We don't **want** to confront someone. We may **have to**, but we never **want to!**

* I remember vividly that there was an individual at one of the churches that I have pastored as an interim pastor, years ago, that I quickly determined had been causing a lot of trouble among the people. I advised the leadership of the church at the time that this person had to be confronted before they called their next pastor. It would have been unfair for the new pastor to have to come in and have to immediately take care of something that should have been taken care of a long time before that! Amazingly, they listened to me, and a couple of the elders at that time were man enough to go to that person and gently but firmly call for repentance and making of amends. The meeting was made much harder because that person denied all wrongdoing - although the evidence was overwhelming.

But this kind of thing is a very hard thing for most of us to do! We are a **gentle** people – gentled by the Lord Himself! We would like to give the benefit of the doubt, at least until it becomes clear that we can no longer do that! We don't enjoy confrontation, or bickering and fighting, or having to deal with controversies. We most certainly hate disputes and hostilities among our colleagues in Christ! But there are evil people sometimes, and what they are doing must be ID-ed and stopped!

The problem is that the early church had very little scripture at all! They only had the apostles and the



2nd generation Christians that the apostles had taught the Gospel of Jesus and its core doctrines too. So, to be clear, teaching in the church was mostly word of mouth from eyewitness or from eyewitness of eyewitnesses and a smattering of New Testament scriptures. This was obviously problematic. We don't argue over eyewitness accounts today of course. We argue over the meaning of the words, sentences, paragraphs in the Holy Bible! We have the gospel in black and white, but we are *still* arguing over it - mostly because those who have strayed from the apostles teachings! False teachers abound and continue to find success in the church because people are not well-versed in the totality of the scriptures. They are led, indoctrinated, bedazzled by some man who's written a lot of textbooks, or bestsellers, or who has a doctorate degree behind his name, or who has a mega-church, a a TV show or a successful podcast, or has a seminary or a



study Bible named after himself! And rank-and-file Christians don't have an overall well-rounded knowledge or understanding of the totality of scripture, of critical analysis skills, and just a smidgin of common sense. So, despite plain-spoken words in black and white, and unmistakable context, despite the powerful work of the Holy Spirit to lead us into God's truth - literally millions are led into error – error that is egregious enough to threaten their very souls.

Well, Paul says that they are a certain type of people – interested in controversy – or who are in it for the money! They are evil! He is instructing us to not tolerate such behavior but to have the guts to root it out, confront it, and purge it! To do anything like that successfully requires a command of scriptural information complimented with perfect restraint - so that we do not *ever* lower ourselves to their level! ***“Truth in love”*** says Paul elsewhere – ***“truth in love”***! Love is a lot tougher that we understand! Love does not tolerate a pattern of bad behavior! It does no one any favors to tolerate such things. Love says ***“Only so far and no farther, or else I will stand up to you and do the right thing here!”*** You do that with your children, your family, your friends, at work, *and you do that in the church!* You double and triple check your facts/your story so that you do not do an injustice, and then you hitch up your pants, (or as the Bible puts it, ***“gird up your loins”***), and you do what love requires you to do, in the most loving but resolute manner possible! You proceed with caution, knowing that you are a flawed person as well, but not with so much caution that the message is not clear! This is our apostolic instruction for today!