

1 Timothy 1:1-7, The Aim of Sound Doctrine

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope, ² To Timothy my true son in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. ³ As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain people not to teach false doctrines any longer ⁴ or to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. Such things promote controversial speculations rather than advancing God's work—which is by faith. ⁵ The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. ⁶ Some have departed from these and have turned to meaningless talk. ⁷ They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.

Notes:

- Key words/concepts throughout the letter that appear here are faith and God as savior
- What does Paul mean by “false doctrine” (cf. “sound doctrine” 1:10).
 - Various options are based on clues in the letter are found in 1:8-11; 2:13-15; 3:16; 4:1-3; cf. 2 Tim. 2:16-18; 3:6-9
- What are the “myths and endless genealogies”?
 - Given the immediate context mentions these people desire to be “teachers of the law” it seems to be either some kind of speculative teaching based on the law and genealogies in the Old Testament. Or some kind of proto-gnostic teaching based on Plato's philosophy (Gnosticism is a very complicated subject but basically creation was not good, and you need special “knowledge” to be saved). Or its a combination of both, Platonic ideas mixed with Jewish speculative views of the OT.
 - Regardless, the point is rather straightforward when we focus on the fruit of such obsessions and teachings: the promote controversies, meaningless talk, and not love and faith.

Questions

1. What is the fruit of these false doctrines? What is the aim of sound doctrine?
2. How have you seen theology used in a divisive way and how have you seen it produce sound faith and love?
3. What is speculation? How does an obsession with “controversial speculations” lead one astray from much of what is mentioned in vv. 4-6?
4. What practices do you have to guard your heart against getting sucked into controversial speculations?
5. It could be said the internet has given everyone the false impression they are experts “of the law,” but in reality “do now know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.” (v.7). How is God challenging you to greater humility, faith, and love in a day with so many controversies?