

False Teachers in Ephesus

1 Timothy

EXCLUSIVISM vs. INCLUSIVISM	
In this letter Paul confronts an exclusivist false teaching of those who desired to be teachers of the law (1:7a) and therefore devoted themselves to OT myths (1:4a). However, Paul classifies all their sophisticated instruction as “false knowledge” “irreverent babble” (6:20b) and “silly myths” (4:7a). This teaching, and its accompanying denial of the inherent goodness of God’s creation (4:3a, 8a), closes the door of faith to all but a small minority who know and follow this obscure teaching. The gospel, on the other, flings wide the door of faith to “ALL” (2:1, 4, 6; 4:10b) who put their faith in their dying and rising Messiah Jesus.	
<i>Fixation with obscurity</i>	desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions. (1:7) charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, ⁴ nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies (1:4a)
<i>Paul’s assessment of this misplaced focus</i>	which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith ... wandered away into vain discussion (1:4b, 6b) I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling (2:8) Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness (4:7) ³ If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, ⁴ he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, ⁵ and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth (6:3-5a) Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called “knowledge,” ²¹ for by professing it some have swerved from the faith. (6:20b-21)
<i>Ascetic devaluing of the body</i>	in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, ² through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, ³ who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving (4:3a) for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way (4:8a)
<i>False teachers limit access to God, Paul extends invitation to “all”</i>	I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people ... ³ This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all (2:1, 4, 6) we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people (4:10b)

LOVE OF MONEY

These wicked false teachers, not content with accumulating deceived disciples, extract money from their confused flock (6:4b, 5b, 9-10). While elders who rule well deserve compensation (5:17a), true elders ought not be lovers of money (3:8).

<i>These false teachers in Ephesus charged money for their teaching</i>	He has an unhealthy craving for controversy ... imagining that godliness is a means of gain. (6:4b, 5b) ⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation ... ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith (6:9, 10)
<i>True elders and deacons, on the other hand, are not lovers of money</i> <i>Though they ought to be supported for their service to the church</i>	² Therefore an overseer must be above reproach ... not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. (3:2, 3) ⁸ Deacons likewise must be dignified ... not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. (3:8) ¹⁷ Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. ¹⁸ For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages." (5:17-18)
<i>The rich ought rather to be generous</i>	¹⁷ As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches ... ¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹ thus storing up treasure for themselves (6:17-19)

DECEIVED WOMEN

Unfortunately, some women within this church fell for this false teaching. This deception took place initially in the homes of rich young widows (5:13-15). "Deceived" (2:14) in their ignorance, now they have become deceivers themselves, further spreading this false teaching at the church's prayer meetings (2:11-12).

<i>These false teachers initially targeted widows within the church</i>	For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions (2 Tim. 3:6) ¹¹ But refuse to enroll younger widows ... ¹³ Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not. (1 Tim. 5:11, 13)
<i>Who them taught it themselves in the prayer meetings</i>	¹¹ Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. ¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. (2:11-12)
<i>Paul counsels such women get married and have children</i>	¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve; ¹⁴ and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. ¹⁵ Yet she will be saved through childbearing (2:13-15a) ¹⁴ So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander. ¹⁵ For some have already strayed after Satan. (1 Tim. 5:14-15)

CALL: REPLACE ELDERS

It was, therefore, of greatest urgency that Paul compel Timothy to confront these elders, removing them from their office. Paul himself began this process when he was in Ephesus, removing Hymenaeus and Alexander (1:20) and then lays out the process of excommunication for Timothy to follow (5:19-20, 22) and the qualification he should look for in replacement elders (3:1-7).

<i>Paul warns Ephesian elders of wolves among the flock</i>	¹⁷ Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. ¹⁸ And when they came to him, he said to them ... ²⁸ “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. ²⁹ I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.” (Acts 20:17-18a, 28-30)
<i>Paul’s initial exercise of excommunication</i>	By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, ²⁰ among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme. (1:19b-20)
<i>Process for Timothy to remove errant elders</i>	¹⁹ Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. ²⁰ As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear ... ²² Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure. (5:19-20, 22)
<i>Qualifications for selection of new elders</i>	² Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴ He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, ⁵ for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church? ⁶ He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. ⁷ Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil. (3:2-7)
<i>Jesus commends the Ephesian church for its opposition to false teachers</i>	¹ To the angel of the church in Ephesus write ... ² “I know ... how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false ... ⁶ Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.” (Rev. 2:1, 2, 6)