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Called to Tell the Truth

Understanding God's Design for the Church in 1 Timothy

1 Timothy 1:1-11

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We live in a culture that has become pretty dismissive of the idea of truth. It's kind of this idea, "There's no such thing as absolute truth," and, "Just kind of do your own truth." But it seems to me we're very selective in where we apply that. So, for example, a couple of weeks ago, Patty and I met with our financial advisor. What would be the expectation there? I don't need them to tell me what I want to hear. I expect them to tell me the truth. When you go to the doctor or the dentist, you don't need them to tell you what you want to hear. You expect them to tell you the truth. When you take your vehicle to your mechanic, you don't want them to make up a bunch of stuff. My expectation is, "Just tell me the truth." So the reality is, we expect truth in a lot of environments, which then gets me to my question. "When you walk through these doors to gather for a service like this, what is it you expect from me, and from Ryan, and from any other of our teachers?"

That's what we want to talk about this morning. If you have a Bible, turn with us to 1 Timothy as we begin our new series, and talk about, "What exactly is it that we're doing here?" First, a little bit of background. So, Paul, most likely, led Timothy to Christ on the first missionary journey. Timothy, then, joined the team on the second and third missionary journeys, which included a significant amount of time—a couple of years in Ephesus—which was a significant city. Eventually, then, Paul moves on. He's arrested, ends up in Rome, spends a couple years under house arrest in Rome, and we know that Timothy was there with him. That's where the book of Acts ends. But the story goes on. Paul is released. He eventually makes his way back to Ephesus and realizes there's all kinds of problems there. So, he urges Timothy to stay there and be their pastor, and help sort through this stuff, because he has to move on to visit the other churches in Macedonia. So, Paul is writing a letter to Timothy, to help him think through and sort out these issues within the church. Paul's letter to Timothy—1 Timothy—and then the next one—2 Timothy—and then a similar letter to Titus, are referred to as the Pastoral Epistles. They're really designed to talk about what it is to be the church, and how do we create order and flourishing here? As a matter of fact, Paul's purpose in writing 1 Timothy is very clearly stated in chapter 3, verse 15. He straight up says:

I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. (*NASB, 1 Timothy 3:15)

So with that in mind, we pick it up in chapter 1, verse 1:

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus, who is our hope, To Timothy, *my* true child in *the* faith: Grace, mercy *and* peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. (1 Timothy 1:1-2)

So, Paul opens up as he often does, identifying himself as an apostle of God. This is very common. In nine of his thirteen letters, this is how he opens. So it establishes some credibility and authority. But the second part of what he says is actually very rare when he says, **according to the commandment of God, our Savior**. It's a phrase that Paul only uses in the Pastoral Epistles, and it's only used two other times in the entire New Testament. So, it's pretty rare. You could imagine that the false teachers and people causing the problems in the church might be questioning Paul's credentials, like, "Who is this guy to tell us what to do?" So, he's establishing himself as an apostle of God. Some people think the reason he adds the language, **according to the commandment of God our Savior**, is because at this time, Nero was the emperor of Rome and his slogan was that he was the savior of the world. So, it may be Paul's way of saying, "No, he's not the savior of the world. God is." But since that interesting question arises, it makes sense that Paul would establish his authority with the troublemakers.

But he's writing to Timothy. Timothy is his friend. Timothy is his disciple. There's no need to pull rank; there's no need to establish authority with Timothy. So why would he do that? The obvious answer is because the intent of Paul is that this letter is going to be publicly read to the church. It also would be Paul's intent that it's going to be read to all the churches, because this establishes basic things they all need to understand about the church. So, Timothy is probably early-to-mid-30s in a very significant city. This would have been a very difficult assignment. Imagine how much this would have helped him to have this letter read in the service. That basically would have added a great deal of weight to what Timothy was trying to accomplish. Starting then in verse 3 through verse 11, which is as far as we will go this morning, Paul needs to establish the base of authority—you might say the playbook or the guidebook—for all of the discussions we'll have in the rest of the letter. There are some difficult, sensitive conversations, so he establishes right up front that there is a source of authority that is going to guide us through those conversations.

So again, this is the city of Ephesus. If you remember, when we went through Ephesians, Paul clearly established the truth that Jesus is the head of the church. It's not "my" church. It's not somebody else's church. Jesus is the head of the church, and He's given us His word as our source of authority, to know how to conduct ourselves here. This really shouldn't be that difficult to understand. There's no business that can flourish without clarity around beliefs and principles and values, and how we do business here. No business just turns everybody loose to do their own thing. It couldn't flourish that way.

It's equally true of an athletic team. So, next Sunday is the Super Bowl. I am absolutely positive both teams will show up with very complex, clear playbooks. And when a play is called, everybody needs to understand the complexity of the play, and "What is my assignment in order for the play to flourish, in order to win the game?" It's the only way it can work. If they don't do that, there's no chance of winning. So, it's not so different that within the church there would be a playbook

that is our source of authority for what we believe and how we conduct ourselves as the church. The problem is there are false teachers stirring up trouble. Verse 3:

As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus...

If you read between the lines here a little bit, it kind of sounds like Timothy wasn't so warm about staying. "This place is a mess. I really don't want to stay here." But Paul is urging him to stay. "You need to stay. You need to be the pastor. You need to help work through this stuff," because he had to move on.

...so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than *furthering* the administration of God which is by faith. (Vs. 3-4)

So when the text says **you may instruct**, the Greek word there is actually much stronger than that. I don't think that's the best translation. It's a military term that means *command*. It's a common term. It's used 32 times in the New Testament, so it's pretty strong. And literally, the grammar is, "*Command them to stop teaching strange doctrines.*" Throughout the Pastoral Epistles, there is a consistent use of the term **faith**. But actually in the Greek, it's almost always "*the faith*". The definite article is almost always in there. It just doesn't show up all that often in our English translations. Most scholars think "the faith" is a reference to the body of doctrine they've been taught, what we would refer to as a doctrinal statement. There is a body of doctrine; it's called "the faith", and this is what you've been taught. This is what you've been told is true from God.

So what is **strange doctrine**? Strange doctrine is anything that's outside of that, anything that's different from that, anything that conflicts with that. In other words, that's not in the playbook. Can you imagine next Sunday at the Super Bowl, at a critical time in the game, a play comes in. The quarterback calls it, and some of the players decide, "Yeah, I don't want to do that. I'm going to do something *strange*." There's no chance of winning if that's what they do. That's the same basic idea. There is an authority. That's Jesus. He's the head of the church, and He's given us His Book, and it is the playbook. It is our source of authority, and anything contrary or outside of that is **strange**. Now, Bible-teaching churches do have areas where we differ on what we refer to as secondary issues. The Bible is not completely clear on certain issues. So, there would be things where we see it differently. But every one of those churches can go to the Bible and defend their conclusions from the text, still within the boundary of the Book. Strange doctrine is stuff that's outside of the boundary and just strange.

He goes on to also identify what he refers to as **myths and endless genealogies and mere speculation**. So, what does he mean by that? Some people think this is a reference to the early forms of Gnosticism. Gnosticism carried this idea of secret knowledge, that you discover this secret, and you have uncovered and unlocked this spiritual mystery. While that's possible, this would have been very early in the development of Gnosticism. It is much more likely that it's referring to Jewish teachers. We know for certain that it wasn't that unusual for them to get into

these strange, mysterious, twisted ideas out of the Old Testament. This idea of **endless genealogies** and trying to find the hidden message and the mystery and the myth. And if you can find it, and decode it, and unpack it, you can find this mysterious spiritual relationship. Actually, there's still books today that every so often come out, and it has these codes where, "It's this code and that code, and you add this, and multiply this, and eliminate this, and twist this, and you discover the mystery that no one has discovered for 2000 years—and it unlocks your Christian life!" So, it's the same basic idea.

What's interesting about this is that, if you go to Acts chapter 20, it records when Paul was giving the tearful farewell to the elders in Ephesus. And as part of that conversation, he actually says to them...warns them that there are wolves among you. You know, it's kind of the wolves in sheep's clothing idea. Essentially what he says is, "The big problem isn't out there. The big problem is in here. There are some wolves, and they're going to rise up among you and try to lead you astray." That would have been several years before Paul wrote to Timothy. So, when Paul was there, he had a gut feeling this was coming, and he warned them of his concern. What Paul says to Timothy is, "This just creates **mere speculation**. People get preoccupied with all this strange stuff that's outside of the body of the doctrine that defines the church." Specifically, he says **it does not further the administration**—that just means it doesn't further the mission of the Church—which is by **the faith**. In other words, it is the body of doctrine, the truth that God has given us, that defines who we are, but it also defines our mission, rather than being preoccupied with all kinds of strange stuff.

So I would tell you, as someone who has preached for over 40 years, there's always pressure to come up with something new, to come up with something different, to come up with something a little more exciting, a little more mysterious, a little more entertaining. We live in a culture that thrives on entertainment. All of us that preach know that's true of the culture. So, there's always this pressure. You want to reach this moment where everybody in the crowd, their eyes get big and their mouth drops open and they're like, "Whoa! Never heard that before!" But here's the reality of it. Over the 40 years that I've preached, there should not have been one single time where I ever said something new. It might be new to you, but it's not new. It might explain it a little differently, might illustrate it a little differently, might connect some of the dots a little differently, but at the end of the day, everything that is said from this platform should line up with what has been taught in the church for 2000 years. I guarantee you, if it's new, it's strange...and it's outside the boundaries of what God has revealed. Verse 5:

But the goal of our instruction, (the goal of our *commandment is the same word*) is love...

Now that's a really important statement. What is the **goal**? Why should we be so committed to right doctrine? Is it because when you die and stand before God, there's an entrance exam. And if you don't get at least 80% on the entrance exam, you can't get in. No, of course that's not it. Is it so that we can become very spiritually arrogant and convince ourselves that we're the only church that always gets it right? The obvious answer is, "No, that would be terrible. We don't think that at all." Then what is the goal? Why is it so important to be so committed to being doctrinally correct?

The answer is: in order to produce love. The two great commandments: *to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself* require doctrinal correctness. The idea of agape love is flourishing...to experience this relationship with God and this relationship with one another that we, as a church, might flourish. How do we get there? Ryan talked about this last week from John 13, verse 35. Jesus said: **By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.**

So that's great. How do we get there? Answer? Doctrinal correctness. Everything we learn should cause us to love Jesus more deeply and to love our neighbor more fully. If that doctrine doesn't accomplish that, then we have not rightly understood that doctrine. None of it is just to fill our heads with information. So that's what he's saying. The goal should be love from a pure heart. That just means a heart that's not contaminated with self: selfish ambition, self-centeredness. It's just purely a belief that this is the truth that leads to flourishing.

...from a pure heart and a good conscience. . .

That just means that we morally regulate ourselves. In other words, I don't just do the right thing because somebody's watching. I don't just do the right thing because I'm in church. I do the right thing because it's the right thing. And when I'm all alone, I must morally regulate myself simply because I believe it's morally correct, because it's right. The third one...

...and a sincere faith.

That just means I really do believe it's true. It's not a marketing pitch. It's not just something to fill up a room. I really do, with all my heart, believe this is the truth that leads to flourishing. I really believe that. That's what he's saying there. Verse 6:

For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion...

He says earlier, they just occupy themselves with this stuff.

...wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions. (Vs. 6-7)

So verses 6 and 7 are very interesting. Some have strayed from the truth, which turns into a **fruitless discussion**. They want to be considered **teachers of the Law**, but they have no idea what they're talking about. And they make all kinds of confident assertions with no basis in biblical truth.

So here's what I would say, "Let's just take our community here in Lincoln." There are many wonderful Bible-teaching churches that I would highly recommend to anyone. Lincoln is very blessed that way. But it's also equally true that there are many churches in our city that are described by what Paul just said in verses 6 and 7. They're teaching strange doctrines, stuff that is

far outside the boundaries of Scripture. They want to be considered teachers of the Bible, but they have no idea what they're talking about, and they make strong assertions about things that are contrary to what the Bible teaches.

In the preaching world, we sometimes refer to, “Those that have nothing to say, but they're really good at saying it.” This is a significant problem in our country. You have many churches who have turned the platform over to simply being a platform for advancing political agendas. I think this happens both on the political right and the political left. You have churches that have turned their platform over to the promoting of social agendas. But I'm going to add one more in there. I think you also, today, have lots of churches who have turned the platform over to tons of speculation, to tons of myths and mysteries that fall under the umbrella of prophecy. This has always been a problem in the church, but it's times ten since COVID. I go through the preaching channels on television, and they're full of people who are speculating about exactly how the world is going to end, what's going to come next, and this and that. And it's very sensational; it's very entertaining; but most of it is pure speculation. It's an opinion that goes far beyond the boundaries of Scripture. I want to say to the preacher, “You have no idea what you're talking about. There's nowhere where that's found in the Bible. That's just you coming off as an authority.” I understand why people do this. It's great for ratings. It's great for social media. It fills auditoriums. It sells lots of books. But at the end of the day, it's very similar to what Paul is talking about. People preoccupy themselves with these fruitless discussions that ultimately do not advance the mission of the church. I wonder how many of these people that are constantly preoccupied with this stuff are aware of the fact that your neighbor is hurting; your neighbor is confused; your neighbor needs to know Jesus. That's the mission of the church. Isn't that what Jesus has called us to? So, what's described in verses 6 and 7 happens in lots of ways, in lots of churches. I suppose it would be possible for some then to conclude, “Well, if that's the case, you know the whole Old Testament Law. What's it good for? Apparently not good for anything.” So that's where Paul goes, verse 8:

But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, (It's a bit of a play on words. The Law is good. You just have to use it the way God intended...lawfully.) **realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person...** (Vs. 8-9a)

The purpose of the Old Testament, of the Old Testament Law, was not to provide some mysterious way to find these myths and these strange doctrines, and endless genealogies, and to wade your way through it, and discover some secret code of information that ultimately unlocks your spiritual life. That's not what it is. It's never the intent of it. If we were all righteous people, there's no need for the Law. You wouldn't have to have any laws in the world. But we're not. It's a fallen world, and we're sinners, so God reveals His righteousness through the Law. So, it's **not made for the righteous person, but for those who are...** (and then there's three sets of descriptions). The first one:

...but for those who are lawless and rebellious. . .

I would say those are people that are determined to be insubordinate. I would refer to it as the “way of Cain,” starting in Genesis 4.” Don't tell me what to do...don't tell me what to do!” So, if you think of these as people that decide they want to travel a different path, the only way that can be true is you have to have the righteous path defined, so you know what is a different path. The Law is to say, “This is the path to flourishing. You're choosing to rebel, which is the way of Cain.” The second set:

. . .for the ungodly and sinners. . .

I would say this addresses the temptation that all of us have as people made in the image of God, to be self-righteous. There's something within all of us to think, “Hey, we're good enough. If anybody's going to get into heaven, I'll get into heaven.” You hear people talk about that all the time. They really don't need Jesus. If anybody is going to get in, they'll get in because they're good enough. What opens our eyes to the truth is, God has defined the standard in His Law that exposes the fact, “What do you know? I'm not good enough! Matter of fact, I'm not good. I'm a sinner. I'm ungodly. I'm in rebellion,” which hopefully turns our hearts toward Jesus as the Savior. It's really important when you think about the Law, that you don't think of it as a book of rules. Here is God's book. It's full of rules, and you've got to do what God says. If you remember, when we were going through Exodus, I did the week when we were in the 10 Commandments, and the title of that sermon was “A Recipe for Flourishing”. God doesn't give us a rule book like some power trip, but He as the Creator understands, “This is how I've made you. This is the path to flourishing.” So the Law is saying, “You need to understand that these are all the things that do violence to flourishing.” So you think about the Law as God's clarity around the pathway to the life that we long for. Then he gets into a few more specific issues. The third one is:

. . .for the unholy and profane. . .

I would just title that “the secular”. It's what both those words mean. It's just somebody that says, “I don't care about God. I don't know if there is a God. I don't really care. I'm not interested in what He has to say. I'm not interested in following Him, not interested in His way whatever.” Again, God defines His pathway to flourishing. It's God's way of saying, “You can travel that path, but I told you, this is where it leads. This is what happens without Me.” He goes on and says:

. . .for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers. . .

So, the Greek there is “*smite fathers and mothers*”. It may not be to kill them as much as it is to dishonor them, to devalue them, or to abuse them. We've talked many times in here that God created the world to work in such a way that the family unit is necessary to be healthy; in order for there to be flourishing. When the family breaks down, flourishing breaks down. So, this is the idea that outside of God's plan, to abuse, to misuse, to dishonor parents, is to break down flourishing. **Murderers** is pretty obvious what that means. Verse 10:

. . .and immoral men and homosexuals. . .

So **immoral men** isn't limited to men. It's the Greek word *porneia*: general sexual immorality. And then the second, **homosexual**. The Greek word literally means *men in bed with one another*. So, this is a good example of where we started. I understand this is a sensitive topic. I understand the culture really doesn't like what God's word has to say about this subject. But now I'm back to my question. "When you walk through these doors, what do you expect from me? Do you expect me to say what some people want to hear? Do you expect me to not be truthful about what God has said? Or do you expect me to rightly represent the truth about what God has said?" I know the culture doesn't like it, but my responsibility before God is not to satisfy the culture. It's to tell you the truth. The Word is very clear. It's not confusing at all. There's no gray; there's no fuzziness. From Genesis to Revelation, there's no gray fuzziness around this topic at all. I understand you can go home and get on the Internet, and you can find preachers and people on the Internet that do serious mental gymnastics to try to dismiss this and make the Bible say something it clearly doesn't say. I understand that. But I'm saying it isn't unclear in the Bible. You can't just cherry pick the words you want to include and the words you want to remove. It doesn't work that way.

Look at everything in the list. Everything in the list is very obvious. That's the whole point of the list. Is there anybody in the room that's going to argue the fact that murder is a good thing? That dishonoring and abusing your parents, that's a good thing? Nobody's going to argue with any of these. So let me give you an example. The very next one is **kidnappers**. It's kind of a strange translation, but it's literally *slave traders*. When we were going through Ephesians, I spent quite a bit of time in one service explaining why slavery was so common in the Roman Empire. It was common in the ancient world and had very little in common with what we experienced as slavery in our own country. This term, however, is almost identical to what we experienced in our country. It's referring to those who would literally go to other places, capture people, kidnap them, take them away from their families, and literally sell them like a commodity, as slaves. Even in the ancient world, that was mostly considered to be offensive. It's much more similar to what happened here. So here's my question. Is there anyone in the room that's going to say, "Yeah, we think that's a good thing. We should do that again?" I'm sure not. Of course, it's not. It's offensive to God and should never happen. But you can't just cherry pick which obvious terms you're going to agree with and disagree with.

But I also want to add, homosexual behavior is one form of sexual immorality. You might think of the first term as a heterosexual sin. You might think of the second term as a homosexual sin. But sexual sin is sexual sin. One is not more or less than the other. We need to be careful we don't make it different than any of these other sins. Whether it's adultery, whether it's sex outside of marriage, whether it's pornography, or whether it's homosexual sex. They're all sexual sins; they're all offensive to God, and they're all contrary to flourishing. **Kidnappers**, I already explained that one. The last two:

...and liars and perjurers,...

That's pretty obvious. The only thing I'm going to say is the reminder. No community can flourish where truth isn't valued. It just can't. Whether you're talking about a marriage, whether you're

talking about a family, whether you're talking about a church, or a community. Where truth is not valued, there's no chance for flourishing. None! So that's what he means there with **liars and perjurers**. But listen to how he ends this conversation:

...and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching,

The word **sound** there, the Greek word is actually the word *healthy*...flourishing! How do we become a healthy body of believers? Through sound teaching, through right doctrine. That should cause us to fall more deeply in love with Jesus and to do better at loving one another. I can imagine someone in Ephesus saying, "Well, who put Paul in charge? What makes him the authority?" So that's where he ends. **According to...** like, where does this come from?

...according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted. (Vs. 9b-11)

The **glorious gospel** here is not the plan of salvation: "One, two, three; here's how you get into heaven." It's the good news from Genesis to Revelation. We'd simply say, "It's the Bible." If someone says, "You know, that's just your opinion. Where do you get that?" The answer would be, "According to the authority of Scripture." That is our playbook. This is not a gathering for your opinion or my opinion. It is rather a fierce commitment to do our best to rightly divide the word of truth and do our best to tell you, "This is what God says. This is the pathway to flourishing." So what should you expect, when you walk through these doors, of me, of Ryan, of any other teacher here at Berean? Answer: "You should expect us to do our best to tell you the truth about what God has said in His Word!"

Our Father, we're thankful this morning You tell us the truth. Lord, in a culture of lies, a culture of deception, in a culture of chaos, there should be one place where people can come and feel like what they're hearing is truth that leads to the flourishing they long for. Lord, may that be true of us here at Lincoln Berean. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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Introduction

Welcome to the first week of our new series titled “What Are We Doing Here?” We’ll be examining Paul’s first letter to Timothy, which is packed with wisdom about faith, leadership, and holding to the truth of the Gospel. In these opening verses, Paul greets Timothy and urges him to keep a course of true and faithful instruction in his local community of believers in Ephesus. It’s a great place to begin as we dive into what it means to be God’s people.

We invite you to look over all the questions on the following pages and write your thoughts down before you meet with your group. Some people even use these questions to take notes during the sermon. The questions are meant to stir your thinking and prompt open discussion, and we do not expect you will cover every question each week.

Warm Up *(Suggested time: 30 min)*

- 1) What is the best group or team that you’ve ever been a part of (other than your Life Group, of course)?
- 2) Together with your group, check out the introduction video to the book of 1 Timothy produced by The Bible Project (linked here: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/1-timothy/>), or using the QR code below)



Getting Started

Transition into group discussion.

- 1) Open group discussion with prayer. Here are a few potential prayer items:
 - a. For the Spirit of God to lead you in truth
 - b. For the fruit of the Spirit to be cultivated in your lives
 - c. For grace to hear and apply what the Spirit says to you
- 2) Choose someone to read the passage aloud for the group.

Study Questions *(Suggested time: 40 min)*

- 1) **What ideas, questions, or key points stood out in your mind from Bryan’s sermon this past weekend?**

- 2) The “big idea” of the book of 1 Timothy is best outlined by what Paul says later in chapter 3, verse 15: *“I write so that you will know how one should act in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.”* In other words, this book narrows its scope to specifically offer instruction for the local church. **Why do you think that our behavior as God’s church is important enough to devote a full book of the Bible to it?**

The fundamental issue in this first portion of 1 Timothy is instructing Church leaders to build an ordered environment around God’s Word. **How might a church with an environment of chaos or conflict affect someone’s view of God and His kingdom?**

- 3) Paul makes it clear in this week’s passage that the correct teaching of the gospel *“from a good conscience, and from a sincere faith”* (verse 5) is essential to a thriving church. **What are some qualities that you’ve seen displayed by groups of believers who are rooted in that sincere faith?**

This past weekend, Bryan said “When the Bible isn’t front and center, opinions rule the day.” In our world today, where individualism is valued over truth, Paul calls the church to be a society ordered around the commonly agreed-upon truth of the Bible. **How does knowing the Bible is our ultimate source of order in our community of believers challenge you to engage with the scriptures more or in new and different ways?**

What are some non-biblical teachings (or “*strange doctrines*” as Paul calls it in verse 3) that are shared in some churches or other groups of believers today?

How can you take steps in your everyday life to live aligned to God’s truth rather than being guided by your own opinions?

- 4) In 1 Timothy 1:7, Paul delivers an indictment against those who want “to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying of the matters about which they make confident assertions.” In other words, he is addressing those who manipulate the Old Testament to say what they want it to say. **How does the important practice of using the Bible in its correct context help to put an end to this kind of teaching?**

What is the biblical relationship between the Gospel and flourishing?

Personal Spiritual Exercises

Just like physical exercises help strengthen and stretch our bodies for healthy living, these spiritual exercises are meant to move us spiritually in ways that may be new so we might experience inner growth. Since God longs for us to experience Him with our whole selves—mind, body, spirit—we invite you along each week to strengthen your souls with suggestions and prompts.

Scripture Focus: Read Psalm 19, where David connects his awe of God’s creation to his reverence of God’s law. As you read it, open yourself up to connecting with the authority and instruction of the Word of God, and consider how you might praise God for His law and instruction that brings order to your life.

Prayer Focus: As we get started in this new series that's all about the purpose behind the church, try creating a habit of praying for the community of believers, and adding that to your usual prayer rhythms in your life. Ask God to be present and make His will known in a widening scope starting with your close circle of friends and family, then your Life Group and in our church family at Lincoln Berean, and so on all the way to the worldwide body of Christ.

Prayer *(Suggested time: 20 min)*

A significant part of “coming together” is being open and honest with our lives. Sitting in a group of people for prayer may be new or it may be familiar to you. If you would rather not pray aloud when it is your turn, feel free to pray silently and then say “Amen” aloud signaling the next person in the group to pray. Whether or not you choose to verbalize your prayer, everyone is a participant in sharing this time before God together.

Take a few moments to prepare a prayer request. What did the message, working through the above questions or the discussion cause you to notice about your own relationship with Jesus? Would you be willing to share your prayer request with the group?