

## Everything God Has Made Is Good

### 1 Timothy 4:3-5

Bishop Taylor has given the following advice:

“If you are for pleasure, marry; if you prize rosy health, marry. A good wife is heaven’s last best gift to a man; his angel of mercy; minister of graces innumerable; his gem of many virtues; his box of jewels; voice, his sweetest music; her smiles, his brightest day; her kiss, the guardian of innocence; her arms, the pale of his safety; the balm of his health; the balsam of his life; her industry, his surest wealth; her economy, his safest steward; her lips, his faithful counsellors; her bosom, the softest pillow of his cares; and her prayers, the ablest advocates of Heaven’s blessing on his head.”<sup>1</sup>

Or, what do you think about this situation?

Barbara and Gordon Ray, of Madison, Wis., want to adopt a child. They thought this would not be too difficult. Their doctors had told

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<sup>1</sup> Tan, Dr. Paul Lee. *Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations*. Copyright © 1998 Paul Lee Tan. All rights reserved. Database © 2004 WORDsearch

them it was very unlikely they could have a child of their own.

When the two 28-year-olds applied to the state Health and Social Services Department, Mrs. Ray, who is 5 ft. 9 in. and weighed 210 lb., was told she had to lose weight. Her obesity was a health problem, explained the state physician who examined her. Mr. Ray, a shipping and mail clerk at the University of Wisconsin, who is 6 ft. 2 in. and weighs 220 lb., also had to lose weight, the state social worker said.

So Mrs. Ray went on a diet, and lost 20 lb. in three months. That was still not enough, the department said, and suggested she take off an additional 20 lb. Infuriated, the Rays made their problem public. State Senator Peter Bear openly criticized the department's ruling, and the state legislature decided to investigate. Finally, Social Services officials relented and suspended the informal guidelines on obesity.<sup>2</sup>

We have thus far looked very carefully at the first two verses of first Timothy chapter four. We will now read those verses again and then move on to verses 3-5.

1 Timothy 4:1-5 NAS:

<sup>1</sup> *But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away*

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

*from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,*

*<sup>2</sup> by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron,*

*<sup>3</sup> men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.*

*<sup>4</sup> For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude;*

*<sup>5</sup> for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer.*

Paul has already given us an indication of his favorable view of marriage and the family in 1 Timothy 3:2, 4, 12.

*<sup>2</sup> Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,*

*<sup>4</sup> He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive,*

*<sup>12</sup> Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well.*

Now not only did Paul express his feelings about marriage previously in 1 Timothy, but Paul had also explained the Christian understanding of marriage in 1 Corinthians 7. Let us look specifically at the beginning of that chapter.

1 Corinthians 7:1-17 MSG:

*<sup>1</sup> Now, getting down to the questions you asked in your letter to me.*

*First, Is it a good thing to have sexual relations?*

*<sup>2</sup> Certainly—but only within a certain context. It's good for a man to have a wife, and for a woman to have a husband. Sexual drives are strong, but marriage is strong enough to contain them and provide for a balanced and fulfilling sexual life in a world of sexual disorder.*

*<sup>3</sup> The marriage bed must be a place of mutuality—the husband seeking to satisfy his wife, the wife seeking to satisfy her husband.*

*<sup>4</sup> Marriage is not a place to "stand up for your rights." Marriage is a decision to serve the other, whether in bed or out.*

*<sup>5</sup> Abstaining from sex is permissible for a period of time if you both*

*agree to it, and if it's for the purposes of prayer and fasting—but only for such times. Then come back together again. Satan has an ingenious way of tempting us when we least expect it.*

*<sup>6</sup> I'm not, understand, commanding these periods of abstinence—only providing my best counsel if you should choose them.*

*<sup>7</sup> Sometimes I wish everyone were single like me—a simpler life in many ways! But celibacy is not for everyone any more than marriage is. God gives the gift of the single life to some, the gift of the married life to others.*

*<sup>8</sup> I do, though, tell the unmarried and widows that singleness might well be the best thing for them, as it has been for me.*

*<sup>9</sup> But if they can't manage their desires and emotions, they should by all means go ahead and get married. The difficulties of marriage are preferable by far to a sexually tortured life as a single.*

*<sup>10</sup> And if you are married, stay married. This is the Master's command, not mine.*

*<sup>11</sup> If a wife should leave her husband, she must either remain single or else come back and make things right with him. And a husband has no right to get rid of his wife.*

<sup>12</sup> *For the rest of you who are in **mixed marriages**—Christian married to nonChristian—we have no explicit command from the Master. So this is what you must do. If you are a man with a wife who is not a believer but who still wants to live with you, hold on to her.*

<sup>13</sup> *If you are a woman with a husband who is not a believer but he wants to live with you, hold on to him.*

<sup>14</sup> *The unbelieving husband shares to an extent in the holiness of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is likewise touched by the holiness of her husband. Otherwise, your children would be left out; as it is, they also are included in the spiritual purposes of God.*

<sup>15</sup> *On the other hand, if the unbelieving spouse walks out, you've got to let him or her go. You don't have to hold on desperately. God has called us to make the best of it, as peacefully as we can.*

<sup>16</sup> *You never know, wife: The way you handle this might bring your husband not only back to you but to God. You never know, husband: The way you handle this might bring your wife not only back to you but to God.*

<sup>17</sup> *And don't be wishing you were someplace else or with someone else. Where you are right now is God's place for you. Live and obey and love and believe right there. God, not your marital status, defines your*

*life. Don't think I'm being harder on you than on the others. I give this same counsel in all the churches.*

Looking at 1 the first phrase of 1 Timothy 4:3, we might wonder, why would the Enemy want to forbid marriage? Well, he is a rebel, oppositional to the core, so he's going to be against anything that God establishes.

God ordained marriage and the family. That is made very clear throughout Scripture; for instance,

Genesis 2:18, 22-24 NAS:

<sup>18</sup> *Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."*

<sup>22</sup> *The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.*

<sup>23</sup> *The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man."*

<sup>24</sup> *For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.*

Proverbs 18:22; 19:14 NAS:

<sup>22</sup>*He who finds a wife finds a good thing And obtains favor from the LORD.*

<sup>14</sup>*House and wealth are an inheritance from fathers, But a prudent wife is from the LORD.*

Mark 10:9 NAS:

*"What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."*

God planned for marriage to be a source of joy, pleasure, and comfort for a man and woman who have committed themselves to each other.

Proverbs 5:18-19 NAS:

<sup>18</sup>*. . . rejoice in the wife of your youth.*

<sup>19</sup>*As a loving hind and a graceful doe, Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; Be exhilarated always with her love.*

2 Samuel 12:24 NAS:

*Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and went in to her and lay with her; and she gave birth to a son, and he named him Solomon.*



Psalm 127:3-5 NAS:

<sup>3</sup> *Behold, children are a gift of the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward.*

<sup>4</sup> *Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth.*

<sup>5</sup> *How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them.*

Children, hence a family, are the product of a loving couple. The family provides the nurture and guidance children need in order to become productive, happy, well-adjusted adults who follow God's principles. It is family, consisting of a mom and dad and children, that teaches them to be spiritual Christians. So if Satan can destroy marriages and families, he has thrown a big monkey wrench into the health and spirituality of the children. This in turn affects the next generation.

Another important factor regarding marriage is that marriage symbolizes God's relationship with His people. The whole book of Hosea in the Old Testament illustrates beautifully God's grace and forgiveness toward people who prostitute themselves by serving false gods. But the concept of God's people being His bride is elsewhere in the Old Testament as well.

Hosea 2:18-20 NAS:

<sup>18</sup> *"In that day I will also make a covenant for them With the beasts of the field, The birds of the sky And the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword and war from the land, And will make them lie down in safety.*

<sup>19</sup> *"I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, In lovingkindness and in compassion,*

<sup>20</sup> *And I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. Then you will know the LORD."*

Isaiah 54:5 NAS:

*"For your husband is your Maker, Whose name is the LORD of hosts; And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, Who is called the God of all the earth."*

Then in the New Testament, the Church is called the Bride of Christ and marriage symbolizes the love of Christ for His Church.

Ephesians 5:21-28 MSG:

<sup>21</sup> *Out of respect for Christ, be courteously reverent to one another.*

<sup>22</sup> ***Wives, understand and support your husbands in ways that show***

*your support for Christ.*

<sup>23</sup> *The husband provides leadership to his wife the way Christ does to his church, not by domineering but by cherishing.*

<sup>24</sup> *So just as the church submits to Christ as he exercises such leadership, wives should likewise submit to their husbands.*

<sup>25</sup> ***Husbands, go all out in your love for your wives, exactly as Christ did for the church—a love marked by giving, not getting.***

<sup>26</sup> *Christ's love makes the church whole. His words evoke her beauty. Everything he does and says is designed to bring the best out of her,*

<sup>27</sup> *dressing her in dazzling white silk, radiant with holiness.*

<sup>28</sup> *And that is how husbands ought to love their wives. They're really doing themselves a favor—since they're already "one" in marriage.*

<sup>29</sup> ***No one abuses his own body, does he? No, he feeds and pampers it.***

***That's how Christ treats us, the church,***

<sup>30</sup> *since we are part of his body.*

<sup>31</sup> *And this is why a man leaves father and mother and cherishes his wife. No longer two, they become "one flesh."*

<sup>32</sup> *This is a huge mystery, and I don't pretend to understand it all. What is clearest to me is the way Christ treats the church.*

<sup>33</sup> *And this provides a good picture of how each husband is to treat his wife, loving himself in loving her, and how each wife is to honor her husband.*

The Church then becomes the family of God, nurturing and discipling baby Christians so that they grow to maturity and can understand the meat, or solid food, of the Word.

1 Peter 2:2 ESV:

*Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation.*

1 Corinthians 3:1-3 ESV:

<sup>1</sup> *But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ.*

<sup>2</sup> *I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready,*

<sup>3</sup> *for you are still of the flesh.*

So we can speculate, probably accurately, that Satan knew that one way to make people miserable was to ruin their marriages. He also wanted to destroy this wonderful symbol of God's love, and to get the emphasis on all the wrong things. So he emphasizes same sex so-called "marriage" or downright forbids something that God declared good. Warren Wiersbe cautions us to "*Beware of any religious teaching that tampers with God's institution of marriage. And beware of any teaching that tampers with God's Creation. The false teachers who were infecting the Ephesian church taught that certain foods were taboo; if you ate them, you were not spiritual.*"<sup>3</sup>

That leads us to consider the next phrase in 1 Timothy 4:3: "*advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.*"

One blistering hot day when they had guests for dinner, Mother asked 4-year old Johnny to return thanks. "But I don't know what to say!" the boy complained. "Oh, just say what you hear me say" his mother replied. Obediently the boy bowed his head and mumbled, "Oh Lord,

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<sup>3</sup> Wiersbe, Warren. *Be Faithful*. Wheaton IL: Victor Books, 1981, p. 57.

why did I invite these people over on a hot day like this?"<sup>4</sup>

Have you ever wondered why Christians pray and give thanks before we eat? We are responding to God's command in verses four and five: "*nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer.*" We are to receive God's good gifts prayerfully and thankfully, especially His provision of food to nourish and strengthen our bodies.

Paul's teaching about food laws basically asks the question, "*Who made the food, the animals and plants and trees? Can anything God made be bad?*" God has created these things for a specific purpose and they are to be enjoyed with thanksgiving.

1 Corinthians 10:31 NLT:

*So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*

But since unbelievers are not able to genuinely give thanks to God, Paul adds in 1 Timothy 4:3: "*by those who believe and know the truth.*" Joyful acceptance of

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<sup>4</sup> Source Unknown.

God's truth does not result in self-denial, but rather in the ability to enjoy with thanksgiving. Paul adds to his point concerning food in Romans 14:1-3 (NLT):

<sup>1</sup> Accept other believers who are weak in faith, and don't argue with them about what they think is right or wrong.

<sup>2</sup> *For instance, one person believes it's all right to eat anything. But another believer with a sensitive conscience will eat only vegetables.*

<sup>3</sup> Those who feel free to eat anything must not look down on those who don't. And those who don't eat certain foods must not condemn those who do, for God has accepted them.

The bottom line here is for you to eat what you want as long as you give thanks before every meal, and as long as it is not something that is harmful to your body. Every creature God created is good. Nothing is to be thrown away, as if it were evil. In his commentary, Adam Clarke writes:

“Jewish people always praised God before their meal; the normal blessing included praise for the God who ‘created’ the fruit of the vine. Another blessing, possibly standardized in the early second century, was used after meals and included the

statement ‘God is good and does good.’ This Jewish custom was an appropriate way to show gratitude to God for his provisions. The food was in a sense sanctified by the word of God (Genesis 1:30-31) as well as by such prayer; there was thus no need to abstain from it.”<sup>5</sup>

Genesis 1:30-31 NLT:

*<sup>30</sup> And I have given every green plant as food for all the wild animals, the birds in the sky, and the small animals that scurry along the ground—everything that has life.” And that is what happened.*

*<sup>31</sup> Then **God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!** And evening passed and morning came, marking the sixth day.*

Genesis 9:1-3 ESV:

*<sup>1</sup> And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.*

*<sup>2</sup> The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered.*

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<sup>5</sup> Adam Clarke, *A Commentary and Critical Notes*, (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press,



*<sup>3</sup> Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything.*

The false teachers harassing the Ephesian church in the first century here in 1 Timothy came before the **Gnostics** of the second century. When the Gnostics arrived on the scene they spread the word that all desires related to the body are evil and should be forbidden, including normal desires for sex and food. They did not allow people to get married and they ordered them not to eat certain foods. How does that teaching stand up against the words of Paul in Colossians 2:8, 16-23 (NLT)?

*<sup>8</sup> Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ.*

*<sup>16</sup> So don't let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink, or for not celebrating certain holy days or new moon ceremonies or Sabbaths.*

*<sup>17</sup> For these rules are only shadows of the reality yet to come. And Christ himself is that reality.*

<sup>18</sup> *Don't let anyone condemn you by insisting on pious self-denial or the worship of angels, saying they have had visions about these things. Their sinful minds have made them proud,*

<sup>19</sup> *and they are not connected to Christ, the head of the body. For he holds the whole body together with its joints and ligaments, and it grows as God nourishes it.*

<sup>20</sup> *You have died with Christ, and he has set you free from the spiritual powers of this world. So why do you keep on following the rules of the world, such as,*

<sup>21</sup> ***“Don't handle! Don't taste! Don't touch!”?***

<sup>22</sup> *Such rules are mere human teachings about things that deteriorate as we use them.*

<sup>23</sup> *These rules may seem wise because they require strong devotion, pious self-denial, and severe bodily discipline. But they provide no help in conquering a person's evil desires.*

Paul told the folks that matter (anything that you can see and feel) is not evil because God created matter, 1 Timothy 6:17:

*<sup>17</sup> Teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which is so unreliable. Their trust should be in God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment.*

That is about as clear as it can get. Believers in Christ can gratefully (cf. 4:4) receive and use the things God created, because they were designed to be used (1 Timothy 4:4).

Although Paul advised against marriage in certain situations, he always spoke of marriage being ordained by God and compared marriage with Christ's relationship to His Church. He rejected the human false teaching that marriage (and the sexual relationship between a man and wife) is evil and that in order to be good person one needs to avoid such behavior.<sup>6</sup>

In the same way, refraining from eating certain kinds of food can be good for your health. Not eating during a time of extended prayer (fasting) may have a very positive effect in the prayers being answered. But abstaining from food does not

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<sup>6</sup> Bruce B. Barton, David R. Veerman, Neil Wilson, *Life Application Bible Commentary – 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1993), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "1 TIMOTHY 4".

make a person better than anyone else or bring him or her closer to God.<sup>7</sup> You are never closer to God than the day you first believed. If, however, you want to be more Godlike, look to His Son (Jesus) and live the way He did.

So as you sit down to dinner shortly, thank God for the food from the bottom of your heart wherever you are: home, restaurant, car, or park. Recognize that three meals a day gives you extra opportunities to talk with your Lord. Then ask Him to keep you close to Him and help you live the kind of life that would please Him.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.