

Hitting The Target In Your Christian Life **1 Timothy 1:3-7**

Introduction:

1. To be occupied with something means that it has fully engaged your time, attention, and energy. **Illustration:** When I was in Bible College, I became occupied with a young lady by the name of Deniece. She fully engaged my attention and energies!
2. What occupies your time, energy, and attention? How would those who know you best answer that? Your job, the kids, school, TV, your computer, video games, sports, music, your house, boat, car, boyfriend, girlfriend, etc.?
3. What is the main thing that should occupy the heart of a “Christ-ian?” It is not hard to figure out, is it? The word itself gives you the answer.
 - Think about this: In all those various places and activities I named, you take Christ with you into **all** of them. This isn’t true of the rest. You don’t take your video games with you into work (I hope not), or your music into your sports, or TV into school, etc.
 - Christ lives in you and goes with you everywhere. Therefore, Christ should occupy your heart and mind. He should be the central focus of your life.
4. If you were to summarize the Christian (Christ-filled) life in one sentence, what would it be? Verse 5 does a good job by describing a sincere love driven by a real and genuine faith.
 - This is the end (conclusion; goal) of the Christian life. It’s the target! This is what we are shooting at – a sincere faith that leads us to love God and love people.
5. There is only way to see those marvelous fruits evidenced in your life. vs. 1
6. Your heart and mind must be fully occupied with Christ (Colossians 3:1-4). How?

First, by detecting false teachers

1. Does what we believe affect how we act? Does what we believe affect our attitudes and decisions? As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.
2. Paul left Timothy in Ephesus to keep that church on track doctrinally.
3. Doctrine is what we believe, and it affects everything about us, to the very core of our being. This is why it was a constant point of emphasis with Paul. vs. 3
 - Doctrine is mentioned 17 times just in the Pastoral Epistles. cf. 4:6
4. In Paul’s day, false teaching was already very prevalent. 1:4, 7
 - “*Fables*” (vs. 4) are mystic stories designed to appeal to people’s raw emotions. Many churches preach fables. Of course they salt and pepper them with Scripture. But it is subjective, experience-based religious mysticism. “Let’s go to church, have an experience, and feel good.”
 - Law-based religion or legalism (vs. 7). There were teachers who wanted to mix law and grace. They didn’t know what they were talking about. Grace

and law cannot mix any more than oil and water. Paul's gospel was rooted in grace.

5. All false teaching revolves around one of these two man-centered philosophies. They both have two characteristics in common:
 - They disregard the clear teaching of the apostle Paul.
 - They demean and devalue the finished work of Jesus Christ.
6. Satan desires to move people away from the simplicity that is in Christ. If he can get people to focus on experiences or religious rules rather than Christ, he has succeeded.

Second, by avoiding trouble-makers

1. The false teachers that were trying to lead away believers were not answering questions. They were **producing** questions and confusion.
2. Some of the false teachers were obviously Jews that desired to teach the law and argue about endless genealogies (vs. 3). Herod had destroyed the public registers, so they argued over which tribe they were from, the virtue of their ancestors, the priesthood, etc.
3. All of this side-tracked believers from what they **should** be focusing on – Jesus!
4. Likewise, today people will show up in church, develop their own agenda, and seek to get people occupied with side issues. They have an ax to grind.
5. Paul warned about these kinds of people repeatedly. Romans 16:17-18; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 11, 14; Titus 3:9-11; Acts 15:24
 - Over and over, Paul says “*avoid*,” “*withdraw*,” “*reject*,” “*have no company with*,” etc.
6. God desires that your heart and mind be occupied with Jesus Christ. But the Bible warns that there will be people that have turned away from making Christ their focus, and they will attempt to get you off course too (vs. 6). They will try to get you embroiled in their side issues that do not edify and are not of faith. vs. 4
7. When you allow yourself to be influenced by the wrong kind of people, it will always cause you to lose focus on Christ.

Third, by constantly examining the fruit of your life

1. What kind of fruit does an orange tree yield? How about an apple tree? What kind of fruit does a Christian that is occupied with Jesus Christ bear? Look at verse 5.
2. If we are not loving others, or if our conscience (“*heart*”) is constantly troubled, or if we find ourselves faking our Christian life (“*feigned faith*”), these are warning signs.
3. It means we have lost focus. We have become occupied with something other than Christ.
4. Jesus Christ sets us free to love fervently, to have an inner peace, and to have a vibrant, growing faith. We don't need a list of rules. Christ lives His life through us.
5. Christ fulfills the righteousness of the law through us very naturally when our hearts are occupied with Him. Romans 8:2-4

6. We should constantly be checking and examining our lives to see if Christ's fruit is being evidenced in and through us. 2 Corinthians 13:5

In Conclusion:

1. Do you remember at the beginning of this message when I talked about becoming occupied with Deniece in college? I did, in fact, become occupied with her, and I allowed this to distract me from my relationships with Christ. This led to problems.
2. I made a decision that I would put Christ first, and give Him one-on-one time every day, and be occupied with Him first and foremost. Deniece did the same. Do you know what happened? It enhanced our relationship!
3. Has something come into your life that has distracted you from developing a close relationship with Christ? Tell Jesus this, admit it, and then make a decision today to become fully occupied with Christ!
4. This is the only way you will hit the target in your Christian life!