

CONQUERING THE TOXIC ENVIRONMENT

(Part 1 of 2)
September 5, 2022

2 TIMOTHY 4:3-6 NKJV – (3) For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because they have itching ears*, they will heap up for themselves teachers; (4) and they will turn *their ears* away from the truth and be turned aside to fables. (5) But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

TOXIC - very harmful or unpleasant in a persistent or dangerous way. A toxic person is **anyone whose behavior adds negativity and upset to your life**. To do this, they act in ways that don't present them in the best light (spiritually) and usually upsets others along the way. Sin is abundant, and thus, toxic and abusive relationships are formed. Christians are not immune to finding themselves trapped in these situations. Occasionally, we get wound up in these unhealthy relationships and cycles of behavior.

Everyone is guilty on some level of being abusive or toxic to others at some point. As humans, we are going to fail to live up to God's standards. Christians that cause harm to others understand that they must repent for their mistakes and apologize for their actions. Those who have accepted the need for a Savior acknowledge that only Love Himself, Jesus Christ, can overrule our selfishness, transforming it into real love (**Romans 8:10**).

Christians have been called to be the ultimate example through kingdom teaching. We are here to conquer that which is not an example of the kingdom by standing for righteousness! We don't run, participate with toxic living, but conquer through righteous living, prayer and acknowledging the "Good news!"

In **verses 3-4**, Paul tells Timothy how the environment will become toxic. People would grow tired of the true gospel and reject it. Instead, they would turn in other directions, looking to replace sound or healthy teaching. This is to be expected when the gospel message begins with a humbling, difficult thought: we are imperfect and in need of saving.

Instead of following godly teachers, people would choose to follow teachers who told them what they liked to hear, rather than what was true. The idea of "itching ears" may be that of twitching or moving ears that sought something different from the traditional, true gospel message.

These who fall away will specifically be avoiding the truth. In addition to not enduring sound teaching and finding teachers of their liking, these unfaithful people will literally turn the other direction from the truth. If the truth says to go right, these people go left. They will not live by the truth or even listen to it. Instead of responding to reason, and conviction, they will rebel against it.

Fourth, these unfaithful people will stumble through false ideas and myths. Timothy had already been warned about false teachers who were devoting themselves to myths (**1 Timothy 1:4**) and was warned against this practice in his own life (**1 Timothy 4:7**). Paul also gave a similar warning to Titus (**Titus 1:14**). Peter firmly stated he and the other apostles did not follow "cleverly devised myths" but were "eyewitnesses of his majesty" (**2 Peter 1:16**). Once a person is determined to reject the truth, they are prone to believing anything, no matter how silly it might be.

The fact is people will not want the "Truth!" Next week we will look at the ways told Timothy how we are to conquer the toxins in the culture.

SCRIPTURE READING

PSALM 119:9-11

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

I will not allow anyone to walk in my mind with dirty feet.