

Healthy Church – Doctrine that Protects the Church 1 Timothy 4

A modern-day parable – The story of the 3 Little Pigs. As you listen, what details do you notice about the story that align well with the Christian life?

- The time comes in every pig's/person's life when they must leave their home of origin & venture out on their own. The question is, **Are they ready?** Are they ready in a physical... employment... financial... spiritual sense...?
- **They leave with a father's warning "Watch out for the big bad wolf."** The father knows that there is real danger and there are real enemies looking to devour the unprepared and unsuspecting!

Our heavenly Father also warns us in **1 Peter 5:8 – "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion (or wolf), seeking someone to devour."**

- **The 1st pig was called a lazy pig.** He hadn't gone far & he was already tired. He built his house out of straw that he found nearby! He looked for the quickest and easiest way to do it... The path of least resistance!

How often are we tempted to take this approach in our pursuit of following Jesus, and living out our faith?

- The 2nd pig went a little further, did a little more, but said "This will do!" **He settled for far less than he should have** & he built his house with only sticks that were scattered around. He was content with mediocre!

How often do we settle for mediocre when it comes to our faith development? Church attendance... Bible reading... Prayer... Faith sharing...

- **The 3rd pig persevered & he found a place worth building on...** next to a stream of water! He also drew up plans... Bought the best bricks... & worked hard for weeks. He built a strong, & safe, brick house to live in!

Anything worth doing is worth doing right! We are to be diligent, patient, & faithful! It's true for building a house & for building our faith!

- **For the big bad wolf will come!** And when he does, how will he find us?
 - He found the 1st pig resting in his straw house! And when he huffed & he puffed he easily blew that lazy pig's house down!
 - He found the 2nd pig in a wobbly stick house that was also easily destroyed. **How shaky is the ground we stand on & the house we live in?**

- He found the 3rd pig safe & secure in his brick house! And after repeated attempts & even trying to sneak in a different way, he failed!

The wolf's attacks were unsuccessful because the 3rd pig recognized the voice & the ploys of the enemy & he built a structure that would withstand him!

Do we have faith like that? Are we standing on unshakable ground, with walls of protection surrounding us? This is what good doctrine provides!

Take out your bulletin insert & look at all that is being offered as ways of building up a safe & secure faith... **Built on the solid ground of Scripture.**

The challenge before us is to not be like those first two pigs... not be lazy & not settle... But be like the 3rd, who built his house with bricks & was secure!

Let's look at **1 Timothy 4** & see what bricks we can build our faith upon:

- **We are to receive what God has given to us with thanksgiving...** Bricks Scripture (food)... The Church... Mentors in the faith... Prayer... Marriage...
- Vs. 6 - **Training in the words of faith and good doctrine** (growth groups).
- Vs. 7-8 - **Godliness, that combats worldliness, irreverent silly myths, heresy.**
- Vs. 9-10 - **"We have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially/particularly those who believe."**
- Vs. 12 - **Youth is a gift, not a curse...** But that doesn't let the aged off the hook! Regardless of age, there are examples to set (bricks to lay) in faith...
- Vs. 13 - The public reading of Scripture... Exhortation... Teaching...
- Vs. 14 - Like Timothy to Ephesus, **God has given us pastors & teachers gifted to lead us.** As they do not forsake their gifts, we do not forsake the opportunities to learn from them... Receive their preaching/teaching w/joy!
- Vs. 15 - **The brick of practice... "Train yourself in godliness..."** May all see our progress... We call them "Growth Groups" for a reason... Are we practicing faith? Are we growing? This is where strength & safety are found!
- Vs. 16 - **The brick of good doctrine... "Keep a close watch on yourself & on the teaching."** Doctrine matters! Because faith built with straw or sticks will not withstand the huffing, puffing & blowing of the evil one!
- **The brick of persistence... "Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers."** The 3rd pig was safe, but he also saved the other 2. May we build our faith with the bricks of good doctrine!

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