

THINGS WHICH ARE "USEFUL" OR "USELESS"

As Far as Their Spiritual Value is Concerned

- **chraomai** - to take for one's use, to make use of a thing (1 Timothy 1:8 and elsewhere)
 - **chresimos** (fit for use, useful) + **oudeis/oudemia/ouden** (no one, none) - no use or value: useless (2 Timothy 2:14)
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1 Tim. 1:8 - The law is good, if used properly or in the right way.

The New Testament tells us much about the law and its proper function. It also shows us the relationship between law and grace. We learn that there are different aspects of "law" - such as moral law, ceremonial law, civil law, the law of Moses, etc., and there are varying ways in which each has (or doesn't have) application to us.

Here, in 1 Timothy 1:8, we focus on the law's application to those who break (violate) the moral law. We focus on its use for exposing and condemning sin. This is comparable to the focus of Galatians 3:24, which tells us that the law was intended to show us our need for a Savior - Jesus Christ. Within the context of 1 Timothy, Paul is warning about people who acted like "teachers of the law" (v. 7), but who had no comprehension of its proper use. As a result, they taught "meaningless words" (v. 6) - they were "teachers of falsehood" (v. 3). The context describes some of the consequences of these false-teachers' actions.

2 Tim. 2:14 - Arguing over words has no value - it is useless and destroys those who listen.

Much of the focus in Paul's two letters to Timothy deals with the issue of "sound" words (the teachings of the Scriptures) contrasted with "empty" words (man-made or distorted teachings). In the context of 2 Timothy 2:14, Paul warns about "godless chatter" - false teaching - which produces only godlessness.

The message of the Word of God is a solid foundation for those who live by it. This is what we should focus on, not on speculations, disputes, arguments and meaningless talk!

TO THINK ABOUT:

The concept of "law" brings different ideas to different people. A full examination of this topic is far beyond the scope of this study. Suffice it to say that there *are* some good uses for it... as well as some bad *misuses* of it. In terms of the focus of 1 Timothy 1, in what way does the law show you how you ought to live? How does it teach you about your need for Christ?

You may wish to explore other New Testament passages that focus on the law. What aspects of the law are we to "uphold" (as Paul says in Romans 3:31)? What aspects of the Law were not intended for everybody? You may wish to explore the issue of what is and what isn't applicable to us today. (Acts 15 is a good place to begin looking.) You may wish to examine the relationship between law, grace, faith and salvation.

Jesus says that all the requirements of the Law are summarized in the two great commands: To love God completely and to love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:34-40). How are these two commands a summary of the 10 Commandments?

Empty talk can take on many forms. It can even sound good and "spiritual." Look at these two letters (1 and 2 Timothy). How does Paul contrast "sound teaching" with "empty talk": what makes the one "useful" and the other "useless"? Focus not only on the descriptive characteristics of each, but also on their "fruit" - the consequences of each. [You may also want to include the book of Titus, which also mentions much about empty talk and "myths."]

When you talk about "spiritual things" (or listen to others talk about them), to what degree does the discussion fit into the category of "useful"? of "useless"? (For example, does it eventually turn into a heated argument, in which nobody listens to anyone? Or does it ramble off to things the Bible isn't concerned about? Does it leave people feeling "more spiritual" without having any positive effect on their spiritual lives?)

If you were involved in such a discussion, how would you be able to recognize if it was truly useless? (Example: Does it have any impact on your relationship with God and with your "neighbor" - including your enemies?) How would you distinguish between a "useful" and a "useless" discussion? (Most people just assume that if it involves themselves, it is "OK." They don't carefully reflect on its spiritual value.)

Empty talk is not limited to "spiritual" matters. Many passages - especially in the Proverbs - make reference to "meaningless speech" or "the speech of a fool." According to Proverbs 10:19, there is a strong connection between "wordiness" and the tendency to sin. James 3:8 reminds us that the tongue is "filled with poison." You may want to explore some of these other aspects of talking. If you do, you will better understand the reason it is so easy for even "good" discussions to become sinful!

How might the expression of love and kindness be indirectly implied by the two passages in this study? (This is an "opinion" question. If nothing comes to your mind, there is no need for you to invent something, just to satisfy the question!)