

## THE GOAL

**“The goal of this command is love . . .” (1 Tim 1:5)**

Soccer is the most popular sport in the world. It is played by 250 million players in over 200 countries. Some say that the origin of the game dates back to 2,500 years before Christ. The game is played on a rectangular field with two teams of 11 players each. The object of the game is to kick the soccer ball into the goal at the opposite end of the field. This isn't easy for the 11 players on the opposing team will do everything they can to keep you from scoring a goal. The team with the most goals, of course, is the winner.

God also has a goal for us in the game of life. He gave many commands to help us reach that goal. In fact, Jewish scholars have listed 613 “mitzvot” or “commandments” in the Hebrew Bible. While all of these commands are different, they have a common purpose. The goal of these many commandments is love out of a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith (1 Tim.1:5). While God commanded sacrifices to be made, His ultimate goal was not merely to see blood drip down an altar. Micah spoke for all of God's prophets when he said that the goal of God was to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God (Micah 6:6 - 8)).

Successful soccer teams never lose sight of the goal. Successful Christians do the same!

Our text from 1 Timothy involves the church at Ephesus. That church was among the largest and most influential in the First Century. They were so evangelistic that in only two short years everyone in Asia heard the word of the Lord both Jews and Greeks (Acts 19:10). The Gospel message was so effective in Ephesus that those who formerly practiced sorcery publicly burned their pagan books valued at 50,000 pieces of silver (Acts 19:19). So many people were being converted to Christ in Ephesus that the idol makers feared they would be put out of business (Acts 19:23 - 27).

It was at this point that the wicked one created a clever diversion. He tricked the believers into taking their eyes off the goal of love and diverting their attention to myths and genealogies. Genealogies, of course, are very important, but they are not the goal. There are an overwhelming number of genealogies in the Bible. Here are some listed in the book of Genesis: (Genesis 5:1-31; Genesis 10:1-32; Genesis 11:10-26; Genesis 11:27-32; Genesis 22:20-24; Genesis 25:1-4; Genesis 25:12-18; Genesis 25:23-29; Genesis 36:1-43; Genesis 46:8-27). The Old Testament Scriptures have MANY other genealogies as well. The first 9 chapters of 1 Chronicles, for example, are all genealogies. The New Testament Scriptures even begin by listing 42 generations in the genealogy of Jesus. The genealogy of Jesus in Luke lists the ancestors of Christ all the way back to God Himself (Lk. 3:23 - 38).

While the study of genealogies is important, however, it is not the goal of God for our lives. You can go to heaven without knowing the genealogies, but you can't go to heaven without love. Jesus said that all the law and the prophets could be suspended on only two commandments, and both commandments involved love (Matt. 22:36 - 40). Paul wrote that anyone who did not love the Lord should be cursed (1 Cor. 16:22).

Sadly, the church in Ephesus ultimately left it's first love (Rev. 2:4). Just as you cannot plow a straight furrow looking back, you cannot win the game of life by taking your eye off of the goal. On Judgement Day you will not be asked about genealogies or any other hair splitting theological technicality. You will be asked, however, if you fed the hungry, clothed the naked, welcomed the stranger, and visited those who were sick and in prison (Matt. 25:31 - 46).

Someone has observed that the MAIN THING, is to keep the MAIN THING, the MAIN THING! The MAIN THING in Christianity is love. Please keep your eyes on that goal!