SESSION 9

DILIGENT

2 TIMOTHY 2:14-26

14 Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to fight about words. This is useless and leads to the ruin of those who listen. 15 Be diligent to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who doesn’t need to be ashamed, correctly teaching the word of truth. 16 Avoid irreverent and empty speech, since those who engage in it will produce even more godlessness, and their teaching will spread like gangrene. Hymenaeus and Philetus are among them. 18 They have departed from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and are ruining the faith of some. 19 Nevertheless, God’s solid foundation stands firm, bearing this inscription: The Lord knows those who are his, and let everyone who calls on the name of the Lord turn away from wickedness. 20 Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also those of wood and clay; some for honorable use and some for dishonorable. 21 So if anyone purifies himself from anything dishonorable, he will be a special instrument, set apart, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. 22 Flee from youthful passions, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. 23 But reject foolish and ignorant disputes, because you know that they breed quarrels. 24 The Lord’s servant must not quarrel, but must be gentle to everyone, able to teach, and patient, instructing his opponents with gentleness. Perhaps God will grant them repentance leading them to the knowledge of the truth. 26 Then they may come to their senses and escape the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

A “Facts” (AMP)—essential realities about faithfulness to Christ (see 2 Tim. 2:12-13)
B “Warn” (CEV); “command” (TLB)
C “Chips away at the faith” (The Message)
D Someone who seeks only God’s approval; “so God can say to you, ‘Well done’” (TLB)
E “Irreverent babble and godless chatter” (AMP)
F Leads people down a path that causes them to drift farther away from the Lord
G A deadly open sore that eats bodily tissue
H Paul proclaimed Hymenaeus as a blasphemer in 1 Timothy 1:20.
I In other letters, Paul had to address the lies being told about the resurrection of Christians (1 Cor. 15:12-21; 1 Thess. 4:13-17; 5:1-11; 2 Thess. 2:1-5).
J “Engraved on the stones” (The Message)
K “Confesses” (NIV); “worships” (CEV)
L “A well-furnished kitchen” (The Message)
M “The ones who stop doing evil” (CEV)
N “Infantile indulgence” (The Message)
O Paul often instructed believers to practice gentleness when they encountered difficult people (1 Cor. 4:21; Gal. 5:23; Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:12).
P “The devil ... makes them obey him” (CEV)
1. TWO GROUPS (2 Tim. 2:14-19)
   - Paul directed Timothy to diligently study God’s Word in contrast to others who were distracted by worldly philosophies.
   - Timothy was to warn others, exposing the danger of basing one’s life on something other than the gospel.
   - Paul reminded Timothy that the gospel is stronger than false teaching.

2. TWO VESSELS (2 Tim. 2:20-22)
   - Paul challenged Timothy to flee sin and pursue righteousness so he could become useful in God’s service.
   - He pointed to various pots and utensils in a house to illustrate that some have a place of honor by being cleaned of the things that contaminated them.

3. TWO APPROACHES (2 Tim. 2:23-26)
   - Paul encouraged Timothy to avoid useless quarrels and instead offer the truth of the gospel.
   - Timothy was to do so with gentleness and kindness, out of a hope that opponents to the gospel would repent and turn to Christ.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS
Believers find truth and direction by studying God’s Word.
   • Believers must continue to study God’s Word to avoid being led astray.
   • Believers must intentionally flee sin and pursue righteousness to be useful in God’s work.
   • Believers are to present God’s Word to others with love and kindness.
FOCUS ATTENTION

If you were a teacher, what would you expect from your students to master a subject and excel in the classroom?

- Good students don’t just come to class; they read the assigned texts and do their homework.
- Students who approach a subject with curiosity and actively engage with the material not only master it faster but help other students in the process.
- Students who excel by diligence rather than innate brilliance also serve as good role models for weaker students.
- Those who excel, no matter what barriers they must overcome to do so, encourage their teachers too and remind them why they became teachers.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

2 TIMOTHY 2:14-19

How may the knowledge you gain from Bible study inform the way you engage with others?

- Knowing the Word empowers us to redirect those who get carried away with worldly philosophies.
- When we’ve diligently studied God’s Word, we can correct others with authority instead of arrogance.
- A good grasp of what the Bible teaches also releases us from confusion when unbelievers challenge our convictions; we can cite Bible chapters and verses to back up what we say.

What teaching principles could you employ to clarify and drive home the gospel message?

- Keeping our speech simple and clear steers us away from confusing our listeners when we communicate.
- We must continually check ourselves to make sure our teaching matches up to truth; people can’t unearth miscommunication and misconceptions attributed to Scripture.
- We counter untruths, no matter how dangerous and contagious, with truth, being confident that God’s Word has the inherent power to trump false teaching.
- Repetition provides opportunity to learn as well as reminds the learners of what they already know. Just as Paul repeatedly pressed home truths to Timothy, we must teach, clarify, and reteach so that the message isn’t just learned but taken to heart and applied.

2 TIMOTHY 2:20-22

How does a commitment to studying God’s Word lead to practicing God’s Word?

- Mastering subject matter qualifies us as experts, able to teach others with greater understanding of applying the material.
- The discipline required to be excellent scholars is the same type of discipline we need to flee from sin and pursue righteousness.
- As we approach Scripture with a pure, teachable spirit, the Bible speaks to us and leads us in righteousness.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

What rewards of being Bible students should inspire us to increased diligence?

- The instruction to study God’s Word contains tantalizing promises that will propel us to higher callings and new heights as believers.
- Students of God’s Word perform valuable services in helping others understand the Scriptures.
- People who approach Bible study with discipline, diligence, and hearts to learn from God will become equipped for special service.
- Simply put, knowing the Scriptures helps us honor God.

Personal Challenge: How do you rate yourself when it comes to your handling of God’s Word? Do you approach Bible study with the heart of a scholar or take a lackadaisical approach? Even if you don’t aspire to be a teacher yourself, being able to reference doctrine and passages and discuss them with authority takes a lifetime of learning and discipline. Resolving to read the Bible regularly, participate in group studies where you can learn from another mature Christian, taking notes in church, and meditating on what you read are all vital steps to becoming proficient in God’s Word.
EVERYDAY OBJECTS, SUCH AS A TOOTHBRUSH, SOAP, AND SHOES

Before the session, gather a collection of items that you use every day, such as a toothbrush, soap, and shoes. Be careful to choose things that most people would also use on a regular basis.

Display the assortment of items you gathered, and ask the group what other tools or accessories they would include to help them have a full, complete, satisfying, and healthy day. Once you’ve entertained some of their suggestions, draw attention to a few of the items you brought. Point out the toothbrush, and suggest that it’s very important for oral health, but when used infrequently it doesn’t do much good. Suggest that shoes protect our feet, but if we wear them only occasionally and go barefoot the rest of the time, our feet will become calloused and possibly injured.

Say: All of these items have benefits to us, whether physical or emotional, but only when we use them over extended periods of time. Point out that reaping all the rewards of Bible study requires making it a daily habit, like brushing your teeth, but with benefits that far surpass mere physical health. Note that students of God’s Word learn life-application tips and wisdom directly from God Himself, and lessons learned can be shared with others to their benefit, too. Conclude by encouraging the group to take a disciplined approach to Bible study for their own good and the benefit of others.

A WORTHY VESSEL

How useful do we want to be for the Lord? That question surfaces when we reflect on Paul’s instruction in 2 Timothy 2:14-26. At the beginning of this section of his letter, he warned us to avoid arguing with other believers over words. Why? Because such arguments turn out to be utterly “useless” (v. 14). Not much later in his letter, Paul encouraged us to live for Christ in a way that allows us to become vessels of honor. Why? Because he wants us to be as useful as possible to the Lord (vv. 20-26).

Cheri Fuller wrote a book entitled Dangerous Prayer. It contains stories about people who simply but sincerely asked the Lord to use them. Some of the stories came right out of the Bible, like the story of Hannah (1 Samuel 1–2) and the account of a nameless Samaritan woman’s conversation with Jesus at Jacob’s well (John 4). Fuller also shared stories about Christians today who dared to go beyond asking God only to bless them or to meet their needs. While she confirmed the value of those kinds of prayers, she went on to challenge Christians to consider what she called a dangerous prayer. She described a dangerous prayer by sharing what a pastor always said to his congregation. He told his church that the most dangerous prayer a believer could offer was simply, “Lord, use me.” Fuller goes on to say that what makes the prayer so dangerous is that God “just might answer you! Then you have to be willing and ready to do the work you are called to because you don’t know what will happen after you pray those words.”

The stories about how God uses His people beckon us to ask the Lord to use us as well. Following Paul’s instruction to Timothy, we’re compelled to ask the Lord to shape us so we can be useful to Him. This passage gives us a fresh perspective on Paul’s challenge to present our “bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God” (Rom. 12:1).

1. Cheri Fuller, Dangerous Prayer (Uhrichsville, OH: Shiloh Run Press, 2015), 7. 2. Ibid.