

2 Timothy 2

Read 2 Timothy 2:1-2: We are supposed to get the gospel out to the whole world. To do so requires that we disciple others; and that they do the same. We can only influence a limited number of people in our own group of friends, family and acquaintances. Those who we influence, in turn, have their circle of contacts. We may not be extroverts or natural evangelists; but we can work on one person at a time as the LORD leads.

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!" (Isaiah 52:7)

Read 2 Timothy 2:3-7: Being obedient is not an easy life. It is compared to a man of war. War is compared to hell by some. War is terrifying and exhilarating. There is an unnatural and profound willingness to endure hardships and die for another. One must go to war to understand these things. It cannot just be found in a text book.

Likewise, evangelism is caught more than it is taught. I have had numerous experiences working with people who had no intention of sharing their faith with strangers. They had a normal fear and feeling of incompetence to engage a stranger. We would regularly set up carnivals in grocery store parking lots; or we would go out to public parks and beaches and cook hot dogs and give away Bibles. I would have to twist their arm to merely agree to help me cook hot dogs. After doing this once or twice they would become struck by hearing some sad life stories; and seeing how the scriptures offer them the hope of a needed change. Nothing touches your heart like a personal testimony. Some of these reluctant evangelists would suddenly become excited and passionate about sharing Jesus...and they went on to lead our church's outreaches. You just have to put yourself out there and jump in *the deep end of the pool* and see what happens.

It is odd that we stand back and wait for a perfect circumstance to engage. That circumstance rarely comes around. Perhaps our group needs to pray about a venue to meet a need; and use that as a vehicle for the gospel. Athletes, farmers and soldiers all have to work up a sweat. Covid complicates that interaction.

Read 2 Timothy 2:8-13: Death is associated with real faith. We have to come to a place where we are willing to give away the old lifestyle and identity; to gain something much better. That process usually involves slowly killing off competing aspirations. We all want options and contingency plans if things don't work out.

Paul was very accomplished; but he could not share in God's glory. Paul is throwing all caution to the wind when it comes to being used to promote that awareness. The gospel goes out, even though Paul is in jail. If we lose our life; we still have eternal life in Christ. If our life becomes more difficult, we will have the future luxury and reign and riches with him. Conversely, if we try to limit our exposure and deny him; he will deny us. Either way he will not abandon his promises; even if we do. Our commitment level will not result in a loss.

There is no other way. Jesus is the only door to heaven. We advocate that others tune into Jesus. There is no doubt that he has fulfilled many prophecies; and is God's salvation for man.

Read 2 Timothy 2:14-19: There are a lot of forgeable and incorrect things that are spoken every day. We should not contribute to those endless raging debates. It is tempting to speak up when we hear something that sounds ridiculous. Today, the division and opposition of thought is severe. It is not about arriving at the truth. It is just a tool to bury our opposition. It is not an issue of having the right answer or the truth. Love is missing. These endless words are to bring damage.

Hymenaeus and Philetus allowed their imagination carry them away. They began to preach that the second coming had taken place. It made the believers very sad; thinking that they missed their opportunity for salvation. **We need to examine the scriptures very carefully.** We should not add or subtract anything.

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll. ¹⁹ And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll. (Revelation 22:18-19)

We also need to stay out of endless arguments. It is important to determine if a person is even looking for the truth. They may just be on a quest to raise their importance and authority.

*Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you yourself will be just like him.
⁵ Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes. (Proverbs 26:4-5)*

Read 2 Timothy 2:20-26: Paul is comparing the church to a large house; full of all kinds of containers. You may have fine china, for special occasions. You also have trash cans, or perhaps coffee cans that hold the kitchen grease drippings. A valuable cup is worth much; and is considered important. The bathroom trash can

is cheap and common; and contains unclean things. We are containers. The contents of our hearts are evident by what flows out of our mouths.

You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. (Matthew 12:34)

This passage implies that we can have some control over what kind of container/vessel that we are. If we jump right into gripe sessions and the criticism of others, we get moved into the trash container inventory. We can vacillate and take the bait, we taint a lot of good living, in a few moments. When we engage in the senseless arguments of this world; as well as foolish talk...we become a common vessel. If we make a concerted effort to honor God; and let his light shine through us we become holy and beautiful containers that have been cleaned. When we hold out for words of healing and truth to glorify God, we are acting as holy vessels. We have a special use; that is not common with all of the other containers around the house.

Many believers get caught up in winning the arguments. It is not about prevailing in our discourse. God does not need to be protected. We are to be healers; not to bring inflammation.

The sanctification process transforms our thinking. As we separate ourselves from garbage, lust and hatred we become associated with what is clean and special. We may be drawn to the same old bad habits; but we really cannot enjoy them without having an issue with our conscience. In a sense, being saved ruins us for this world. Now we are only good for one thing.

As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.³ For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry.⁴ They are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living, and they heap abuse on you. (1 Peter 4:2-4)

If we mix coarse jesting or off-color humor into our conversation it is like pouring a little bit of garbage into the fine china. Nobody has a use for it, once it is contaminated. Those who wallow in the trash really have no use for fine china anyways. A cup of china is not really even good to scoop trash. Ezekiel compares the believer to the wood of a grapevine. It only has one purpose. It is not strong enough to construct a home; or make a peg to hang something up. It is not even good fire wood. It is only useful to grow grapes.

...how is the wood of the vine better than any wood of a branch which is among the trees of the forest? ³Can wood be taken from it to make ¹⁹anything, or can men take a peg from it on which to hang any vessel? ⁴If it has been put into the fire for fuel, and the fire has consumed both of its ends and its middle part has been charred, is it then useful for ¹⁹anything? ⁵Behold, while it is intact, it is not made into ¹⁹anything. (Ezekiel 15:2-5)

The redeeming thing about a container is that it can be cleaned; and used for other uses. We all make poor decisions. We do not have to live like a fool our whole life; just because we have done foolish things. God's word washes us.

Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, ²⁶so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷that He might present to Himself the church ¹⁹in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. (Ephesians 5:25-27)

Some believers speak the truth in a way that produces resentment. Don't serve steak on a garbage can lid. Be humble and gentle.