

The Book of 2 Timothy
Lesson 3 - 2 Timothy 2:14-26
Prescription for a Healthy Church
“A Workman Approved”

Timothy was being attacked by false teachers, just as the church is attacked today. What are we to do? First, remind the people to stick to essentials and not to argue about empty words and philosophies. Second, be sure to rightly divide the Word, being diligent to handle it carefully. “*Rightly divide*” implies “cutting through” the Word carefully, the way an engineer builds a highway. Paul warns that false doctrine “*spreads like a cancer,*” and that the only remedy is the “*solid foundation*” (sound doctrine) of the Word of God. When you start listening to the old fables or the false teachers, you may become spiritually sick. One lie can grow like a cancerous tumor and eat out the spiritual strength of the Christian or the local church. Every church should be a Bible school, where the Word of God is taught accurately.

Paul describes the local church as a house with a solid foundation and containing vessels of different kinds. The Old Testament Jews often put Bible verses on their houses, and it was not uncommon for Gentiles to write verses on their houses too. God’s house has two affirmations on it, one that is God-ward and one that is man-ward. God knows His own, and His own ought to be known to others by their godly lives. Each Christian is a vessel in the great house, but some vessels are defiled and cannot be used. Timothy is warned to cleanse himself from the dishonorable vessels, so he is not defiled. This is the biblical doctrine of separation. Believers should be set apart vessels unto God’s honor. Fleeing youthful lusts, and following that which is spiritual, would help Timothy be a prepared vessel that Christ could use for His glory. Verses 23–26 go on to explain how to deal with problems in God’s house so that there might not be strife and division.

Church members need to pray for their pastors and encourage them in the work of the Lord. Church leaders should faithfully do their work so that the pastors can devote themselves to their own ministry. Churches should provide enough financial support for the ministers so that they can fully devote themselves to the work of the ministry. In other words, ministers and members should labor together in the work of the Lord.

Read 2 Timothy 2:14-26 and answer the following questions.

1. According to 2:14, 16, 23, why should Christians avoid ignorant disputes and quarreling about words?

2. What does it mean to “rightly divide the word of truth”? (2:15)

3. According to the following verses, how should a Christian respond to foolish arguments?

2:15

2:16, 23

2:21-22

2:24-25

4. Why does Paul so strongly condemn the teaching of Hymenaeus and Philetus? Why is their teaching about the resurrection so dangerous? (See 1 Cor. 15:12-19).

5. Why is it often hard to be kind, patient, and gentle with quarrelsome people?

6. Even though foolish speaking leads to foolish teaching and immorality, what confidence can a Christian leader have? (2:19)

7. Why is it wise to flee “*youthful lusts*” (2:22) and to “*avoid foolish and ignorant disputes*” (2:23)? What is the difference anyway?

8. Paul not only tells us to flee from sin, but also to pursue righteousness. Practically speaking, how can you pursue righteousness this week with your words, your actions, and your attitudes?

9. What attitude does Paul want Timothy to have toward those that oppose him? (2:24-26)

10. Choose your favorite verse from 2:14-26. In what practical way can you apply this verse to your life?

Great Word on 2 Timothy 2:15 from Jon Courson

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. 2 Timothy 2:15

Over the years, I have observed that many people who love the Lord Jesus deeply are, nonetheless, embarrassed occasionally when unbelievers raise questions like the following: “How could a God of love order the extermination of the Canaanite civilization?” “How could a God of love mandate the slaughtering of bulls and goats and little lambs and pigeons for sacrifices?” “Why does the Bible set guidelines for slavery rather than abolishing it altogether?” On and on, questions come our way that cause some who love the Lord to feel embarrassed about parts

of the Bible. The problem isn't with the Bible. The problem is with our inability to rightly divide it. The Greek word for "divide" means to cut a straight line, to make an incision. In order to rightly divide the Word, we need to understand first of all that the Bible is not simply a book of theology, but rather a drama through which we see the unfolding of God's redemption of mankind.

Truly, there's a flow, a drama that unfolds throughout Scripture, which is not seen by those who simply focus on one section. That's why Paul said to Timothy, "Study." That's why we meet together regularly to study. And in so doing, we are able to say to the Jehovah's Witness, for example, that the 144,000 among which he numbers himself are part of a dispensation yet to come. And we are able to tell the Adventist that keeping the Sabbath in the "Age of Grace" is impossible if for no other reason than the fact that attending church on the Sabbath is in direct violation of the law that prohibits travel beyond one hundred yards.

An understanding of God's unfolding plan of redemption will cause one to read the Scriptures with an awareness of the scope and purpose of any given dispensation. However, one can rightly divide the Word and still miss the point if the Word of God doesn't divide him (Hebrews 4:12). That is, the Word of God must not only lodge in our minds—it must touch our hearts.

How can we know if the Word is touching our hearts? In Revelation 10:10, we read that when John ate of the scroll, signifying the Word, it was sweet to his mouth, but bitter to his belly. So, too, when I study theology, (the promise of heaven, the assurance of salvation, the doctrine of justification) I find them oh, so sweet. But I know the Word is truly accomplishing its work within me when, upon further contemplation, I find them bitter as I realize the plight of those around me who don't yet know Jesus. In other words, I know the Word is having its intended effect when it not only satisfies my spirit, but when it motivates my soul to ministry, to service, to prayer, and to love.

May we be those who, like a skilled surgeon, rightly divide the Word. And may we be those who, like a willing patient, allow the Word to divide us, and to make us more like Jesus.