



DILIGENT

Believers find truth and direction by studying God's Word.

2 TIMOTHY 2:14-26

Diligent. We use this word to describe a hardworking brick mason artfully stacking brick upon brick to frame a house. We see it in the sweat of a dutiful athlete who endures painstaking workouts to improve performance. Diligent is an adjective referring to conscientious and attentive devotion. We can also use the word to point to someone who refuses to give up. Paul reminded Timothy of the importance of remaining diligent as a follower of Christ.

Name some examples of diligence you see in the world. What are some ways in which diligence is needed in the Christian life?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

2 TIMOTHY 2:14-26

As Paul wrote this final epistle, his primary concern was for Timothy to remain solidly secure in his spiritual heritage. He also wanted his protégé to warn the Ephesian believers against the encroaching danger of false teachers. Finally, Paul addressed specific examples of opposition to the gospel.

While this section starting in verse 14 was predicated on the emphases of the previous passages, the point of view shifted abruptly. After focusing on Timothy's personal faith, Paul suddenly moved to how Timothy should deal with the church and the false teachers. The apostle pulled no punches when he attacked the forces arrayed against the church. Paul did not hesitate to name individuals who exemplified people who had abandoned him and the gospel.

Earlier in chapter two, Paul urged Timothy to invest himself in the lives of faithful men who, in turn, would disciple others in a cycle of spiritual reproduction. Part of that instruction was to warn these church leaders about the pseudo-gospel and then how to deal with the false teachers. Teaching requires being a good role model. As Timothy stood firm in his ministry of the Word, his charges witnessed the courage and faithfulness they should follow.

Paul's love for his son in the ministry led him to repeatedly offer pointed pleas for diligence. Timothy was to be conscientious in his handling of the Word and in his personal deportment. Not only did Timothy's ministry require his faithfulness, but the well-being of the church was also at stake. The vulnerable believers at Ephesus depended on their pastor to show the way to follow Christ and to protect them in the process. This section of the epistle helped to provide a strategic road map for the preacher and his people.

As you read 2 Timothy 2:14-26, notice the different words and phrases used to encourage Timothy to focus on God's truth. Why do you think Paul continually reminded Timothy to steer clear of verbal squabbles?



EXPLORE THE TEXT

TWO GROUPS (2 TIM. 2:14-19)

¹⁴ Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers. ¹⁵ Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. ¹⁶ But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, ¹⁷ and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, ¹⁸ who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some. ¹⁹ But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."

VERSE 14

The church at Ephesus faced internal conflict. False teachers were stirring strife and spreading heresy. Paul's admonition to Timothy to **remind** the church suggests that new ideas were not needed, but rather truths previously taught needed reinforcement in light of the challenges the church faced. **These things** included the fundamentals of the gospel laid out in previous verses. The warning **not to quarrel about words** was a necessary directive against bickering over non-essentials.

One of the catastrophic consequences of word wars is the precious time and energy it wastes on useless arguments. It is time taken away from weightier matters—sharing the gospel, teaching God's truth, building up believers, serving the helpless, and demonstrating the love of Christ.

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VERSE 15

Do your best carried the idea of meticulous urgency. In order to withstand antagonists and fortify believers, Timothy needed to give urgent devotion and maximum effort to communicate and live the

gospel. He was accountable to God and therefore must seek approval from Him rather than seek applause from others.

Paul challenged Timothy to be **a worker who has no need to be ashamed**. An ashamed worker was one who wasted time in useless arguments and embraced deceptive doctrines. Shame awaits those who neglect giving the best of their gifts and energy to glorify Christ and edify His church.

An approved worker **rightly** teaches **the word of truth**. The expression *rightly handling* is derived from a single Greek word that denotes the process of cutting a straight line on a garment or cutting a straight path through a forest. Accordingly, Paul wanted Timothy to deliver God's truth with forthright precision that cut through obstacles and made a straight line to the heart and mind of listeners.

VERSES 16-18

The corruptive influence of false teachers carried an alluring appeal. Timothy needed to be wise and watchful. He could not allow himself to be baited into conversations that were godless and void of edification. Such speech produced a downward spiral into excessive deception.

Paul warned that the teaching of the false teachers would **lead people into more and more ungodliness** and would **spread like gangrene**. The comparison of false teaching with gangrene was graphic because gangrene was usually a fatal infection in the body. The spread of deceptive teaching had a spiritually deadening effect.

•**Hymenaeus and Philetus** were two individuals promoting deadly doctrines in the church. Paul previously mentioned Hymenaeus as someone with a shipwrecked faith (1 Tim. 1:19-20). Apparently, this man had continued to wield a contaminating influence and his partner Philetus may have been equally deceptive.

The specific error of the false teachers was their claim that the **resurrection** had **already happened**. In essence, they misled believers into thinking that the issue of resurrection applied only to Christ and not to the future state of Christians. In doing so, they were **upsetting the faith of some**. This phrase should not be taken to mean that people were losing their salvation by this doctrinal confusion. Rather, the word picture Paul painted suggests the controversy was upsetting their understanding of the truth.



VERSE 19

In spite of opposition from false teachers who tried to demolish the bedrock of the gospel, Paul stated that **God's firm foundation stands**. Regardless of how furious the wind of heresy blew against the church, it could not shake God's plan.

God's solid foundation bears a two-part **seal**. The term *seal* denoted a seal of authenticity and ownership carved into something. The first part of the inscription, **The Lord knows those who are his**, recalls the words of Moses to Korah when Korah and his followers rebelled against Moses (Num. 16:4-5). God's punishment served as a reminder that He knows those who are true followers and those who are pretenders. Timothy could be encouraged by the reality that nothing escapes God's discernment.

True followers of Christ demonstrate genuine belief by right behavior.

The second part of the inscription points to human responsibility: **Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity**. This recalls a challenge of Isaiah to Israel (Isa. 52:11) as well as an exhortation from the psalmist (Ps. 34:14). True followers of Christ demonstrate genuine belief by right behavior. God's saving grace calls for a holy commitment from those who have been saved. The wickedness taught by Hymanaeus and Philetus had no place among to the people of God. Such false teaching ultimately leads to moral corruption.

How does faithfully studying the Bible help a believer avoid useless and false debates? Can a person know the difference between empty speech and edifying speech without studying the Bible? Explain.

TWO VESSELS (2 TIM. 2:20-22)

²⁰ Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. ²¹ Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy,

useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work. ²² So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

VERSES 20-21

To emphasize the importance of godliness, Paul employed a metaphor about two kinds of **vessels** in a house. Some of the vessels were made **of gold and silver**, while others were **wood and clay**. Each had a purpose, but **some for honorable use, some for dishonorable**. The distinction of **honorable** and **dishonorable** could simply refer to special versus ordinary uses. Yet Paul used a word for **honorable** that means “precious,” while the term translated **dishonorable** means “shameful.” His point was that within the house—a representation of the church—some people fulfill God’s purpose while others are not so faithful. Some believers honor Jesus by their behavior and belief, while others dishonor him by their lifestyle. Some magnify Jesus and others minimize Him.

Timothy could not have missed Paul’s point that Jesus desires an honorable and clean vessel for His purpose. An honorable servant for Jesus was marked by three traits. First, such a person was **set apart as holy**. This included separation from false teachers like Hymenaeus and Philetus. Second, an honorable servant was **useful to the master of the house**. God will not use people who cling to sin. Third, such a person would be **ready for every good work**. A prepared worker was one who was equipped and ready for anything God wanted to do through them.

VERSE 22

Flee and **pursue** were crucial imperatives for Timothy. Paul instructed him to run from **youthful passions** like a fugitive escaping capture. The wrong desires Timothy was urged to avoid were not limited to the sexual lusts of a young person. They included arrogance, self-indulgence, obsessive ambition, and a fixation on worldly pleasure.

Paul also directed Timothy to **pursue** four virtues. **Righteousness** indicated right conduct fueled by a right relationship with Christ. **Faith** referred to complete trust in Christ, while **love** signified Christlike affection for others. When believers love with godly love, they naturally experience **peace** with other believers.

Consequently, Timothy’s discipline of fleeing and pursuing would find welcome company in others **who call on the Lord from a**



pure heart. Fellowship with like-minded believers would help Timothy run from inappropriate passions and run toward holy virtues.

How are the ideas of “flee” and “pursue” in verse 22 connected? How does pursuing the things identified by Paul help a person flee ungodliness?

BIBLE SKILL: *Use a Bible concordance to find other uses of a word.*

Use a Bible concordance to identify the passages in which Paul used the word flee. Note the audience and the action from which he directed them to flee. What, if any, common traits do you find in the things Paul directed his readers to flee? What would a person need to pursue to counter what Paul called for them to flee in each passage?

TWO APPROACHES (2 TIM. 2:23-26)

23 Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. 24 And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, 25 correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, 26 and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

VERSES 23-26

Timothy needed to distinguish between unworthy arguments and edifying debates. Paul himself was a rigorous defender of truth and had already encouraged Timothy to guard the sacred deposit of truth (1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:14). Here, Paul was telling Timothy to **have nothing to do with** human speculation that undermined divine revelation.

Sanctification should never be jettisoned in favor of fabrication.

False teachers loved to instigate **quarrels**. Paul wanted Timothy to steer clear of their drama. Timothy needed to model three traits to minimize quarreling. First, he must be **kind to everyone**. It's easy to be gentle toward gentle people, but Timothy's challenge included gentleness toward the false teachers. Gentleness can sometimes defuse drama. It can often serve as a beckoning light, inviting confused seekers to come out of the darkness.

Second, Timothy must be **able to teach**. The term *teach* included more than knowledge of a subject. It specifically referred to an ability to effectively communicate knowledge in a manner that enhanced learning and understanding of God's truth.

Third, Timothy needed to be patient. Patience was necessary in a difficult environment, like Ephesus, where spiritual growth of new converts was hindered by controversy and heresy. Patience is not weakness. It is a strong fruit of the Spirit. (See Gal. 5:22.)

The purpose for **correcting his opponents** was the hope that God would **grant them repentance**. To embrace the truth, they needed to renounce heresy and agree with God's Word.

In addition, Paul wanted the opponents to **come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil**. The enemy sets his snares about unsuspecting people, taking them captive. Instead of following the Lord, they do the devil's **will**. Their hearts and minds are darkened, preventing them from seeing the truth. Believers are to present God's Word with love and kindness so unbelievers may escape Satan's snare.

What are the benefits of a kind and gentle approach to communicating the gospel message? How does this approach break down barriers?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Evangelism and Missions*

The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others (Gal. 5:6).



IN MY CONTEXT

- 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.

Identify some younger believers in your church you can mentor. How can you encourage them to make godly choices?

Discuss steps your Bible study group can take to avoid unedifying conversations. Create a set of guidelines based on the discussion.

What person do you regularly encounter who is antagonistic toward the gospel? What principles discovered in this study can you follow when approaching this person in the future?

Prayer Needs
