

Paul's Second Letter to Timothy – Lesson 5

2 Timothy 3:1-9

*People will be lovers of themselves,
lovers of money, boastful, proud...
lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.
2 Timothy 3:2-4*

In the first two chapters of Paul's Second letter to Timothy, we have seen that Paul encourages Timothy and challenges him to embrace his calling to serve Christ by serving the people of God—proclaiming the gospel, training disciples, and guarding the truth of the gospel teaching. Paul challenges Timothy to make this the focus and central purpose of his life. There is no higher calling than this.

As we consider Paul's challenge as it applies to us, we may have every good intention of making Christ the foremost priority of our lives, but we find that pursuing this calling is like sailing into headwinds. We live in a culture that may be suspicious of Christianity or even hostile toward Christianity. We have the best intentions, but we must take care to guard against the ungodly influences of our 21st century American culture.

1. Read 2 Timothy 3:1-5. ***The Gospel-focused life will face opposition***
 - a. Paul warns of terrible times for Christians in “the last days.” This term is used to refer to the entire period of time between Jesus' first coming and extending until His future promised return. Certainly Timothy was aware of this opposition as an ongoing reality in his day—after all, Paul was in prison and anticipating his imminent execution. But Paul's strong warning here in Chapter 3 speaks of continuing opposition and the corruption of false teachers *throughout the church age*. Why did Paul find it important to warn Timothy (and us) about unceasing ungodliness throughout future generations of the church?

b. Paul lists eighteen vices that will characterize the people of the age. As you read through this list, you'll notice that Paul reveals the things that motivate these ungodly people. They do not love God; what things do they love? (2 Tim. 3:2-5)

c. Read Matthew 22:36-40.

It is not sinful for people to seek to meet their needs, to maintain their health, and to enjoy happy experiences, but when we love the things *created* by God more than God Himself, then we do sin. We sin because we fail to love God as our first and foremost love. When we prioritize career or family or comfort or fitness over loving God and growing spiritually, then we have made a foolish choice.

The fourth-century theologian Augustine taught that the underlying cause of mankind's intractable discontent is "disordered loves." We love the less-important things and neglect the more-important things. Our priorities are out-of-order, and our decisions lead us astray.

We are coaxed by our culture to adopt the culture's priorities. Describe how the following elements of the culture may entice us to neglect our love for God and to neglect our spiritual growth.

i. Social media

ii. Movies and television

iii. Corporate workplace

- d. **For Personal Application:** Consider how the values promoted by our culture differ from the values we hope to cultivate in our families. Identify several problem areas that may be impacting your family. There is a great deal we cannot control in this area, but are there things that you can control? What are your thoughts?

2. Read 2 Timothy 3:6-9 ***False teachers who oppose the gospel will fail***

Paul refers to “Jannes and Jambres” as examples of enemies of the gospel. Although these names are not found elsewhere in Scripture, Jewish tradition teaches that these were among the opponents mentioned in Exodus 7:11—magicians who stood against Moses and Aaron when Moses appeared before Pharaoh. Just as these magicians were unable to counterfeit the power of God; even so, false teachers will not prevail against the true gospel.

How would this implicit comparison of Timothy (in the first century) with Moses (in the 14 century B.C.) be a source of encouragement to Timothy? How does it affirm the plan and purpose of God?

3. **For Personal Application:** We all develop habits of life that serve to help us accomplish our goals. For instance:
- a. I brush my teeth every morning and every evening
 - b. I plan meals for my family each day and every week
 - c. I follow the workout routine that best suits my daily routine
 - d. I go to church every Sunday to offer worship to our Lord

What new habits of life could you develop that would serve to deepen your love for God?

What new habits of life could you develop that would help you to guard yourself and your family against the ungodly pressures of the culture?

My Prayer:

*Father, help me reorder my priorities.
Show me how I can invest more richly in my relationship with You.
Give me a fresh awareness of Your glory and goodness.*