



A LIFE WORTHY OF IMITATION

BIG IDEA: In an increasingly secular world, we are to stay true to God's Word and set an example worthy of imitation.

DATE: Wednesday, November 12 and Sunday, November 16, 2025

SCRIPTURE: 2 Timothy 3:1-5; 10-17

OPENING QUESTION

Who do you know who practiced what they preached? *What about someone who didn't? What effect did that have on you and your faith?*

SETTING THE STAGE

The apostle Paul has called on believers to be a "vessel for honor" for Christ, pursuing "righteousness, faith, love, [and] peace" (2:22). He will now describe the situation that occurs when people *do not* seek to be such vessels for honor. In particular, he will speak about the evil that will fill the world during the end times, when people are boastful and malignant, corrupting everything they encounter. Paul states that an attitude will arise in which people view themselves as having a form of godliness... but they will have no power from God. Paul calls for Timothy to be different. He is to stand apart from the world and stand up for what he believes. Just as the false teachers that Paul identifies were to be recognized and understood and the way they lived, so true believers in Christ are to be recognized and understood by the way they live. Doctrine should translate into everyday conduct.

It has been said that in Christian ministry, if you communicate from your head, you might change someone's mind. If you communicate from your heart, you might change someone's attitude. But if you communicate from your *life*, you might change someone's life. This is Paul's message to Timothy... and to us. He reveals what happens when we communicate to others based on the way we live our lives.

It is interesting that Paul says to Timothy, "You have carefully followed my doctrine" (3:10). In this context, *followed* can refer to walking alongside someone or following in someone's footsteps, but it can also refer to imitating the spiritual example of someone. Paul is saying to Timothy, "You watched me and saw how I lived. You know who I am because I've been vulnerable with you. Now follow my example... and be an example to someone else."

STUDY THE BIBLE

2 Timothy 3:1-5; 10-17 (NLT)

You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. ² For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God,

disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. ³ They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good. ⁴ They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. ⁵ They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that!

¹⁰ But you, Timothy, certainly know what I teach, and how I live, and what my purpose in life is. You know my faith, my patience, my love, and my endurance. ¹¹ You know how much persecution and suffering I have endured. You know all about how I was persecuted in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra—but the Lord rescued me from all of it. ¹² Yes, and everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. ¹³ But evil people and impostors will flourish. They will deceive others and will themselves be deceived.

¹⁴ But you must remain faithful to the things you have been taught. You know they are true, for you know you can trust those who taught you. ¹⁵ You have been taught the holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. ¹⁷ God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.

DISCUSSION

TURN AWAY FROM THE FALSE

READ: 2 Timothy 3:1-5

Paul opens by putting the moral decay that is at work in the world into perspective. What does Paul say that people will be like in the last days? Why might this actually give Timothy *hope* when he encounters people who do evil?

How do you see these verses playing out in our current culture?

The types of people Paul includes have one thing in common – *godless self-centeredness*. What was Paul's advice to Timothy concerning these dangerous people?

ASK: How can you live *in* the culture but not *of* the culture?

On the board write God, People, Things as seen below and then fill in the columns as you go through the **explanation* below.

GOD	PEOPLE	THINGS	
worship	love	use	= correct order; beautiful God honoring life
ignore	use	love	= worship self; godless self-centeredness; miserable life

***EXPLAIN:** In our world there is God, and there are people and things. We are to worship God, love people, and use things. But if we start worshipping ourselves, we will ignore God and start loving things and using people. This is the formula for a miserable life; yet it characterizes many people today. The worldwide craving for *things* is just one evidence that people's hearts have turned away from God. Of course, if someone loves and worships himself, the result will be *pride*. Man became his own god!

FOLLOW THOSE WHO ARE TRUE

READ: 2 Timothy 3:10-13

Paul had suffered much persecution in his work of spreading the gospel, yet the Lord never abandoned him. What was the most important thing the apostle wanted Timothy to take away from the many persecutions that Paul had endured?

SHARE: From the commentary below share about the qualities needed in a pastor worthy of our following. This is especially important given our search for a new Senior Pastor.

Paul's words in this passage echo those of Jesus to His own followers, "If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20). If we follow Paul's example and work to live a godly life in Christ Jesus, what can we also expect?

It is rare for American Christians to be truly persecuted for our faith as we see in countries where it is illegal to worship God. But we may be treated differently. **ASK:** Have you ever been treated differently because of your Christian beliefs?

CONTINUE IN GOD'S WORD

READ: 2 Timothy 3:14-17

Paul stresses that the false teachers continue in their downward trajectory, so Timothy must continue to grow upward in his faith. Why does Paul say Timothy is able to remain confident in the things he has been taught?

Paul states Scripture is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction (NIV). *Doctrine* is teaching, *reproof* is conviction, *correction* is setting someone straight, and *instruction* (as Paul uses the term here) refers to training in spiritual matters. If believers embrace all four aspects of Scripture, what will be the result?

LEADERS: Share about a time that Scripture did one of the above for you – teaching, correct, reproof, or instruct. Ask your group which Scriptures have done that for them and how it played out. How has Scripture equipped you for every good work?

IN SUMMARY: Paul offers Timothy a snapshot of the kinds of people there will be in the end times. He urges Timothy to consider the way people live and avoid those whose lives aren't worthy of imitation. In contrast, Paul offers his own life as a model Timothy should follow, because he worked hard to provide people with a living example of what it meant to follow Christ. Paul urges Timothy to hold fast to everything he has been taught and shown – especially the Word of God.

RESPONSE

What would happen if a young Christian followed the example *you* have set in your life? What changes need to be made in order for you to be able to say with confidence, as Paul did, "Follow my example."

Excerpted from "*1 & 2 Timothy & Titus: The Way to Live and Lead for Christ*" by Dr. David Jeremiah. Peachtree Publishing Services: Copyright 2020.

COMMENTARY

TURN AWAY FROM THE FALSE (vv. 1-5)

A faithful believer should have nothing to do with the people described in this section. It is important to note that these people operate *under the guise of religion*: "Having a form of

godliness but denying the power thereof' (2 Tim. 3:5). They are "religious" but rebellious! Paul discussed some characteristics of these people.

At least eighteen different characteristics are listed here, and Paul probably could have listed more. There is an emphasis on love. The heart of every problem is a problem in the heart. God commands us to love Him supremely; we will not love God or our neighbors.

"Disobedient to parents" suggests that this apostasy reaches into the family. Children are "unthankful" and do not appreciate what their parents have done for them. They are "unholy" in their attitude toward their parents. "Honor thy father and thy mother" is not widely taught or respected.

In the place of natural love that God has put into men and women and families, today we have a good deal of unnatural love which God has condemned. It is confusion, and God will judge it.

Not only in homes, but out in society and the business world, the characteristics of these perilous times may be seen. Some translations use the term "trucebreakers" in verse 3 and this describes people who will not try to agree. They are unyielding and irreconcilable and must have their own way. To defend their position, they become "slanderers" and try to tear down the reputation of others. Unfortunately, some of this activity goes on even among professed Christians.

He goes on to say they are without self-control and when these people cannot have their way, they become much like savage beasts. Instead of honoring what is good, they despise what is good and honor what is evil. In society today the standards of right and wrong have been twisted, if not destroyed.

Paul stated that these people he has just described would consider themselves religious! "Having a form of godliness" (2 Tim. 3:5) suggests an outward appearance of religion, but true Christian faith; for they have never experienced the power of God in their lives. Form without force. Religion without reality.

FOLLOW THOSE WHO ARE TRUE (vv. 10-13)

Paul turned from the false leaders to remind Timothy that he (Paul) had been a faithful servant of God. It is important in these difficult days that we follow the right spiritual leaders. What are their characteristics?

Their lives are open for all to see – Paul had nothing to hide. Timothy had lived and labored with Paul and knew the man well. Paul had not hidden behind extravagant claims or religious propaganda.

They teach true doctrine – No matter how appealing a preacher may be, if he does not preach the truth of God's Word, he does not deserve our support. On TV and online today, we have a great deal of "pseudo-Christianity" which is a mixture of psychology, success motivation, and personality cults, with a little bit of Bible thrown in to make it look religious. Beware!

They practice what they preach – Paul's "manner of life" backed up his messages. He did not preach sacrifice and live in luxury. He gave to others far more than he received from them. He stood up for the truth even when it meant losing friends and, in the end, losing his life. Paul was a servant, not a celebrity.

Their purpose is to glorify God – There was never a question about Paul's purpose in ministry: He wanted to do God's will and finish the work God gave him to do. Paul was a man of faith who trusted God to meet his needs. HE was a man of long-suffering who bore up under people's attacks. He was a man of love who willingly gave himself to serve others.

They are willing to suffer – Paul did not ask others to suffer for him; *he suffered for others*. The fact that he was persecuted from city to city was proof that he was living a godly life. Some people today have the idea that godliness means *escaping* persecution, when just the opposite is true.

CONTINUE IN GOD'S WORD (vv. 14-17)

The only way to defeat Satan's lies is with God's truth. Evil men and deceivers are going to get worse and worse. They will deceive more and more. Why? Because they are being deceived by Satan! In these last days, there will be more deception and imitation; and the only way a believer will be able to tell the true from the false is by knowing the Word of God.

Timothy had been taught the Word of God from the time he was a child. Timothy's grandmother and mother had faithfully taught him the Old Testament Scriptures. Timothy was to continue in what he had been taught. We never outgrow the Word of God.

In this next paragraph, Paul made some important statements about the Scriptures:

They are Holy – The word for holy means consecrated for sacred use. The Bible is different from every other book – even books about the Bible – because it has been set apart by God for special sacred uses. We must treat the Bible as the special book it is. The way we treat the Bible shows others how much or how little we respect it.

They lead us to salvation – We are not saved by believing the Bible, but by trusting the Christ who is revealed in the Bible. The Bible reveals our need for salvation. It is a mirror that shows us how filthy we are in God's sight. The Bible explains that every lost sinner is condemned now and needs a Savior now. It also makes it clear that lost sinner cannot save himself. But the Bible also reveals the wonderful plan of salvation. Christ died for our sins! If we trust Him, He will save us. The Bible also helps give us the assurance of our salvation. Then the Bible becomes our spiritual food to nourish us that we might grow in grace and serve Christ. It is our sword for fighting Satan and overcoming temptation.

They are true and dependable – It is inconceivable that God would give His people a book they could not trust. He is the God of truth; Jesus is "the truth"; and the "Spirit is truth."

The Scriptures are profitable - for *doctrine* (what is right), for *reproof* (what is not right), for *correction* (how to get right), and for *instruction in righteousness* (how to stay right). A Christian who studies the Bible and applies what he learns will grow in holiness and avoid many pitfalls in this world.

They equip us for service – The Word of God furnishes and equips a believer so that he can live a life that pleases God and do the work God wants him to do. The better we know the Word, the better we are able to live and work for God. The purpose of Bible study is not just to understand doctrines or to be able to defend the faith. The ultimate purpose is the equipping of the believers who read it. It is the Word of God that equips God's people to do the work of God.

The times are not going to get better, but we Christians can become better people, even in bad times. We must separate ourselves from that which is false, devote ourselves to that which is true, and continue in our study of the Word of God. Then God can equip us for the ministry in these difficult days, and we will have the joy of seeing others come to a knowledge of truth.

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