

LEAD! C.5 Studying Scripture

boIn Which Diligently Searching God's Word Leads Us to Truth

Few disciplines are as essential -- or as dangerous! -- as studying the words and works of God. Used in the [wrong spirit](#), theology can become a heavy burden or a useless distraction (cf. [Matthew 23:4](#)). But when taught by the [Holy Spirit](#), [God's word](#) becomes the very source of [life](#) itself (cf. [Luke 4:4](#)). The [challenge](#) to us, as to Timothy, is whether we will apply God's word *rightly*...

Memory Verse: *"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](#) (NKJV)

Assigned Reading

1. [Richard Foster](#): [Celebration of Discipline](#)
 - 5. Study
2. [Donald Whitney](#): [Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life](#)
 - 2. Bible Intake (Part I)
3. [Eugene Peterson](#): [A Long Obedience in the Same Direction](#)
 - 6. Help: "Oh, Blessed Be God! He Didn't Go Off & Leave Us!"
4. [Ruth Haley Barton](#): [Sacred Rhythms](#)
 - 3. Scripture: Encountering God Through Lectio Divina

Anecdote

Read [2 Kings 22-23](#). How does reading the Book of the Covenant impact the nation?

Bible

[2 Timothy 2](#)

In the [previous chapter](#), Paul recounted the faithfulness of many people Timothy has known, and now urges Timothy to build on their example:

[2:1](#) You therefore, my [son](#), be [strong](#) in the [grace](#) that is in Christ Jesus.

In particular, he charges Timothy to ensure that Paul's teaching about Jesus will continue to be passed along:

[2](#) And the things that you have heard from me among many [witnesses](#), [commit](#) these to [faithful](#) men who will be able to [teach](#) others also.

As we noted at the [very beginning](#) of this course, the reason we have (and trust) Scripture is because of the faithful men and women who endured so much to bring us God's word. [C.1]

Which is why we -- like Timothy -- have an obligation to do the same:

[3](#) You therefore must [endure hardship](#) as a good [soldier](#) of Jesus Christ.

Paul elaborates on this mandate using illustrations from three different professions:

⁴ No one engaged in [warfare](#) entangles himself with the [affairs](#) of this life, that he may [please](#) him who enlisted him as a soldier.

⁵ And also if anyone [competes](#) in athletics, he is not [crowned](#) unless he competes according to the [rules](#).

⁶ The [hardworking farmer](#) must be first to [partake](#) of the crops.

Effectively transmitting the word of God requires focus, obedience, and hard work -- but the payoff is pleasing our Commanding Officer, receiving an eternal crown, and sharing in the resulting harvest.

This is no small matter, which is why Paul urges Timothy to carefully think it through [C.2]:

⁷ [Consider](#) what I say, and may the Lord give you [understanding](#) in all things.

Particularly in light of what Jesus -- as well as Paul himself -- has gone through:

⁸ Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my [gospel](#), ⁹ for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, [even] to the point of [chains](#); but the [word](#) of God is not chained. ¹⁰ Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the [elect](#), that they also may obtain the [salvation](#) which is in Christ Jesus with [eternal glory](#).

Paul doesn't mind his own suffering and captivity if God's word is glorified as a result, and His gospel is unleashed to bring salvation to everyone who is called ([eklektos](#), "elect").

He appears to employ a creed-like quotation to emphasize these points:

¹¹ [This is] a faithful saying:

- For if we [died with](#) [Him], We shall also [live with](#) [Him].
- ¹² If we [endure](#), We shall also [reign with](#) [Him].
- If we [deny](#) [Him], He also will deny us.
- ¹³ If we are [faithless](#), He remains [faithful](#); He cannot deny Himself.

Note the contrast between the consequences of explicit denial versus those for mere faithlessness; God understands our weakness, but will not tolerate our rejection. [C.3]

Of course, better to avoid both types of failure and remain faithful to the charge the Lord has laid upon us:

¹⁴ Remind [them] of these things, charging [them] before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers.

This is a sober warning for those engaged in the task of study, as we are. Not all words are profitable: we must continually bear in mind both the purpose of study and the price Christ paid to bring us God's "logos", lest we create more harm than good.

Which requires unceasing diligence on our part:

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

Note that the focus here is *not* on policing others, but on having a care for our own souls. The key is to remember who our Commander is, and seek to honor Him in all our efforts. This requires immersing ourselves in the whole word of God so that we understand and serve His purpose. [C.4]

Which is essential in order to avoid dangerous digressions:

¹⁶ But shun profane [and] idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. ¹⁷ And their message will spread like cancer.

This is an excellent test of our theology: regardless of how popular or unpopular it is, does it simply create ungodly disputes, or does it promote the formation of godly character? [C.5]

To be sure, an even more foundational test is whether our teaching promotes belief in the truth:

Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, ¹⁸ who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.

At times like this, it is good to remember that The One who is the Truth, the Way, and the Life (cf. John 14:6) can never be overthrown:

¹⁹ Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

Though the Lord has chosen us, we still have an obligation to purify ourselves:

²⁰ But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. ²¹ Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.

Which involves both avoiding sin and cultivating virtue -- in community:

22 [Flee](#) also youthful lusts; but [pursue](#) righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

We must be extremely careful in our choice of friends. It is good to partner with those who are zealous for the Lord -- provided their zeal does not lead to argumentativeness:

23 But avoid foolish and ignorant [disputes](#), knowing that they generate [strife](#).

For true godliness is not puffed up and eager to prove others wrong (cf. [1 Corinthians 8:1](#)), but meek:

24 And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be [gentle](#) to all, able to [teach](#), [patient](#),

Remember, our goal is not to win theological disputes, but to serve others in all humility so that they -- by God's Spirit -- may come to embrace His truth: [C.6]

25 in [humility](#) correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them [repentance](#), so that they may [know](#) the truth,

Because we wrestle not against flesh and blood (cf. [Ephesians 6:12](#)), but the schemes of the evil one:

26 and [that] they may come to their senses [and] [escape] the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to [do] his will.

Are we willing to endure whatever is necessary to liberate those who oppose us?

Conversation

1. Who are the spiritual ancestors that trained the teachers you learned from?
2. What price will you pay in order to understand and pass on God's word?
3. How might denying God differ from merely being faithless?
4. Based on our previous lessons, what would you say is -- or at least should be -- the purpose of Bible study?
5. Have you ever gotten bogged down in profitless theological disputes? Why?
6. When has someone helped you see the error of your ways? How did they do it?

Decision

- Repentance: Where are you prone to profane and idle babbling?
- Action: When will you consistently "pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord"?
- Worship: Reflect on the price Christ paid to bring His Word to us.

Explore More

- [Word – International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#)
- [Daily Devotional Reading About Knowledge and Pride – Knowledge Puffs Up – Daily Devotional](#)
- [How to Study the Bible – The Navigators](#)
- [You Have Heard It Said | Christianity Today | A Magazine of Evangelical Conviction](#)
- [YouTube – Humorous Illustrations: God's Word, Our Food](#)

For Next Week

For next week, read [2 Corinthians 8](#). Why, and how, should we give?

Memory Verse: *"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich."* -- [2 Corinthians 8:9](#) (NKJV)

References

1. **Blue Letter Bible.** "[2 Timothy 2](#) – New King James Version." Blue Letter Bible. 1996–2009. 27 Mar 2009. < <http://www.blueletterbible.org/Bible.cfm?t=NKJV&b=2Ti&c=2> >
2. **[New King James Version](#) (NKJV)** Copyright © 1982 by [Thomas Nelson, Inc.](#)

