

Main Idea: According to 2 Timothy 2:14-19, we learn that a leader is a workman, and a workman has three vital responsibilities.

- I. A workman is responsible for his people (14).
 - A. We are to remind.
 - B. We are to warn.
- II. A workman is responsible for himself (15).
 - A. Make sure you are pleasing God.
 - B. Make sure you are handling God’s Word correctly.
- III. A workman is responsible for his message (16-19).
 - A. We must avoid certain subjects (16-18).
 1. They produce ungodliness.
 2. They spread.
 3. They turn from the truth.
 - B. We must build on God’s solid foundation (19).
 1. We focus first on the Lord’s sovereignty.
 2. We focus next on the need for personal holiness.

Take Inventory: Some questions for every workman to ponder...

1. What do you need to do with your people this week?
2. What do you need to do personally this week?
3. What do you need to do with your message this week?

Scripture Reading: 2 Timothy 2:1-2, 14-19

This morning we turn our attention once again to 2 Timothy 2. What a critical chapter for those seeking to influence people for Christ in a hostile world!

Paul was in prison in Rome, awaiting his execution. He writes this Holy Spirit inspired letter to his spiritual son Timothy who was providing leadership for the church in Ephesus. What was on Paul’s mind as he thought of leaving this life?

His own discomfort? No. Personal regrets? No.

He thought of one thing. What will happen to the gospel of Jesus Christ after I’m gone? Who will take the baton and pass it on? He thought of Timothy, and people like him.

Timothy, God has called you to be a leader, a pace-setter for the passing on of the gospel.

Parents, this is your task. Grandparents too. Camp counselors. Deacons. Sunday School teachers. And those who one day will be.

What’s involved in being God’s kind of influencer? In chapter 2, Paul gives Timothy, and us, seven images/metaphors of a leader. A leader, a gospel minister, and by application, a parent, a Sunday School teacher, a counselor, must see himself or herself as a:

1. Teacher (1-2)
2. Soldier (3-4)
3. Athlete (5)
4. Farmer (6)

**Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

5. Workman (15)
6. Vessel (21)
7. Servant (24)

Today we come to the fifth, a *workman*. A gospel minister must be a workman. Verse 15 “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a *workman* who does not need to be ashamed.”

A leader/minister is a workman.

This points to a basic reality. Ministry is work, hard work. So a minister must see himself as a workman.

Granted, we preach salvation by the grace of God, not the works of men. But God’s gracious salvation, once received, produces men’s works. If it doesn’t, the salvation isn’t genuine, no matter how many tears were shed.

There’s no getting around it. Jesus told us to pray to the Lord of the harvest that He would “send forth LABORERS into His harvest (Matt 9:38).” Not spectators. Not talkers. Laborers. Workers.

What’s involved in this work called the gospel ministry?

Our culture defines a “minister” as a professional clergyman. Yes, the New Testament does teach that God gifts certain men to minister as leaders in His Church (Ephesians 4:11, pastor/teachers, evangelists, missionaries). They are ministers.

But listen. Every follower of Jesus Christ is called to minister. God has a plan for each of His children. Some will minister for Him in the factory, others in the schools, etc. Though Paul’s specific instructions in 2 Timothy are for Timothy, who was an apostolic associate and leader of the pastors of the church in Ephesus (whose qualifications are in 1 Timothy 3), there is application here for all of us, regardless of what our specific ministry is.

And today we’re going to learn that, according to 2 Timothy 2:14-19, a leader is a workman, and a workman has three vital responsibilities. You’ll see the three responsibilities by noting the three commands Paul gives to Timothy.

1. Keep reminding them (14).. So a workman is responsible for *his people*.
2. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved (15). So a workman is responsible *for himself*.
3. Avoid (16). Thus, a workman is responsible for *his message*.

I. A workman is responsible for his people (14).

Verse 14 “Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen.”

Timothy, you have an obligation to your people.

Q: What was that obligation? It involves a two-fold task.

A. We are to remind.

B. We are to warn.

V 14 "Put them in remembrance"

= bring up, remind; the verb is a present imperative--"keep reminding!"
That's interesting. Paul already told Tim twice that HE HIMSELF was to remember (1:6 Remember your calling; 2:8 Remember Jesus Christ). Now the gospel general tells his assistant he had the same responsibility. Remind people Timothy!

Q: Of what? V 14 "Of these things put them in remembrance..."

Q: What things?

A: Ultimately, the truths of the gospel message (V 2 "...the things you have heard from me."). Specifically, our responsibilities as followers of Christ (vv 11-13).

That was Timothy's obligation. "Remind them Timothy!"

Key: Listen. Here's one of the great keys for successful Christian living. We need continually to be reminded of truth we've already heard and already know. We need to hear it over and over again. Why? Because the Christian life isn't lived solely up here (in our heads), but our here (in our lives). We need to be constantly reminded of truth we already know. So we can evaluate and re-evaluate our conduct.

Illust: Listening to a SS teacher--"Oh, I already heard that story..."

Case in point. All of us know that the improper use of our tongue is wrong, don't we? But notice one area Paul specifically told Tim to keep reinforcing for his people. V 14 "charging them ...strive not about words..."

Do you know what the people in the church at Ephesus loved to do? The same thing people in all churches are prone to do! Argue about trivial matters. Get caught up debating frivolous issues.

I learned about the leader's challenge when I was in college at Cedarville and given the privilege to lead a gospel team called the "Swordbearers." We would travel on the weekends to minister in churches. So we had to decide what to wear, and we had two outfits from which to choose. "Should we wear the blue coat and the gray pants, or the tweed coat and the brown pants?"

You can generate a lot of discussion about that important question. But of course, at the end of the discussion, it doesn't really matter. As in the case of so many issues that could occupy our conversations in the church.

Just minister! That's why we're here.

Illust:

What was Tim to do?

"charge them" = affirm solemnly

"before God"--Remind them God has given us too serious a task to become sidetracked by words that what? Two things:

1. "no profit"= useless
2. "subvert hearers"= overthrow

I like how the NASB translates this phrase--Timothy charge them "not to wrangle about words." I wonder what Paul had in mind. What kind of words were the Christians in Ephesus wrangling about? (see I Tm 1:3-7)

Listen. Paul told Tim it was his responsibility as a leader to remind God's people, to charge God's people to major on major issues, not minor.

Our commission from Jesus Christ is clear. We are to reach out and rescue lost people. We are to disciple them.

Problem: Trivial matters can keep us from seeing the big picture (see verse 23). And what is trivial? The things on which the Bible is silent.

Illust:

Tran: There's the first critical obligation a leader/minister has--to His people.

II. A workman is responsible for himself (15).

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”

V 15 "Study to show thyself approved unto God..."

"thyself"--an emphatic pronoun

Timothy, you have an obligation to your people, but never forget this. You have a prior responsibility. To yourself. Top Priority.

I Tim 4:16 " Take heed to yourself and unto the doctrine"

Observation: I am finding that if I am to be used by God, I must devote more and more time and effort to preparing MYSELF and well as my message. That goes for every minister, every SS teacher, etc. Prepare yourself, as well as your doctrine.

Q: What was Tim's personal obligation?

A: Let's look at the words carefully...

"study" = actually "study" is a poor word; "to make haste, to be diligent"

II Tim 4:9 "Do your diligence..."

Tit 3:12 "Be diligent to come to me..."

Eph 4:3 "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit"

I Th 2:17 "We...endeavored the more abundantly to see your face."

The word translated "study" actually means "to be zealous, take pains, to make every effort to do something."

Q: What was Tim to do? What was his personal obligation?

A: V 15 As a workman, he was to pour every ounce of energy into 2 objectives.

1. Approval--The Approval of the Person of God
2. Accuracy--The Accurate Handling of the Word of God

A. Make sure you are pleasing God.

The Approval of the Person of God

V 15 "Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman...not ashamed"

"workman"--used of agricultural laborers and craftsmen

A minister of the gospel is a workman. Listen. Ministry is hard work.

Painstaking. If you are a lazy person, don't get involved in ministry. Too many have and caused great discredit to our King!

But if you are involved in ministry, who is it you're aiming to please? The people to whom you minister? Notice the One that Paul told Tim to please?

"approved unto God"--Our goal is to please God, not men. The word "approved" means "tested" (used of testing precious metals). In construction projects the word was used for a stone which was "fit" and suitable to be included in the building. A stone with a flaw in it was marked and set aside--"unapproved, tested and found wanting."

NASB "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman"

NIV "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved."

Q: How do we please God? What type of minister obtains God's approval?

B. Make sure you are handling God's Word correctly.

The Accurate Handling of the Word of God

V 15 "rightly dividing the word of truth"

"rightly divide"--rare greek verb; lit. means "to cut rightly; to cut straight" Many pictures could illustrate this. The greeks used the word for driving a straight road across country. When a farmer ploughs his field, he aims to make a straight furrow across his field. When a stone mason shapes a stone, he cuts it so it will fit exactly into the spot it's needed.

What type of minister gains God's approval? The one who "cuts it straight" when he handles the Word of God. NASB, "handling accurately the Word of God."

Application: One of the things that grieves me greatly is this. There is much flipant, careless handling of the Word of God today in churches, even in churches that claim to be Bible-believing, Bible-teaching churches. By pastors, SS teachers, etc.

Q: Why is that? Often it boils down to this. Shallow preparation. Flipant teaching is often the result of flipant preparation.

Illust: (John Stott, "Between Two Worlds") Billy Graham was speaking to a group of pastors in England and acknowledged if he had his ministry to do all over again, he'd do 2 things differently. One, spend more time studying and less time preaching. Two, spend more time praying.

Illust: The well known pastor and Bible teacher from a generation ago, Donald Grey Barnhouse, once said, "If I was going to have only 3 years in which to minister, I'd study and prepare for 2 of them."

It doesn't matter whether you're teaching 2 people in a rest home, or 10 in a SS class, or 200 in a worship service, v 15 applies to you. And here's what it says, "Be accurate in the way you handle the Word of God."

How many hours should you spend in preparation for your teaching ministry? It will vary from person to person. But spend as many hours as it takes so you can accurately handle God's precious Word!

Q: Is it worth it? It is if your aim is to receive God's approval!

Illust:

Back in 1803 John Burton, a Baptist layman who lived in Nottingham, England, wrote several hymns. Including this one, *Holy Bible, Book Divine*. Great words.

*Holy Bible, Book divine,
Precious treasure, thou art mine;
Mine to tell me whence I came;
Mine to teach me what I am.*

*Mine to chide me when I rove;
Mine to show a Savior's love;
Mine thou art to guide and guard;
Mine to punish or reward.*

*Mine to comfort in distress;
Suffering in this wilderness;
Mine to show, by living faith,
Man can triumph over death.*

*Mine to tell of joys to come,
And the rebel sinner's doom;
O thou holy Book divine,
Precious treasure, thou art mine.*

What does God expect of a leader/minister? As a workman, a minister has an obligation to his people, to himself, and...

III. A workman is responsible for his message (16-19).

This is a two-sided assignment. We must avoid (16-18). We must build (19).

A. We must avoid certain subjects (16-18).

“Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some.”

1. *They produce ungodliness.*
2. *They spread.*
3. *They turn from the truth.*

Here's the third imperative verb. Tim was to...

V 16 "But shun profane and vain babblings..."

Remember the setting. Tim is serving in the church at Ephesus. He was the leader of the church. And once more Paul reminds him of his obligation to his message. "Timothy, avoid teaching certain things!" I think the command also implies that Tim was to make sure others in teaching positions in the church did likewise.

Q: What things are to be left out of our message as ministers?

A: "profane and vain babblings" = empty talk

NASB "But avoid worldly and empty chatter."

Objection: What's the big deal about what we teach?

Key: Teaching affects living. What we teach influences how people live.

V 16 "...for they will increase unto more ungodliness"

Example: Vv 17-18

V 17 "...Hymenaeus and Philetus"

Who were they? Deacons? Lay-teachers? Youth workers? We don't know. We do know that Hymenaeus had caused problems before (see I Tim 1:20). We don't know who they were, but we do know what they were like...

"gangrene"

Q: What was their problem?

A: The problem was with their message. They did not handle God's Word correctly.

V 18 "Who concerning the truth have erred..."

The good workman cuts it straight when he teaches the Bible. What does the bad workman do?

"errs"--Paul took a word used in archery. It means "to miss the mark" (like the archer who launches his arrow and misses the target).

Watch this. The Word of truth is a target. Every time you teach God's Word, you either hit the target or miss it. The problem with Hymenaeus and Philetus was that they missed it! They deviated.

How? They taught "saying the resurrection is past already." They bought into a popular greek idea of their day that said the body is evil, and the soul is all that matters to God. They apparently taught that the only resurrection Christians would experience is what happened at their conversion and baptism.

You may be thinking, "What's the big deal? That doesn't sound so flagrant to me..." The big deal is that what they taught was NOT true! It may have been a message taught by the philosophers of the day, but it deviated from the message of God's Word! The key doctrine of Christianity is the bodily resurrection (see I Cor 15).

But that wasn't all. Look what else happened because they taught error.
V 18 "and have overthrown the faith of some"

James 3:1 "Be not many teachers, knowing we shall receive greater judgment"

To encourage Tim, Paul reminded him of 2 great truths in v 19. Just because men like Hymenaeus and Philetus were causing great defection, Tim mustn't lose heart.

Application: Every person involved in the ministry of this church has an obligation to his/her message. Be accurate in the message you pass on. That obviously goes for teachers. Awana workers. The same test holds for those in music ministries. When you select songs to sing for ministry in music, remember you are involved in teaching. Make sure the lyrics do 2 things--Exalt Jesus Christ, and communicate biblical truth accurately.

B. We must build on God's solid foundation (19).

"Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness."

- 1. We focus first on the Lord's sovereignty.*
- 2. We focus next on the need for personal holiness.*

V 19 "Nevertheless the foundation of God stands..." (refer to Korah's rebel, Num 16)

Here's the foundation of Christianity:

1. The Lord knows His people.--Personal Relationship with God
2. Let every one that names Christ depart from iniquity--Personal Holiness

Is God using you right now in the ministry? Do you want to be used? You have 3 obligations--to your people, to yourself, and to your message.

Challenge to all involved in ministry (Children, SS, Youth, etc)

Do you long to gain God's approval? Do you love His Word?

Are you willing to pay the price necessary to prepare to teach His Word?

Do you have any habits that are displeasing to God, and discrediting to your message?

Take Inventory: Some questions for every workman to ponder...

1. *What do you need to do with your people this week?*
2. *What do you need to do personally this week?*
3. *What do you need to do with your message this week?*