

STUDIES IN THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PAUL TO TIMOTHY

“THE TWELVE STEPS TO A FANTASTIC FINISH”

STUDY #6: 2 Timothy 2:14-19

“Focused: This One Thing I Do”

Key verse 2:15 — *“Make every effort to present yourself to God, approved, as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, guiding the word of truth along a straight path.”*

TEXT:

Key verse 2:15

v. 14 These things be reminding them, charging them in the presence of God not to be disputing about words, which results in not even one useful thing, in addition to ruining the ones who are hearing.

v. 15 ***Make every effort to present yourself to God, approved, as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, guiding the word of truth along a straight path.***

v. 16 But be avoiding profane, empty talk; for they will make further progress in ungodliness.

v. 17 And their word will spread as does cancer. Of whom are Hymenaeus and Philetus,

v. 18 who missed the mark concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they are upsetting the faith of some.

v. 19 Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this inscription: “The Lord knows those who are His, and let everyone who is naming the name of the Lord abstain from wickedness.”

INTRODUCTION:

(Cowboy Poetry by Larry McWhorter)

Black Draught

“Good Lord, what a dink” I thought as the boss
Said “Put that black colt in your string.”
I’d rode lots of duds but none quite compared
To this pitifully ugly, poor thing.

Taylor, he read me just like the Good Book
And probably felt the same way
But his heart beat soft for children and colts
So he took a moment to say,

“Just give ‘im a chance to prove himself, son.
You asked that of me when you hired.
Find out his limits and bring ‘im on slow,
Don’t get him too mad or too tired.

“Just look at that eye all shiny and bright.
Now he won’t win a prize in a ring
But somethin’ about him I kinda like.
Out here show points don’t mean a thing.”

The boys were grinnin’ when I roped him out
And went to the pen that was round.
My face sure got red as I pulled up my cinch
When he squealed and fell to the ground.

And thus we began our rocky romance,
Not liking each other at all
But somehow that horse was ready to go
When we started workin’ that fall.

I still hadn’t stuck a tag on him yet
But name ‘im I figured I’d ought.
There was but one thing he brought to my mind
So I dubbed him the title, “Black Draught.”*

He'd put on some bone and muscle and fat
 By the end of our third workin' season.
 The boys still grinned at my little black horse
 But now for a different reason.

Ever alert, he was easy to teach.
 A pretty good horse he had made.
 One day he even out cut Taylor's ace,
 The cowboss then offered a trade.

I thought for a minute and then I said, "No."
 Although it sure made me feel good
 But Hell would freeze over and pigs would fly
 'Fore he packed another man's wood.

In the evening after we'd stripped kacks and fed
 He'd taxi me up to the house.
 No saddle, or bit, just denim or hide
 Then he with a hose I would douse.

I guess you could say we made quite a team
 But friends, he was far from a pet.
 If things was just right or I'd fall asleep
 He'd still try to pile me off yet.

One day the heirs split up the old ranch
 And though I'm not adverse to change,
 They'd started to ruin a good place in my mind
 So I went in search of new range.

The sad time had come for good friends to part ways
 So I went to tell him good-bye.
 I stroked his dark hide and felt a wet cheek.
 I must have got sand in my eye.

He smelled of my arm and nipped at my shirt.
 He'd not seen me like this before
 But the realization had just hit me square
 That we'd be together no more.

I'd been, seen and done a lot of new things
 In the year since I'd left him behind,
 But no matter how I pushed him away
 He clung to my heart and my mind.

I met an old friend in Childress one night
 And though it might have been tacky,
 Before I asked of his wife and his kids
 I said, "Tell me Dave, how's Ol' Blacky?"

A look I'd not seen come over his face,
 He reached down and got me a beer.
 His hand on my back, he led me away
 And said "Let's go talk over here.

"A few weeks ago we had a big storm.
 That cloud was a terrible sight.
 The wind blew real hard, the thunder was loud,
 The lightin' was flashin' all night.

"We went out to feed the horses next day
 But Blacky, who always came first,
 He didn't show up with the rest of the bunch.
 We started to fear for the worst.

"Taylor and I rode out there and found him.
 He lay all alone on a hill.
 And, Hoss, there's no good way to tell you except
 To say that he's layin' there still.

"A strange thing happened with that little horse.
 He sure-acted good with you there
 But after you left he turned for the worse.
 It seemed like he just didn't care.

"He'd linger outside the bunkhouse all day
 Or aimlessly wander around.
 I really think he was looking for you
 But you was no where to be found."

"Boy, to see the way that little horse wilted,
 It sure would've tore you apart.
 I'll always believe that quick lighnin' bolt
 Give rest to a poor broken heart."

I stood there awhile and let it soak in.
 My little black horse had gone home.
 I'll always wonder if he'd be alive
 If I'd fought that fool urge to roam.

Good horses abound and run through my dreams
But he's the main memory I've got.
He wasn't the best but he was my ace
And I sure do miss him a lot.

If You should call me to ride your range, Lord,
And You have a works in the spring,
I'd sure take it kind, when you hand out the mounts
If Ol' Blacky was stuck in my string.

*Black Draught (pronounced either Draft or Drawt) is an old time cure-all tonic.
Actually, it was a laxative.
pp. 21-25

(All Hat & No Cattle: A Guide for New Texans and All the West of Us
by Anne Dingus)

DUMB

Not the sharpest crayon in the box.

Not the sharpest knife in the drawer.

Not a lot of grain in his silo.

He don't know a brisket from a biscuit.

She's running on a lean mixture.

His belt don't go all the way through the loops.

His bread ain't done.

EXCLAMATIONS

Give 'em what-for!

Wake up and bite the biscuits!

Well, don't that cock your pistol!

I haven't laughed so hard since the mule drug Sister through the sticker patch.

I haven't laughed so hard since I wore three-cornered pants.

I had a fit and fell in it.
pp. 49-63

(All Hat & No Cattle: A Guide for New Texans and All the West of Us
by Anne Dingus)

GENERAL ADVICE

You got to kill a snake where you find it.

That's like telling Noah about rain.

You ain't learning when you're talking

A hog can't pass a good mud hole.

Crow don't taste like chicken.

Just grin and walk through the cannon smoke. [*Hang on.*]

When the chips are down, be careful where you step.

Tight boots'll shrink all your other troubles.

Don't drink downstream from the herd.

Don't mess in the sandbox.

Empty wagons rattle the loudest.
pp. 49-63

(Never Ask A Man the Size of His Spread by Gladiola Montana)

THE CODE OF HER WEST

Use a short rope,
a sweet smile,
and a hot brand.

(Intro)

You can't keep
trouble from visitin',
but you don't have to
offer it a chair.

p. 23

(Never Ask A Man the Size of His Spread by Gladiola Montana)

If a man thinks
that a woman who can
dog steers, ride broncs,
and rope the wind
is too much for him,
he's probably right.

p. 138

J. B. Allen describes the cowboy's view of aging and coming to the end of the trail:

(The Medicine Keepers by J. B. Allen)

Wars and droughts and great depressions whitened hair and twisted bones
Till two young boys were playin' out their string.

p. 42

(Quote Unquote compiled by Lloyd Cory)

One of the nicest things about being bald is that when company comes all you have to do is straighten your tie.

p. 143

(Boomerang Joy: Joy That Goes Around, Comes Around by Barbara Johnson)

Have you heard about the seven stages of womanhood?

In your twenties you want to wake up with romance.
In your thirties you want to wake up married.
At forty you want to wake up rich.
At fifty, to wake up successful.
At sixty, to wake up contented.
At seventy, to wake up healthy!
And at eighty you just want to wake up!

pp. 236-7

(Over The Hill & On A Roll: Laugh Lines for the Better Half of Life
by Bob Phillips)

Most elderly women were born in the year of our Lord only knows.

If you think a woman can't keep a secret, ask a woman her age!
p. 160

An old fellow fell in love with a lady and got down on his knees and said there were two things he would like to ask her. She replied, "Okay." He said, "Will you marry me?" She replied, "Yes," then asked what his second question was. "Will you help me up?"
p. 239

ADVANTAGES OF GETTING OLD (older):

In a hostage situation you are likely to be released first.

It's harder and harder for sexual harassment charges to stick.

Kidnappers are not very interested in you.

No one expects you to run into a burning building.

People call at 9 p.m. and ask, "Did I wake you?"

There's nothing left to learn the hard way.

Things you buy now won't wear out.

You can live without sex but not without glasses.

You got cable for the weather channel.

You have a party and the neighbors don't even realize it.

Your eyes won't get much worse.

Your investment in health insurance is finally beginning to pay off.

Your joints are more accurate than the National Weather Service.

Your secrets are safe with your friends because they can't remember them either.

(Received via e-mail from Nesom & Beth Burt, August 18, 2000)

(Illustrations Unlimited by James S. Hewett, editor)

An elderly woman was filling out an application for residency in a retirement village. She was a bit nervous answering all the questions about her health, fearing she might be refused admission. But, she finally finished the form and then signed her name and filled in the place where it asked for her current address. After “Zip” she printed firmly: “Normal for my age.”

SHARP AND OPEN FOR THE FUTURE

A woman in a convalescent home was given a party to celebrate her one hundredth birthday. Her pastor came to offer his congratulations. Later the pastor said, “Her mind was keen and alert. When I arrived, she was completely caught up in the excitement of the birthday party. A reporter had come to interview her. And when he asked that high-spirited, one-hundred-year-old woman, ‘Do you have any children?’ she replied without hesitation, ‘Not yet!’”

p. 23

Old Age

As men draw near the common goal
Can anything be sadder
Than he who, master of his soul,
Is servant to his bladder?

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First you forget names, then you forget faces, then you forget to pull your zipper up, then you forget to pull your zipper down.

—Leo Rosenberg

I am in the prime of senility.

—Joel Chandler Harris

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

Things My Mother Taught Me

My mother taught me TO APPRECIATE A JOB WELL DONE—
“If you’re going to kill each other, do it outside. I just finished cleaning!”

My mother taught me about TIME TRAVEL—
“If you don’t straighten up, I’m going to knock you into the middle of next week!”

My mother taught me LOGIC—
“Because I said so, that’s why.”

My mother taught me FORESIGHT—
“Make sure you wear clean underwear, in case you’re in an accident.”

My mother taught me THE CIRCLE OF LIFE—
“I brought you into this world, and I can take you out.”

My mother taught me about BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION—
“Stop acting like your father!”

(Received via e-mail from Nesom & Beth Burt, August 17, 2000)

CHRISTIAN BUMPER STICKERS

Give God what's right, not what's left.

A lot of kneeling will keep you in good standing.

To be almost saved is to be totally lost.

We're too blessed to be depressed.

God grades on the cross, not the curve.

Prayer—Don't give God instructions—just report for duty.

Wal-Mart isn't the only saving place.

Don't wait for 6 strong men to take you to church.

A family altar can alter a family.

This Church is "Prayer Conditioned."

WARNING: Exposure to the Son may prevent burning.

Plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark.

Most people want to serve God, but only in an advisory capacity.

Never give the devil a ride! He will always want to drive.

Give Satan an inch and he'll be a ruler.

God doesn't call the qualified, He qualifies the called.

"Read the Bible . . . It Will Scare The Hell Out Of You!"

If God is your Copilot? Swap seats!

(Received via e-mail from Nesom & Beth Burt, August 13, 2000)

A Man/Woman Thing

NICKNAMES

If Sharon, Suzanne, Debra and Barbara go out for lunch, they will call each other Sherri, Sue, Deb and Barb.

If Mike, Charlie, Bob and John go out to lunch, they will affectionately refer to each other as Fat Boy, Godzilla, Peanut-Head & Scrappy.

EATING OUT

When the bill arrives, Mike, Charlie, Bob and John will each throw in \$20, even though it's only for \$32.50. None of them will have anything smaller, and none will actually admit they want change back.

When the girls get their bill, out come the pocket calculators.

MONEY

A man will pay \$2 for a \$1 item he wants.

A woman will pay \$1 for a \$2 item that she doesn't want.

BATHROOMS

A man has six items in his bathroom: a toothbrush, shaving cream, razor, a bar of soap, and a towel from the Holiday Inn.

The average number of items in the typical woman's bathroom is 337. A man would not be able to identify most of these items.

ARGUMENTS

A woman has the last word in any argument.

Anything a man says after that is the beginning of a new argument.

CATS

Women love cats.

Men say they love cats, but when women aren't looking, men kick cats.

FUTURE

A woman worries about the future until she gets a husband.

A man never worries about the future until he gets a wife.

SUCCESS

A successful man is one who makes more money than his wife can spend.

A successful woman is one who can find such a man.

MARRIAGE (so true)

A woman marries a man expecting he will change, but he doesn't.

A man marries a woman expecting that she won't change and she does.

DRESSING UP

A woman will dress up to go shopping, to water the plants, to empty the garbage, to answer the phone, read a book, or get the mail.

A man will dress up for weddings and funerals.

NATURAL

Men wake up as good-looking as they went to bed.

Women somehow deteriorate during the night.

OFFSPRING

Ah, children. A woman knows all about her children. She knows about birthdays, school project deadlines, dentist appointments, romances, best friends, favorite foods, secret fears, hopes and dreams.

A man is vaguely aware of some short people living in the house.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Any married man should forget his mistakes, because there's no use in two people remembering the same thing.

(Received via e-mail from Mark Skorheim, January 13, 2001)

We are making a study of PAUL'S LAST EPISTLE, 2 Timothy, which he is writing from a holding cell in anticipation of his soon execution.

The TITLE of our series is:

“THE TWELVE STEPS TO A FANTASTIC FINISH.”

Thus far we have noticed:

Step #1: INTEGRITY: Getting It All Together (2 Tim. 1:1-7)

Step #2: CONVICTION: Here I Stand, God Help Me (2 Tim. 1:8-12)

Step #3: COURAGE: I Am Willing To Pay The Price (2 Tim. 1:13-18)

Step #4: LEGACY: What Am I Passing On? (2 Tim. 2:1-7)

Step #5: PERSEVERANCE: In Single-Minded Steadfastness, I Will Stay The Course (2 Tim. 2:8-13)

We now come to:

Step #6: FOCUSED: This One Thing I Do (2 Tim. 2:14-19)

Key verse: verse 15

“TO BE FOCUSED” means that I am:

SINGLE-MINDED and
DETERMINED.

I am ZEROING in on the one thing.

I am FINE-TUNED. I am taking AIM.

This is doing something that you have always wanted to ACHIEVE.

FOCUSED means you are ORGANIZED to achieve a particular goal.

In turning to the dictionary’s definition of “focused,” we see:

focused

focused *adjective*

1. **concentrated:** concentrated on a single thing
2. **single-minded:** single-minded and determined

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(The Complete Book of Practical Proverbs & Wacky Wit by Vern McLellan)

If you don't know where you're going, you will wind up somewhere else.

Yogi Berra

p. 54

When you find yourself late in the game of life, in order to make a fantastic finish it will be necessary to narrow everything down to that one thing that you want to do to help leave a legacy and to make the fantastic finish you desire. Ultimately to hear: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" from the Lord Himself.

Quotes

- In the long run men hit only what they aim at.
—Henry David Thoreau
- Most people don't know what they really want—but they're sure they haven't got it.
—Alfred E. Newman
- If you don't know where you're going, you'll probably end up somewhere else.
- Many a man has an excellent aim in life, but no ammunition.
—C.C. Colton
- You must have long range goals to keep you from being frustrated by short-term failures.
—Charles C. Noble
- Every moment of life is granted us for some purpose: becoming like our dear Lord. That ultimate, all-embracing end is reached through a multitude of nearer and immediate ones.
—Alexander MacLaren
- When we are foolish, we want to conquer the world; when we are wise, we want to conquer self. Our life is measured not by what we win; our life is measured by the thing we strive for.
—G. H. Morrison

Sources unknown

Multiple, 10,000 Sermon Illustrations, (Dallas, Texas Biblical Studies Press) 2000.

(Logos Library System)

Goin' Huntin'

A boy was walking along a dusty country road, a rifle slung over his shoulder. A man in a car saw the boy, stopped and asked him what he was hunting. "Don't know," said the boy. "I ain't seen it yet."

C. Swindoll, *Growing Strong*, p. 138

Multiple, 10,000 Sermon Illustrations, (Dallas, Texas Biblical Studies Press) 2000.

(Logos Library System)

General Patton

General George Patton would often ask soldiers, "What is your mission?" Being able to articulate clearly the current mission was the most important piece of information a soldier could carry in combat.

Gordon McDonald, *Ordering Our Private World*, p. 181

Multiple, 10,000 Sermon Illustrations, (Dallas, Texas Biblical Studies Press) 2000.

(Logos Library System)

We'll Know When We Get There

Inscribed on the doorway of the volunteer fire department in a small Minnesota town is the slogan: "We'll know where we're going when we get there."

Pastoral Renewal, 10-86, p. 2

Multiple, 10,000 Sermon Illustrations, (Dallas, Texas Biblical Studies Press) 2000.

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Roger Staubach

Roger Staubach, former quarterback for the Dallas Cowboys, was a plebe in his first summer at the U.S. Naval Academy, and expected to be unobtrusive in the presence of upperclassmen. At breakfast one Sunday, however, an upperclassman began prodding Roger. He was backup quarterback on the football team, and was well aware that soon Roger would be in competition with him. “Hey, Staubach!” he barked. “I hear you’re going to take my job away. Is that right?”

“No, sir,” replied Roger.

The upperclassman pressed the issue. “That’s strange,” he said. “I’m sure that’s what I heard.”

“What is your job, sir?” asked Roger.

“Number two quarterback,” the upperclassman announced.

“I’m not going to take your job away, sir,” Roger assured him.

The upperclassman seemed satisfied until Roger added, “It’s the starting-quarterback job that I’m going to take, sir.”

And he did.

Source unknown

Multiple, 10,000 Sermon Illustrations, (Dallas, Texas Biblical Studies Press) 2000.

(Logos Library System)

Possibility

Some men see things as they are and say why? I dream things that never were and say “Why not?”

Robert Kennedy (1925-1968), U.S. statesman. *Esquire* (1969).

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Loneliness

Pray that your loneliness may spur you into finding something to live for, great enough to die for.

Dag Hammarskjöld (1905-1961), Swedish statesman and diplomat, 1951.
Quoted in: *Markings* (L. Sjsberg and W. H. Auden (tr.); 1964).

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A survey was taken recently of people who are over 95. The people were asked one question. It was an open ended question they could answer any way they wished. The question was: “If you could live your life over again, what would you do differently? Among all the different answers, these three answers came back most frequently:

1. If I could live my life over again, I would reflect more.
2. I would risk more.
3. I would do more things that would live on after I’m dead.

(From *Parson’s Technology*)

Joan Lunden says:

“Don’t focus on what you don’t have, focus on what you do have and be grateful for it.”
(source unknown)

Ecclesiastes 5:20

He seldom reflects on the days of his life, because God keeps him occupied with gladness of heart.

Ecclesiastes 11:10

So then, banish anxiety from your heart and cast off the troubles of your body, for youth and vigor are meaningless.

DON'T FOCUS ON WHAT **WAS** BUT ON WHAT **WILL BE!**

When we are considering “FOCUS” it is awfully good for us to think of some illustrations:

1. EZRA—his “FOCUS” was to REBUILD THE TEMPLE.

Ezra 7:10

For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.

2. Nehemiah—his passion, purpose, and “FOCUS” was to REBUILD THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM.

Nehemiah 6:15, 16

So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of Elul, in fifty-two days. When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God.

3. ESTHER—she was in a STRATEGIC POSITION to be able to thwart the plans for the extermination of the Jewish race.

Ester 5:1-3

On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace, in front of the king's hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the hall, facing the entrance. When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand. So Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter. Then the king asked, "What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you."

4. JESUS—He is another great illustration of One who is passionate about COMPLETING THE FATHER'S MISSION.

John 4:34

Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work.

John 9:4

We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no man can work.

There are several passages of Scripture that I would like to MEDITATE upon at this time that helps us truly get “FOCUSED” on what we are talking about in:

Study #6 — Focused: This One Thing I Do.”

Hebrews 12:1, 2

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance [or perseverance] the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Song of Solomon 2:15

Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards, our vineyards that are in bloom.

Zephaniah 3:9

“Then will I purify the lips of the peoples, that all of them may call on the name of the Lord and serve him shoulder to shoulder.

Luke 10:38-42

Now as they were traveling along, He entered a certain village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. And she had a sister called Mary, who moreover was listening to the Lord's word, seated at His feet. But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him, and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me." But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only a few things are necessary, really only one: for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

In this passage I want us to give our minds to thinking about the phrase:

"REALLY ONLY ONE: FOR MARY HAS CHOSEN THE GOOD PART."

Philippians 3:12-14

Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead. I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Here I would like for us to focus on the phrase:

"BUT ONE THING I DO: FORGETTING WHAT LIES BEHIND AND REACHING FORWARD TO WHAT LIES AHEAD."

Psalm 27:4

One thing I ask of the Lord,
 this is what I seek:
 that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
 all the days of my life,
 to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord
 and to seek him in his temple.

The QUESTION we raise at this time is:

What is that ONE THING that the Lord desires to accomplish through you, ensuring a fantastic finish?

We need to DISCOVER this and GET FOCUSED on the full accomplishment of it!

Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his book Letters and Papers From Prison says:

“The essence of chastity is not the suppression of lust, but the total orientation of one’s life toward a goal.”
 (source unknown)

My PERSONAL PRAYER as we begin these verses is:

“Lord, grant that whatever I may need to lay aside to fulfill Your will may not be seen as a sacrifice, but rather as the pathway to true achievement. Amen.”

Let us now turn our attention to 2 Timothy 2:14-19 so that we can discover the process of being:

Focused: This One Thing I Do.

Hughes titles these verses:

Handling God's Word
2 TIMOTHY 2:14-19

p. 207

He then says:

Now in verse 14, as Paul leaves off his extended appeal to Timothy to stand tall and suffer (1:4-2:13) and turns to his overarching concern of countering false teachers who subvert the Word, he commands Timothy to “Keep reminding them of these things” (v. 14a)—that is, to keep reminding the Ephesian church of the faithful saying, of both its comfort to believers and its warning to apostates. “Keep reminding the church of what is at stake.”

p. 208

Lock says:

This paragraph passes from the thought of the subject matter . . . to that of the character of the teaching and of the teacher.

p. 96

Lenski says:

This half of the chapter is a unit. The connecting link is . . . “needing not to be ashamed,” which continues the “not to be ashamed” occurring in 1:8, 12, 16, and the thought of shame and disgrace that lies in the . . . verbs “suffer disgrace” in 1:8; 2:3, 9. After being thus joined to what precedes, the admonition advances to Timothy’s work, which he is to do so that he needs not to be ashamed.

p. 796

Baxter says:

Take the first two chapters. Running from [1] i. 3 to [2] ii. 13, the aspect is that of the pastor's *personal* reactions; while in the remaining verses of chapter [2] ii. it is that of his *pastoral* reactions. In each section there is challenge and incentive. In the personal section see the *challenge* in such expressions as "Stir up" (i. 6), "Be not ashamed" (i. 8), "Be strong" (ii. 1), "Endure" (ii. 3); and the *incentive* in "Remember" (i. 6, ii. 8), and in Paul's own moving example (i. 12, ii. 9, 10).

Then in the pastoral section (ii. 14-26) see again *challenge* in such words as "Charge" (verse 14), "Study" (verse 15), "Shun" (verse 16), "Refuse" (verse 23); and the *incentive* in "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure" (verse 19), and "That they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil" (verse 26).

pp. 234-5

Towner says:

Battle plans appear to be very reasonable and "doable" when viewed in the war room. For the Christian, the thought of struggling for God, maybe even to the point of suffering, may seem exciting in the safe environment of a worship gathering. But out there where the enemy may wear a disguise or may be overwhelming and relentless in opposition, where the war drags on, terms such as "struggle," "uncertainty" and "fatigue" take their place in the vocabulary of Christian life and service. This reality lies behind the instructions and encouragement that Paul gives here.

p. 180

King says:

THERE is a rare lot said in Scripture about speech, and great stress is laid upon its very great importance—for good or ill. Take this one statement of the Master's, as found in Matthew [12] xii. 36-37, "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment, for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned". This does not mean that we shall be condemned for making a joke, or indulging in jolly banter, or in clean happy fun—perhaps some of us need a little more of the humorous outlet than we at present allow ourselves; but it does mean that our words are to be examined, like our "thoughts" in Psalm [139] cxxxix. 23-24, to "see if there be any wicked way" in them, in us. The exceeding importance, then, of words.
p. 63

Guthrie says:

Specific instructions are next given to Timothy to guide him in his unavoidable encounters with false teachers.
p. 146

Kelly says:

Having done his best to fire Timothy with courage to face suffering in the spirit of Christ, Paul passes on to specific instructions about his preaching, with a special eye to the growing menace of heresy.
p. 182

Fee titles the section and then says:

Exhortation to Resist False Teachers
(2 Tim. 2:14-19)

The concern for the “salvation” of “God’s chosen people” expressed in verse 10, plus the exhortation to perseverance, with its warning against apostasy in verses 11-13, bring Paul—and Timothy—back to the hard realities of the situation on Ephesus, with the presence of the false teachers (cf. 1 Timothy). Apparently they continue to plague the church, as Onesiphorus had probably informed him, although clearly not all have capitulated.

p. 253

Knight observes:

This half of the chapter continues Paul’s exhortations to Timothy, but now in the context of false teachers and false teaching . . . rather than in the context of the non-Christian world, as has been primarily the case up to this point.

p. 409

He then titles the section and has this to say:

WARNING AGAINST FALSE TEACHING: 2:14-19

Here Paul warns against the error of the false teaching, specifies various forms of that error, and warns against the results of such error (vv. 14, 16, 18). He names certain false teachers who say that the resurrection has taken place (v. 17) and concludes with a counterbalance to the dismay that such apostasy might bring by asserting that God’s solid foundation stands firm (v. 19).

p. 409

Lea & Griffin say:

In 2 Timothy, Paul still faced the problem of false teaching that was common in 1 Timothy, but the problem was much more in the background than it had been in 1 Timothy. A concern for dealing with false teachers is prominent in Paul's directives from 2:14 through 4:8. In this present section Paul urged Timothy to take the lead in resisting falsehood by warning of the danger from heresy and exposing its error (2:14-19).
p. 213

They say further:

Paul had poured out many words urging Timothy to endure suffering with courage and commitment. Now he cast a watchful eye on the still-present threat of heresy. Paul warned Timothy about the false teachers and their errors (2:14). He also wanted Timothy to take the lead in resisting them and their teaching (2:15-18). He spoke a word of encouragement to the church, reminding them of God's protective love and appealing for separation from evil (2:19).
p. 214

MacArthur says:

Scripture clearly affirms that God is truth and that He speaks only truth and cannot lie. Jesus testified of His Father, “Thy word is truth” (John 17:17); of Himself, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14:6); and of the Holy Spirit, He “is the Spirit of truth” (v. 17).

Scripture also affirms that Satan is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44). His very nature is to lie and deceive. Since he fell from his exalted position in heaven, he and the angels who rebelled with him against God and became demons have been at complete, unredeemable enmity with God and separation from Him. That enmity has brought uninterrupted conflict between God and Satan. His evil angels have been in continual conflict with the holy angels of God, and on earth there has been relentless conflict between the truth of God and the lies of Satan.

God’s own people have not escaped the plague of falsehood. False prophets were the bane of ancient Israel. Likewise, false teachers, preachers, and even false Christs have been the bane of the church, and will continue to be until the Lord returns. Jesus predicted that, in the last days, “false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect” (Matt. 24:24).

pp. 67-68

He then says further:

Satan attempts to obliterate God’s truth with his own falsehood. He attempts to keep the fallen world in spiritual darkness and to confuse and discourage God’s people. It was Satan’s deceit that lured Eve and then Adam to distrust God, which brought sin and death into His perfect creation and separated now-sinful mankind from the holy God. Since that time, humanity has existed in the muck and morass of sin and deceit. Through the centuries, the steady stream of falsehood has become a deeper, wider, and increasingly more destructive sea of ungodliness. False teaching about God, about Christ, about the Bible, and about spiritual reality is pandemic. The father of lies is working relentlessly to pervert and corrupt the saving and sanctifying truth of God’s written Word, the Bible, and of the living Word, His Son, Jesus Christ.

p. 68

Since we know that it is SATAN’S PLAN to DISTRACT and to DESTROY, we need to keep our FOCUS UPON JESUS and upon the one thing He wants us to do, in order to make the fantastic finish we all desire.

MacArthur says finally:

“Christian” cults abound today as never before, as does every type of false religion. Many Protestant denominations that once championed God’s inerrant Word and the saving gospel of Jesus Christ have turned to human philosophy and secular wisdom. In doing so, they have abandoned the central truths of biblical Christianity—including the Trinity, the deity of Christ, His substitutionary atonement, and salvation by grace alone. In rejecting God’s truth, they have come to condone and embrace countless evils—universalism, hedonism, psychology, self-salvation, fornication and adultery, homosexuality, abortion, and a host of other sins. The effects of ungodly teaching have been devastating and damning, not only for the members of those churches but for a countless number of the unsaved who have been confirmed in their ungodliness by false religion.

p. 68

v. 14 These things be reminding them, charging them in the presence of God not to be disputing about words, which results in not even one useful thing, in addition to ruining the ones who are hearing.

We are going to talk about:

1. HIS MINISTRY in verse 14,
2. THE MAN in verse 15, and
3. THE MENACE in verse 16.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

The instruction of the previous verses was not for Timothy only. Timothy was to **keep reminding** others of **these things**. The verb is a present imperative, which means that this was to be Timothy's regular practice. The bulk of preaching to a knowledgeable audience frequently consists of reminding them of what they already know.
p. 754

Philippians 3:1

Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.

2 Peter 1:12-15

Therefore, I shall always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you. And I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder, knowing that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you may be able to call these things to mind.

In verses 14, 15, and 16 Paul gives **THREE COMMANDS**. As we mentioned earlier, the commands have to do with:

1. the **MINISTRY** here in verse 14,
2. the **MAN** (Timothy himself) in verse 15, and
3. the **MENANCE**, with regard to the false teachers in verse 16.

“THESE THINGS BE REMINDING THEM, CHARGING THEM IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD.”

1 Corinthians 4:20

For the kingdom of God does not consist in words, but in power.

Guthrie says:

The Christian teacher must never forget his responsibility to those who listen. The word *katastrophē*, used here for subversion, which means literally ‘turning upside down’, is the antithesis of edification.
p. 147

Matthew Henry says:

He must make it his business to edify those who were under his charge. This is the work of ministers; not to tell people that which they never knew before, but to put them in mind of that which they do know, *charging them that they strive not about words*. If people did not consider of what little use most of the controversies in religion are, they would not be so zealous in their strifes of words. People are very prone to strive about words, and such strifes never answer any other ends than to shake some and subvert others.
p. 1896

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown say:

. . . “(a thing tending) to no profit,” lit., “profitable for nothing”; the opposite of “meet for the master’s use” (vs. 21). **to the subverting**—sure to subvert (overturn) the hearers: the opposite of “edifying” (building up) (II Cor. 13:10).
p. 1377

J. Vernon McGee says:

We don’t need to argue about empty words or philosophies or our little differences. The pastor of an Assembly of God church wrote to me saying that he appreciated our ministry and that he recommends our notes and outlines to his church, although we don’t agree on everything. And we don’t—I can’t see his point of view on some matters and he can’t see mine. Perhaps when we get to heaven, we will find it true that there are three sides to every question: your side, my side, and the right side. Maybe the Lord will have to straighten out both of us. But the important thing is that he and I ought not to argue since we agree on the essentials. And that is the way we both want it. I think we waste a lot of time in a negative approach and trying to correct other believers. Instead of doing that, let’s try to stay on the positive side and enjoy each other’s fellowship in the gospel.
p. 467

Patrick & Lowth say:

Here we learn, First, What are the things which ought not to be matters of contention among Christians: (1.) Such things in which we differ from each other rather in words than sense; mean the same thing, but differ only in the expressing of our sentiments: which rule observed would put an end to many of our controversies. (2.) Such things as tend to little or no profit, either as to edification in the faith, or edifying of the body in love . . . or, by knowing which, we may be the more learned, but not the better Christians. Again, Hence we learn why we should not contend about such things, viz. because they tend to beget strife and contentions (ver. 23, 1 Tim. i. 4), which divide Christians into parties, and dissolve or obstruct Christian charity. (2.) Because they tend to the disturbance of the hearers, they not knowing to which party to adhere; and also to their subversion, causing them to doubt of the truth of that faith about which the contending parties cannot agree.
p. 861

“THESE THINGS BE REMINDING THEM, CHARGING THEM IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD.”

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

In the case of the Christians at Ephesus, they were to be solemnly charged in the presence of God (cf. 1 Tim. 5:21) to avoid **quarreling about words** . . . a tendency in the early church . . . The destructiveness, but especially the worthlessness, of false teaching is a recurrent note in the Pastorals.
p. 754

These people are guilty of “DISPUTING ABOUT WORDS” when really their mission should be to DISCOURSE ON THE WORD.

As one begins to DISPUTE OVER WORDS, it leads to confusion and all sorts of frustration.

Paul says, here, that as a result of “DISPUTING ABOUT WORDS” there is:

NEGATIVE—“NOT EVEN ONE USEFUL THING” and

POSITIVE—it upsets “THE ONES WHO ARE HEARING.”

A. T. Robertson says:

A mere war of words displeases Paul.
p. 619

He also speaks of the Greek word which is translated “RUINING” in our translation:

[It is an] Old word (from *katastrephō*, to turn down or over), here only in N.T. (except II Peter 2:6 in some [manuscripts] MSS., not in Westcott and Hort). “Because of the overthrow” (result *epi*, not aim), useless for this reason. Such war of words merely upsets the hearers.
p. 619

Barnes says:

These great principles in regard to the kingdom of Christ. They would be as useful to others as they were for Timothy, to whom they were specially addressed.

p. 225

He says further:

Turning them away from the simplicity of faith. It is rare, indeed, that a religious controversy does not produce this effect, and this is commonly the case, where, as often happens, the matter in dispute is of little importance.

p. 225

Lange says:

With these words a new part of the Epistle begins, which runs through to the end of this chapter. If the Apostle, in the first half of the second chapter, exhorts Timothy to patient *suffering*, now he rouses him to vigorous *action*, and communicates directions to him on the manner and way in which especially he shall act against false teachers.

p. 97

He says further:

A preacher must often repeat an exhortation, because we dwell in a land of forgetfulness.

p. 102

Hendriksen says:

Says Paul, **Remind them of these things, charging them in the presence of the Lord not to wage thoroughly useless word-battles which upset the listeners.**

p. 261

Liefeld sets the stage in these verses by saying:

FROM THE WARM words of encouragement in 2:1-10 and the lofty saying of 2:11-13 we suddenly find ourselves back in the world of the Ephesian church with its heretical teachers. This does not mean discontinuity, for verse 14 refers back to what has just been said with the exhortation to “keep reminding them of these things.” But Timothy’s act of reminding must be accompanied by an act of warning, an act so sobering that it is said to be “before God.”

pp. 256-7

Larson says:

As a minister of the gospel, Timothy must remind all those in the church about the instructions and warnings Paul had delivered to him. Pastors are to **keep reminding** their congregations of the truth of Scripture, the nature of God, and the demands of holy living. This task is never complete.

p. 285

Quinn & Wacker translate verse 14:

Bring these matters to mind, Timothy, I adjure you, as God looks on. Shun quibbling over words—good for nothing except the utter ruin of the listeners.

p. 656

Quinn & Wacker say further:

This warning is “not to word-wrangle,” . . .
p. 672

Hawthorne & Martin say:

“*These things.*” This formula is found at the conclusion of cited material and introduces its application to the current situation.
p. 664

They say further:

Repeatedly Paul calls on God as a “witness” (*martys*) to apostolic truthfulness and integrity . . .
p. 974

Lenski says:

By “these things” Paul refers to all that he has thus far said.
p. 797

Lock's paraphrase of the entire passage is so helpful:

Paraphrase. These are the central truths of which you must remind any to whom you entrust your teaching, and you must charge them as in the sight of their Lord and Master not to be “word-warriors,” constantly arguing and wrangling with words as if they wished to ruin rather than to build up their hearers’ faith: such wrangling is perfectly useless. With regard to yourself, take all pains to present yourself before God as one who can stand His test—as a real worker, as one who will never be put to shame for bad or scamped work, but as teaching rightly the one message of the truth. But to all these irreligious and frivolous hair-splittings give a wide berth. Those who take part in them will go forward—on a downward grade of impiety: their message will be like a cancer eating into the sound members of Christ’s body. To that class belongs Hymenaeus and Philetus, for they have entirely missed their aim about the truth, explaining away the literal resurrection and saying that Resurrection is only our past resurrection with Christ in Baptism, and thereby they are upsetting the faith of some. Yet be not alarmed; whatever false teachers may say, the solid foundation-stone of God’s Temple has been fixed once for all; and on it are two inscriptions carved first by Moses and renewed by Our Lord: one tells of God’s knowledge, “The Lord knoweth them that are His own”; the other of man’s duty, “Let every one who worships the Lord depart from iniquity.”
p. 97

Hughes says:

Hassle follows hassle, producing perpetual ruinous conflict.
p. 208

He then says:

Quarreling over words is a very grave matter. God himself will call such “word-warriors” into account. Remember this when you encounter people like this in the church or at your door.
p. 208

MacArthur says:

Paul's purpose was to motivate and encourage Timothy to keep a firm grasp on that truth himself and to pass it on to others who would do likewise (2:2). It is only with a thorough knowledge of God's truth that falsehood and deceit can be recognized, resisted, and opposed.

p. 70

He mentions further:

As mentioned in the previous commentary chapter, **remind** translates an imperative, as do many other verbs in 2 Timothy 2, e.g., "be strong" (v. 1), "entrust" (v. 2), and "consider" (v. 7), "be diligent" (v. 15), "avoid" (v. 16), and "abstain" (v. 19). Because of the present tense in the Greek, **remind** carries the further idea of persistence.

p. 70

He says further:

Beginning with verse 14, the apostle focuses on Timothy's *negative* responsibility to oppose and correct false teaching in the church.

p. 71

He goes on to say:

. . . (**solemnly charge**) is a strong verb, here used as an imperative participle, which carries the idea of stern warning. The seriousness of the admonition is made clear first of all because it intensifies still further Paul's forceful command at the beginning of this verse to remember and, second, because the warning is to be given **in the presence of God**. God is always present, of course, and He is never unaware of what His children are doing. But because of the profound danger of false teaching, Paul wanted to make sure that Timothy and those he admonished were consciously and continually aware of **the presence of God**. Being specially aware of God's presence adds a measure of healthy fear of the Lord and therefore of increased determination to serve Him faithfully.

p. 71

MacArthur goes on to say:

. . . (**wrangle about words**) carries the idea of warring a war of words, in this instance with false teachers, who are later described as “always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim. 3:7). Such deceivers use human wisdom and reason to undermine God’s Word, and believers are not to debate with them, especially within the church.
p. 72

He continues:

To discuss interpretations of Scripture and doctrine with other believers who recognize the Bible as God’s inerrant and authoritative Word is important when it is done in a spirit of humility and civility and is an honest attempt to grasp the truth. In the early days of the church, the Jerusalem Council was called to settle a dispute about the circumcision of believers (see Acts 15). Throughout church history, equally godly believers have differed on certain points of doctrine, as they still do today. But to argue doctrine with someone who disdains Scripture is both futile and foolish.
p. 72

He then says:

In any case, Paul gives six specific reasons for avoiding and opposing *all* false teaching: it ruins the hearers (2:14b), it brings shame on the teacher (v. 15), it leads to ungodliness (v. 16), it spreads rapidly (v. 17a), it upsets the faith of some (vv. 17b-18), and it characterizes those who do not belong to the Lord (v. 19).
p. 73

He then says:

The first and most obvious harm of false teaching is the damage it does to those who hear it. It puts an obstacle in the way of unbelievers, who may be turned away from the true way of salvation. It also does harm to believers, by causing confusion, doubt, discouragement, and disobedience.
p. 74

MacArthur says finally:

As one might guess, *katastrophē* (**ruin**) is the word from which we get *catastrophe*. False teaching has a catastrophic effect. The Greek word has the basic idea of being overturned or overthrown, and in this context it carries the more explicit connotation of being spiritually ruined.

p. 74

Lea & Griffin say:

The beginning imperative in v. 14 contains a strong appeal, directing Timothy to do his duty for the people. He was to continue reminding his audience of the emphases Paul had made in 2:11-13, namely, that they were to endure in their commitment and proclaim the Christian message (2:2).

p. 214

They then say:

“In the end disputing about words seeks not the victory of truth but the victory of the speaker.” This word splitting involved useless verbal quibbling, but it did not focus on the aims of Christianity.

p. 214

They then say:

The word for “ruins” (*katastrophē*) describes the tearing down of believers. It is the opposite of edification. Word splitting whets an appetite for argument rather than building commitment to the living God. In the heat of debate we must always ask ourselves if the subject is actually worth a fight and a searing disagreement.

p. 214

Fee says:

This opening imperative picks up Paul's concern for the "salvation" of "God's chosen people" (v. 10) in light of the threat—and dire consequences—of apostasy.

p. 253

He goes on to say:

That is, in light of the spreading "gangrene" (v. 17) of the false teachings, **keep reminding** your people of the need for perseverance and of the awful consequences of rejecting Christ.

p. 254

He then says:

Thus the people are warned not to engage in the empty, purposeless, speculative (cf. v. 16) disputes **about words** carried on by the false teachers, because it does no good of any kind (cf. Titus 3:8); indeed, quite the opposite, it **only ruins those who listen**.

p. 254

Kelly says:

... he bids him **Keep on reminding people of these things**, i.e. in the first instance of the profound gospel truth summarized in 11-13, but also, more generally, the Christian message as he had learned it from the Apostle (ii. 2).

p. 182

He then says:

What Paul is underlining here is the danger of getting involved in that kind of theological discussion which is in the end purely verbal, having nothing to do with the realities of the Christian religion.

p. 182

Milne says:

No small part of the public teacher's work is that of reminding people what they may have already known but have forgotten through ageing, spiritual immaturity or backsliding (2 Pet. 1:12-15). If it is human to err, it is also human to forget. Repetition is an essential part of sound teaching method.
p. 151

He then goes on to say:

These controversies are full of heat but no light, and lead to schism in the church and spiritual catastrophe (literally) for those who allow themselves to be sucked into them.
pp. 151-2

Calvin says:

These things is emphatic. Paul means that the summary of the Gospel that he has just given, along with the exhortations he has added, is so important that a good minister should never grow weary of dealing with them. They deserved to be constantly taught, and people cannot be taught about them too much. "These are things," he says, "which I want you not just to say once, but to take pains to impress frequently on people's minds." The sole aim of a good teacher must be to edify his hearers, and he should devote his whole life to this end.
p. 137

He then says:

Paul condemns **quarreling** for two reasons. First, it is fruitless; second, it does great harm by upsetting people with weak faith.
p. 137

Wiersbe says:

An approved worker does not waste his time arguing about “words to no profit” (2 Tim. 2:14) because he knows that such arguing only undermines God’s work.

p. 135

Gaebelein says:

These things he was to remember. And if they are remembered they will bring deliverance from the strife about words, vain and unessential disputations in which there is no profit, which only subvert the hearers, It is through disputes about words, and speculations, that Satan brings in his most subtle deceptions.

p. 189

Barclay titles this verse:

THE DANGER OF WORDS

p. 195

He then says:

There is both a fascination and a peril in words. Words can become a substitute for deeds. There are people who are more concerned to talk about things than to do things. If the world could have been saved by talking, it would have been saved long before now; and if the world’s problems could have been solved by discussion, they would have been solved long ago. But words cannot replace deeds.

p. 196

Wilson says:

This verse sets forth Timothy's duty as a trainer of other teachers, the 'faithful men' mentioned in verse 2. The charge which Paul had laid on him must also be passed on to them. For they need to be reminded that the whole object of their ministry is to benefit their hearers, and not to upset their faith! Hence Timothy must warn them before God not to engage in useless word-battles, as this only 'subverts' (liberally: turns upside down) those they should be building up.

p. 144

King says:

Dr. Plummer says, "One is inclined to think that if ministers always remembered that they were speaking in the sight of GOD, they would sometimes find other things to say, and other ways of saying them."

p. 64

He then says:

They can be tragically perilous—"to the subverting of the hearers". All this heat about matters of doubtful importance can have a very serious effect on those "outside the fight", those who are looking on, bewildered, disillusioned; so often they have been undermined, overthrown, and have let go their faith. The word translated "subverting" is the one from which our word "catastrophe" comes; and, in the light of this verse, one is constrained to acknowledge that while, in some circumstances, controversy is necessary, and even a plain duty, yet in many cases, and for many people, uncalled-for controversy is very near to catastrophe.

p. 65

Towner sums it up by saying:

False teachers are destructive. As this passage shows, this applies to their methods, their doctrine and the results they cause in the church. With regard to method, they are argumentative. Throughout these letters, it is this trait that most typifies the activities of the false teachers.

p. 181

His first COMMAND and CHARGE in verse 14, then, is for them is “NOT TO BE DISPUTING ABOUT WORDS” because:

NEGATIVELY—there is nothing “USEFUL” in doing so, and

POSITIVELY—it upsets “THE ONES WHO ARE” listening to what is being said.

“Baptist fellowship is heavenly.” “Yeah, heaven is the only place it will work.”

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

Q: When you have fifty people all of different opinions, what do you have?

A: A Baptist church.

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

It is an honor for a man to stay out of a fight. Only fools insist on quarreling.
Proverb 20:3

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

Truth often suffers more by the heat of its defenders, than from the arguments of its opposers.
—William Penn

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

Are You a Crab?

Charles L. Allen in *The Miracle of Love* writes of a fisherman friend who told him that one never needs a top for his crab basket. If one of the crabs starts to climb up the sides of the basket, the other crabs will reach up and pull it back down. Some people are a lot like crabs.

(From *Parson's Technology*)

(Renewed Day by Day: Daily Devotional Readings: Volume I by A. W. Tozer, compiled by Gerald B. Smith)

The saintly souls are forgotten in the whirl of religious activity. The noisy, the self-assertive, the entertaining are sought after and rewarded in every way, with gifts, crowds, offerings and publicity. The Christlike, the self-forgetting, the otherworldly are jostled aside to make room for the latest converted playboy who is usually not too well converted and still very much a playboy.

(May 9)

(The Best Ever Book of Good Clean Jokes by Bob Phillips)

TALKING

Son: What do you call it when one is talking?

Dad: Monologue.

Son: What do you call it when two women are talking?

Dad: Cat-ologue.

p. 270

(The Best Ever Book of Good Clean Jokes by Bob Phillips)

An old philosopher of Greece once received a severe tongue-lashing from his wife. When he listened in silence, she was more infuriated; so she picked up a pail of cold water and threw it over him, drenching him from head to foot.

With the water still dripping from him, very calmly he remarked, "After that thunder and lightning, I rather expected a shower."

TONGUE SANDWICH

"I seem to be a rose between two thorns," remarked Miss Prettygirl as she seated herself between two men at a football game.

"I'd say it's more like a tongue sandwich," retorted one of the men.
p. 280

(An Encyclopedia of Humor by Lowell D. Streiker)

Henry Ward Beecher, the famous New England minister, entered his pulpit one Sunday morning. Awaiting him was an unmarked envelope. Opening it, he found a single sheet of paper on which was written the single word, "FOOL." After chuckling to himself, he held the paper up to the congregation and said, "I have known many an instance of a man writing letters and forgetting to sign his name. But this is the only instance I've ever known of a man signing his name and forgetting to write his letter."

p. 21

(1001 Humorous Illustrations for Public Speaking by Michael Hodgin)

A Brief Message of Hot Air

A note was hung on the hot air hand dryer in the restroom at work: "Push here for a word from the boss."

p. 52

(The Seeking Heart: Volume 4: The Library of Spiritual Classics by Fenelon)

Don't be angry about what people say. Just follow God and let them talk. As far as people are concerned, you will never be able to satisfy them. Silence, peace, and union with God should comfort you from all that people speak against you.

p. 16

(Well-Intentioned Dragons: Ministering to Problem People in the Church
by Marshall Shelley)

In dealing with dragons, public action is a last recourse, obviously. "Never get in a spittin' match with a skunk," says the folk wisdom. "Even if you win, you come out smelling bad." Dragon/pastor conflicts can normally be settled behind the scenes. Even most dragon/church conflicts can be settled without a public show of force.

p. 132

(Tongue in Check: The Holy Spirit Can Harness Your Tongue by Joseph
M. Stowell)

In regions of South America there is a snake called the "Two-Step" snake. If it bites you, you take two steps and die. Its venom swiftly paralyzes your nervous system which stops your heart. Words can be like that. They have the potential to swiftly kill a relationship, paralyze love, poison minds, destroy faith, stain purity, and deface reputations.

p. 16

(Illustrations Unlimited by James S. Hewett, editor)

DEEP CANDOR

Dentist is overheard speaking to his patient as he bends over him with a hypodermic needle in hand: “You might feel a little sting. On the other hand, it might feel as though you’ve been kicked in the mouth by a mule.”

p. 286

ATTENTION SPAN

The attention span of a typical human is ten praises, six promises, or one preachy statement.

JOCCO GRAND

p. 318

v. 15 Make every effort to present yourself to God, approved, as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, guiding the word of truth along a straight path.

Whereas, the COMMAND in verse 14 had to do with the:

MINISTRY.

Now the COMMAND in verse 15 has to do with the:

MAN.

This is our KEY VERSE to this particular study:

Step #6: FOCUSED: This One Thing I Do.

The COMMAND is:

“MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO PRESENT YOURSELF TO GOD”
with the passionate desire that your presentation would be
“APPROVED” by Him.

Romans 12:1, 2

I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Paul then turns to an ILLUSTRATION. “AS A WORKMAN” he is CHARACTERIZED in TWO WAYS:

1. NEGATIVELY—“WHO DOES NOT NEED TO BE ASHAMED”
and
2. POSITIVELY—“GUIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH ALONG
A STRAIGHT PATH.”

2 Corinthians 2:17

For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.

The SINGLE FOCUS for the Apostle Paul is:

“GUIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH ALONG A STRAIGHT PATH.”

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

As for Timothy, he was to **do his best** (lit., “be zealous”) to be sure he would meet with God’s approval, a “laborer” . . . **who does not need to be ashamed**. Paul had spoken of shame before men (2 Tim. 1:8, 12, 16); far worse is shame before God. Timothy need not fear such shame if he would **correctly handle the Word of truth** . . . which for him included both Old Testament Scripture and what he had heard orally from Paul. The Greek . . . “correctly handling,” found only here and in the [LXX] . . . in Proverbs 3:6 and 11:5, means literally “to cut straight,” but just what image Paul had in mind here is uncertain. Stone masons, plowers, road builders, tentmakers, and (least likely of all) surgeons have all been suggested, but a firm conclusion remains elusive. What is clear is that the shame of God’s disapproval awaits those who mishandle His Word.

p. 754

King says:

It seems to me to be a most delightful summing-up of a satisfactory Christian life, with a revelation of its secret, “the word of truth”.
p. 68

Barclay titles this section:

THE WAY OF TRUTH AND THE WAY OF ERROR

2 Timothy 2: 15-18
p. 198

He then says:

PAUL urges Timothy to present himself, amidst the false teachers, as a real teacher of the truth. The word which Paul uses for *to present* is the Greek word *parastēsai*, which characteristically means *to present oneself for service*. The following words and phrases all develop this idea of usefulness for and in service.
p. 198

He then says:

So Timothy was to be purified and tested that he might be a fit weapon for the work of Christ, and therefore a workman who had no need to be ashamed.
p. 198

Barclay then says:

The Greeks themselves used the word, or the phrase, in three different connections. They used it for driving a straight road across country; they used it for ploughing a straight furrow across a field; they used it for the work of a mason in cutting and squaring a stone so that it fitted into its correct place in the structure of the building. So the man who rightly divides, rightly handles, the word of truth, drives a straight road through the truth and refuses to be lured down pleasant but irrelevant bypaths; he ploughs a straight furrow across the field of truth; he takes each section of the truth, and fits it into its correct position, as a mason does a stone, allowing no part to usurp an undue place or an undue emphasis, and so to knock the whole structure of truth out of balance.

p. 199

Milne says:

The pastor-teacher is like a workman seeking approval through the excellence of his work on the basis of maximum effort. Good workmanship does not just happen, it is the result of long hours, concentrated effort and high standards.

p. 152

Fee says:

The word translated **correctly handles**, which occurs only here in the NT (but cf. Prov. 6:3 and 11:5, LXX), is a metaphor that literally means “to cut straight.” There has been considerable speculation regarding the metaphor itself, as to what kind of “cutting” (wood, stones, furrows) may have been in mind. Most likely the original sense of the metaphor has been lost, and the emphasis simply lies in doing something **correctly**.

p. 255

Lea & Griffin say:

What could Timothy personally do to prevent a growing interest in such misdirected actions? M. Dibelius and H. Conzelmann say, “The best medicine against the disease of ‘disputes about words’ is Timothy’s good conduct itself.”³

³M. Dibelius and H. Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 111.
pp. 214-15

They then say:

The good conduct included three features. First, Timothy was to make it his supreme ambition to obtain God’s approval (“Try hard to show yourself worthy of God’s approval,” NEB). Second, he was to be a workman with no reason to be ashamed. The term “workman” is frequently used in reference to an agricultural laborer (e.g., Jas 5:4), but here Paul used the term to describe a laborer for God. Paul was urging his Christian friend to work with such diligence that he would have no fear of shame for poor quality work. Third, this same workman (specifically, Timothy but by application today all believers) was to be accurate in delivering the message of truth.
p. 215

MacArthur says:

The supreme purpose of the diligent and selfless teacher is to please God. “For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God?” Paul asked Galatian believers. “Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ” (Gal. 1:10). Every Christian teacher and preacher should be able to say, “Just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who examines our hearts” (1 Thess. 2:4). His greatest desire is to hear his Master say, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matt. 25:21). Such a teacher or preacher is **a workman who does not need to be ashamed.**
p. 75

Hughes says:

Being one who “correctly handles” the Word requires getting it straight and giving it straight. “Correctly handles” has as its basis the Greek word *orthos* (“straight”), the same word from which we build words like *orthopedic* and *orthodoxy*. The exact charge to Timothy is to “impart the word of truth *without deviation, straight, undiluted.*” Here it refers to the straight, precise, careful communication of the word of truth, the gospel (cf. Ephesians 1:13; Colossians 1:5), which both have “the word of truth, the gospel”). This apostolic command to get it and give it straight has become a 2,000-year-old charge to all who are called to teach and preach the gospel.

p. 209

He says further:

This command draws the picture of a workman who has done his work well and therefore can submit it to his superior without hesitation or embarrassment.

p. 210

Quinn & Wacker paraphrase this as:

clears the way for the message of the truth.

p. 658

They then say:

Do your best to make yourself a fit offering to God, a workman who has no reason for shame, one who clears the way for the message of the truth. This verse stands in positive contrast to the preceding and following, a shaft of sunlight between banks of storm clouds.

p. 673

Larson says:

Timothy, and all who follow Christ, are to consecrate themselves to God, working diligently for his approval. The teacher whom God approves has no need of shame in his presence.

God bestows his approval on the one who exhibits truth, love, and godliness in daily living, and who **correctly handles the word of truth**.
p. 286

Liefeld says:

Timothy is not simply to court God's approval but to be the kind of worker and who is approved so that he can present himself to God. The word for "workman" was often used for agricultural workers.

p. 257

Hendriksen says:

Timothy's personal example must serve as a powerful weapon against error: . . .

p. 262

He then says:

Timothy must exert every effort so to conduct himself that even now *before the bar of God's judgment* he stands *approved*, that is, as one who, after thorough examination by no one less than the Supreme Judge, has the satisfaction of knowing that the latter is well-pleased with him and commends him . . .

p. 262

Hendriksen says further:

In the light of verses 14 and 16 the idea which Paul wishes to convey is clearly this, “*Handle* the word of the truth *rightly* instead of waging thoroughly useless word-battles which upset the listeners, and instead of paying any attention to profane, empty-chatter.”
p. 263

He says finally:

The man who handles the word of the truth properly does not change, pervert, mutilate, or distort it, neither does he use it with a wrong purpose in mind. On the contrary, he prayerfully interprets Scripture in the light of Scripture. He courageously, yet lovingly, applies its glorious meaning to concrete conditions and circumstances, doing this for the glory of God, the conversion of sinners, and the edification of believers.
p. 263

Patrick & Lowth say:

. . . he requires Timothy to separate from the preaching of the word all noxious and idle questions . . . all superfluous things, and give his hearers only “the sincere milk of the word:” and this sense agrees well with the preceding and the following words. Others think it refers to the cutting out a straight path to walk in; and so it is an admonition, saith Theodoret, to keep close to the truth of the gospel, in all his exhortations . . . “following the canon of the holy scriptures.”
p. 861

Hawthorne & Martin say:

Of primary importance in the process of building up God’s people is the regular and systematic exposition of Scripture, together with the teaching of “sound doctrine” by those equipped and appointed for the task . . .
p. 129

Remember it is:

EXPOSITORY PREACHING,

NOT SUPPOSITORY PREACHING!

Wilson says:

According to Arndt-Gingrich, the idea conveyed by the use of the word in Prov. 3. 6 and 11.5 is that of cutting a straight road through a forest or difficult country so that the traveller may go directly to his destination. This suggests that it here means: '*guide the word of truth along a straight path* (like a road that goes straight to its goal), without being turned aside by wordy debates or impious talk'.

pp. 144-5

Gaebelein says:

What a havoc has been wrought by a wrong dividing of the Word of Truth! Law and grace have been jumbled together, Israel robbed of her promises, and the church impoverished on account of it. The Word of God and the Truth of God have suffered most from the hands of such unskilled workmen, who, not dividing the Word of Truth rightly, have produced confusion worse confounded.

p. 189

He then says:

To insist upon "rightly dividing the Word of Truth" and to practice it both in teaching and living is a most essential requirement of the true workman.

p. 190

Wiersbe says:

The emphasis in this paragraph is that the workman needs to be diligent in his labors so that he will not be ashamed when his work is inspected. “Rightly dividing” means “cutting straight” and can be applied to many different tasks: plowing a straight furrow, cutting a straight board, sewing a straight seam.

The pastor is a workman in God’s Word. The Word is a treasure that the steward must guard and invest. It is the soldier’s sword and the farmer’s seed. But it is also the workman’s tool for building, measuring, and repairing God’s people. The preacher and teacher who use the Word correctly will build their church the way God wants it to be built. But a sloppy worker will handle God’s Word deceitfully in order to make it say what he wants it to say (2 Cor. 4:2). When God tests our ministries in His local churches, some of it, sad to say, will become ashes (1 Cor. 3:10ff).
pp. 134-5

He goes on to say:

Each of us as God’s workman will be either *approved* or *ashamed*. The word *approved* means “one who has been tested and found acceptable.” The word was used for testing and approving metals. Each trial that we go through forces us to study the Word to find God’s will. As we rightly use the Word, we succeed in overcoming our trials, and we are approved by God. Martin Luther once said that prayer, study, and suffering make a pastor; and this is true. We cannot be approved unless we are tested.

What does it mean to be “ashamed”? Certainly it means that such a workman’s work is below standard and cannot be accepted. It means loss of reward. In fact, in Paul’s day, a builder was fined if he failed to follow the specifications. When the Lord judges our works, it will be revealed whether we as workmen have handled the Word of God honestly and carefully.
p. 136

Calvin says:

We must be workmen who edify the church and do God’s work in such a way that it produces fruit. Then we will have no reason to be ashamed.
p. 138

Stott says:

First, the kind of work the Christian workman does is teaching. He is called to handle ‘the word of truth’.

Secondly, there are two kinds of workman. On the one hand, there are those who are ‘approved’, ‘tried and true’ (AG), who having been tested like coins or metals and passed the test are recognized as ‘sterling’; on the other hand there are those who are not approved, because they fail the test. The former group have ‘no need to be ashamed’, while the latter ought to be deeply ashamed of themselves.

Thirdly, the difference between these two categories concerns their handling or treatment of ‘the word of truth’, the good deposit.

So Paul sets these two kinds of teacher in contrast, and supplies an example of each.

p. 66

He then says:

The verb in verse 15 (*orthotomeō*), translated in RSV ‘rightly handling’ means literally not to ‘divide rightly’ (AV) but to ‘cut straight’. It is a very unusual word and occurs three times only in biblical Greek, once in the New Testament (this verse) and twice in the book of Proverbs, where in 3:6 we read ‘He will make straight your paths’, and in 11:5 ‘The righteousness of the blameless keeps his way straight’.

How then is ‘the word of truth’ being pictured that Timothy is commanded to make or cut it straight? Not as a sacrificial victim to be cut into pieces, as some ancient commentators thought; nor as a loaf, so that ‘Paul assigns to teachers the duty of carving or dividing the Word, like a father dividing the bread into small pieces to feed the children’; nor as a ribbon to be cut into strips, or a plot into allotments, as some modern dispensationalists teach; nor even, I think, as a stone which masons cut to fit into a building, as C. K. Barrett suggests; but rather as a road or path or—to be more modern—as a motorway or freeway needs to be cut straight through the countryside. Thus, Arndt and Gingrich define the verb as meaning to “‘cut a path in a straight direction” or “cut a road across country (that is forested or otherwise difficult to pass through) in a straight direction”, so that the traveller may go directly to his destination’.

p. 67

Lenski says:

Many are now proud, unashamed, challenging their faithful fellow workers to try to put them to shame, feeling very secure and laughing at their judgment; alas, when the eye of God at last examines them regarding their work, utter, eternal shame will overwhelm them.
p. 798

Barnes says:

Give diligence (2 Pet. ii. 10), or make an effort so to discharge the duties of the ministerial office as to meet the divine approbation. The object of the ministry is not to please men. Such doctrines should be preached, and such plans formed, and such a manner of life pursued, as God will approve.
p. 225

He then says:

A man faithfully performing his duty, so that when he looks over what he has done, he may not blush.
p. 225

A. T. Robertson says:

Handling aright [is a] Present active participle of *orthotomeō*, late and rare compound . . . cutting straight, . . . here only in N.T. It occurs in Proverbs 3:6; 11:5 for making straight paths . . . with which compare Heb. 12:13 and “the Way” in Acts 9:2. Theodoret explains it to mean ploughing a straight furrow. Parry argues that the metaphor is the stone mason cutting the stones straight since *temnō* and *orthos* are so used. Since Paul was a tent-maker and knew how to cut straight the rough camel-hair cloth, why not let that be the metaphor?
p. 619

J. Vernon McGee says:

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God.” You are to study, eager to do your utmost, to present yourself approved unto God. The workman here is evidently a teacher, which means he is to be a diligent student of the Word of God.

p. 467

He then says:

“Rightly dividing the word of truth” means to handle rightly the Word of God. To rightly divide the Word the Christian is to be a skilled workman like an artisan. The student of the Word must understand that the Word of God is one great bundle of truth and that it has certain right divisions. The Bible is built according to a certain law and structure, which must be observed and obeyed as you go through the Word of God.

p. 467

Matthew Henry says:

Workmen that are unskilful, or unfaithful, or lazy, have need to be ashamed; but those who mind their business, and keep to their work, are workmen that need not be ashamed. And what is their work? Not to invent a new gospel, but rightly to divide the gospel that is committed to their trust.

p. 1896

Guthrie said:

It is one thing solemnly to charge others and quite another to take oneself in hand. The danger of self-neglect was certainly not confined to Timothy, for its symptoms are universal. Yet the value of self-discipline cannot be too highly estimated, for the most effective refutation of error is for the teacher to be the living embodiment of truth, with God’s approval upon him.

p. 147

Guthrie then says:

The shame that any workman feels when the incompetence or shoddiness of his work is detected is used as a figure for the Christian ministry. *A workman that needeth not to be ashamed* must, therefore, be understood in the sense of a Christian teacher who can unblushingly submit his work for God's approval, like the men in the parable of the talents who had gained other talents.

p. 147

Knight says:

Since Timothy has been retaining Paul's words and passing them on . . . and since the false teachers were disputing them . . . Paul charges those who would be faithful not to dispute about these words. This correlation is borne out by Paul's admonition of Timothy (as an example to those he warns) to handle accurately "the word of truth" (v. 15), i.e., the apostolic message.

p. 410

He then says:

Paul urges Timothy to handle accurately "the word of truth" and thus be a positive example to those he is "charging" of a faithful person and good minister. Paul sets before him the goal of serving in such a way that God will approve of his labors.

p. 411

He then says:

Paul "lifts the whole question of attestation out of the hands of men and sets it in those of God. God alone decides this issue . . ."

p. 411

Knight then says:

The material that this worker is to handle correctly is “the word of truth” . . . Only when he handles it correctly will he be unashamed . . .
p. 412

He says finally:

The sense of the phrase here is probably best conveyed in the rendering “the message of the truth.” To handle this word correctly is to handle it in accord with its intention and to communicate properly its meaning . . .
p. 412

Griffiths says:

Do your best to present yourself to God, as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and correctly handles the word of truth (verse 15). Paul repeats the phrase *not . . . ashamed* which we met four times in chapter 1, referring to himself, Timothy and Onesiphorus. A worker should be ashamed of shoddy and incompetent work. The word ‘workman’ occurs sixteen times in the New Testament. Here it seems to refer to labourers who make roads, because the word translated as *correctly handles* (‘rightly divides’ AV) means literally ‘cut straight’. It refers to cutting roads in the only two other places it is used in Scripture: ‘He will make your paths straight’ (Proverbs 3:6); ‘The righteousness of the blameless makes a straight way for them’ (Proverbs 11:5).
pp. 187-8

Demarest says much the same thing:

The word translated “*rightly dividing*” in verse 15, literally means to “cut straight.” In the history of the interpretation of this passage, this has been taken to mean a number of things such as cutting a sacrificial animal into pieces, a piece of land into sections, a cloth into strips, or a father cutting bread for his family. I prefer the concept of making a straight road as with John the Baptist’s proclamation: “Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight” (Luke 3:4). To “cut straight” in this sense is to be as direct as possible in getting to the destination.

p. 265

I love the paraphrase of Paul saying in:

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (version unknown)

I run straight for the goal with purpose in every step.

Spurgeon says:

Timothy will neither to mutilate, nor twist, nor torture, nor break in pieces the word, nor keep on the outside of it, as those do who never touch the soul of a text, but rightly to divide it, as one taught of God to teach others.

p. 863

He then says:

He that rightly handles the word of God will never *use it to defend men in their sins*, but to slay their sins. If there be a professing Christian here who is living in known sin, shame upon him; and if there be a non-Christian man who is living in sin, let his conscience upbraid him. What will he do in that day when Christ comes to judge the hearts of men, and the books shall be opened, and every thought shall be read out before an assembled universe? I desire to handle the word of God so that no man may ever find an excuse in my ministry for his living without Christ, and living in sin, but may know clearly that sin is a deadly evil, and unbelief the sure destroyer of the soul. He has indeed been made to handle the word aright who plunges it like a two-edged sword into the very bowels of sin.

p. 864

“GUIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH ALONG A STRAIGHT PATH”
is to be the one thing we are to do.

We are to be FOCUSED in:

“GUIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH ALONG A STRAIGHT PATH.”

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

1 Thessalonians 2:13

And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God’s message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.

1 Peter 1:23

for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God.

Expectations

Most of us do not accomplish much because we do not expect to accomplish very much.

- A. B. Simpson indicated the majority of us when he said, “Our God has boundless resources. The only limit is in us. Our asking, our thinking, our praying are too small. Our expectations are too limited.”
- J. Hudson Taylor observed, “Many Christians estimate difficulties in the light of their own resources, and thus attempt little and often fail in the little they attempt.”

You Can Win!, Roger F. Campbell, 1985, SP Publications, pp. 10-11.

Multiple, 10,000 Sermon Illustrations, (Dallas, Texas Biblical Studies Press) 2000.

(Logos Library System)

Things to Consider

1. Cut your lofty goals in half.
2. Be specific about your goals.
3. Write down how you will do it.
4. Don't make too many resolutions.
5. Keep your goals realistic.
6. Consider finding a partner.
7. Keep track of your progress.
8. Think of each new day as a new beginning.

Source unknown

Multiple, 10,000 Sermon Illustrations, (Dallas, Texas Biblical Studies Press) 2000.

(Logos Library System)

Low Aim

The poet James Russell Lowell has said it so well:

Life is a leaf of paper white
Whereon each one of us may write
His word or two,
And then comes night.

Greatly begin, though thou have time
But for a line,
Be that sublime,
Not failure, but low aim, is crime.

The Pursuit of Excellence, Ted W. Engstrom, 1982,
Zondervan, p. 92.

Multiple, 10,000 Sermon Illustrations, (Dallas, Texas Biblical Studies Press) 2000.

(Logos Library System)

Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's a heaven for?

—ROBERT BROWNING (1812-1889)

Climb every mountain, ford every stream,
Follow every rainbow, 'til you find your dream.

—OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN (1895-1960)

Everyone should have a goal for which he is willing to exchange a piece
of his life.

—CARLYLE BOEHME

If it's going to be, it's up to me.

—ROBERT HAROLD SCHULLER (1926-)

(From Quick Verse 6.0)

It's not enough to be busy . . . the question is: What are we busy about?

—HENRY DAVID THOREAU (1817-1862)

Jesus knew where he had come from, why he was here, and what he was supposed to accomplish. He came down from heaven, not to do his own will, but the will of the Father. That determination controlled every decision he made.

As a result, he was not distracted with trivia. He was never in a hurry, for he knew his Father would not give a task without the time to do it. Christ was not driven by crises, feeling he must heal everyone in Israel. He could say, "It is finished," even when many people were still bound by demons and twisted by disease. What mattered ultimately was not the number of people healed or fed, but whether the Father's will was being done. His clearly defined goals simplified his decisions.

—ERWIN W. LUTZER (1941-)

Life without a goal is like entering a jewel mine and coming out with empty hands.

—JAPANESE PROVERB

More men fail through lack of purpose than through lack of talent.

—BILLY SUNDAY (1862-1935)

My goal is God himself, not joy nor peace,
Nor even blessing, but himself, my God;
'Tis his to lead me there, not mine, but his—
At any cost, dear Lord, by any road!

—F. BROOK

Nothing is more terrible than activity without insight.

—THOMAS CARLYLE (1795-1881)

Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off the goal.

—HANNAH MORE (1745-1833)

One half of knowing what you want is knowing what you must give up before you get it.

—SIDNEY COE HOWARD (1891-1939)

(From Quick Verse 6.0)

One ship drives east and another west, with the self-same winds that blow;
 'tis the set of the sails and not the gales that determines where they go.
 Like the winds of the sea are the ways of fate, as we voyage along through life;
 'tis the set of a soul that decides its goal—and not the calm or the strife.

—ELLA WHEELER WILCOX (1850-1919)

Our plans miscarry because they have no aim. When a man does not know
 what harbor he is making for, no wind is the right wind.

—LUCIUS ANNAEUS SENECA (C. 4 B.C.-A.D. 65)

The great thing in the world is not so much where we stand, as in what
 direction we are moving.

—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES (1809-1894)

The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.

—LAO-TSE (C. 604-C. 531 B.C.)

The man without a purpose is like a ship without a rudder—a waif,
 a nothing, a no man.

—THOMAS CARLYLE (1795-1881)

The vast neurotic misery of the world could be termed a neuroses of
 emptiness. Men cut themselves off from the root of their being, from God,
 and then life turns empty, inane, meaningless, without purpose. So when
 God goes, goal goes. When goal goes, meaning goes. When meaning goes,
 value goes, and life turns dead on our hands.

—CARL GUSTAV JUNG (1875-1961)

What is important is not where you come from but where you are going.

—BERNIE RHODES

Year by year we are becoming better equipped to accomplish the things we
 are striving for. But what are we actually striving for?

—BERTRAND DE JOUVENAL (1903-)

(From Quick Verse 6.0)

You can't drive straight on a twisting lane.

—RUSSIAN PROVERB

(From Quick Verse 6.0)

Effort

If you would hit the mark, you must aim a little above it;
Every arrow that flies feels the attraction of earth.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882), U.S. poet. *Elegiac Verse* (1880).

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A Sad Choice

On the table side by side;
A Holy Bible and the TV Guide,
One is well worn but cherished with pride,
(Not the Bible, but the TV Guide).
One is used daily to help folks decide,
No! It isn't the Bible; it's the TV Guide.
As pages are turned, what shall they see?
Oh, what does matter, turn on the TV.
So they open the book in which they confide
(No, not the Bible, it's the TV Guide).
The Word of God is seldom read,
Maybe a verse ere they fall into bed.
Exhausted and sleepy and tired as can be,
Not from reading the Bible, but watching TV.
So, then back to the table, side by side,
Is the Holy Bible and the TV Guide.
No time for prayer, no time for the Word;
The plan for salvation is seldom heard.
Forgiveness of sin so full and free
Is found in the Bible, not on TV!!

(From *Parson's Technology*)

HANDLE WITH CARE

In an excavation at Jerusalem, archeologist Gabriel Barkay uncovered a small copper scroll with writing on it from the Bible. This fragment of Scripture was brittle and tarnished with age. Barkay took it to his laboratory and worked with unbelievable patience and delicate care to unroll it without destroying it.

Dated around 400 BC, the scroll was a very important find because it contained the earliest written Hebrew name for God, *Yahweh* (or Jehovah). Apparently the scribe who copied it had broken with the practice of never writing that sacred name. Always before, because of their reverence for its holiness, Jewish scribes had felt unworthy to pen that special name.

The Bible is God's holy, inspired, infallible Word, and we must handle its truths with the same care Barkay gave to his discovery and the same reverence the copyists gave to God's name. Scripture comes to us from God's heart. Therefore, we must guard its message with integrity by "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). We must respect its every word. To take Scripture out of context or twist its meaning to serve our purposes or justify our own opinions is to dishonor God's Word and His name.

Let's always handle the Word of God with care. —DCE

*The Bible stands, and it will forever
When the world has passed away;
By inspiration it has been given—
All its precepts I will obey.* —Lillenas

**OPEN YOUR BIBLE PRAYERFULLY, READ IT CAREFULLY,
AND OBEY IT JOYFULLY.**

(From *Our Daily Bread*, Wednesday, June 8, 1994)

CUT YOUR OWN WOOD

**Be diligent to present yourself approved to God,
... rightly dividing the word of truth. 2 Timothy 2:15**

The most beneficial study of God's Word requires diligence and perseverance, but the results are worth the effort. A. B. Simpson said, "God has hidden every precious thing in such a way that it is a reward to the diligent, a prize to the earnest, but a disappointment to the slothful soul. All nature is arrayed against the lounge and the idler. The nut is hidden in its thorny case; the pearl is buried beneath the ocean waves; the gold is imprisoned in the rocky bosom of the mountains; the gem is found only after you crush the rock which encloses it; the very soil gives its harvest as a reward to the laboring farmer. So truth and God must be earnestly sought."

Henry Ford is credited with saying, "Cut your own wood and you warm yourself twice." What he meant was that the man who chops his own firewood not only enjoys the heat from the logs burning in his fireplace, but he also gets physically warmed from the exercise involved in his labor.

If you really want to enjoy your Bible, you should "cut your own wood" by studying things for yourself. Check the cross references, look up the meaning of key words, and ask God to show you how the passage on which you are meditating applies to your life. The truth you discover for yourself in the Word will have a fresh, new flavor.

Have you tried to "cut your own wood?" —H.G.B.

Thy Word is like a deep, deep mine,

And jewels rich and rare

Are hidden in its mighty depths

For every searcher there.

—Hodder

Every Christian should own a read Bible.

(From *Our Daily Bread*, Wednesday, August 10, year unknown)

TEACHING THAT OFFENDS

Not everyone who quotes the Bible teaches the truth of the Bible. As a result, well-meaning but misinformed preachers have caused some people to turn away from the Lord instead of to Him. This was in part the reason the famous author Mark Twain went through life vacillating between submission to God and rebellion against Him. From his writings, it appears he was greatly disturbed by some things he heard in church. He was repulsed by the practice of slavery, yet it was defended from the pulpit as a Biblically ordained institution. True, not all the blame for Mark Twain's agnosticism can be placed on the ministers he heard. He could have listened to others who didn't defend slavery. And he should have studied the New Testament for himself. But the fact remains that he was turned away from the church by so-called Bible teaching.

We must handle the Scriptures with integrity.

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

WHY NOT THE BEST?

When former President Jimmy Carter wrote his autobiography, he entitled it *Why Not the Best?* He selected that phrase because of an encounter he had with Admiral Hyman Rickover. As a young naval officer, Carter had applied to serve in Rickover's nuclear submarine program.

The admiral's first question to him was, "How did you stand in your class at the Naval Academy?"

Carter replied, "Sir, I was 59th in my class of 820." Instead of the congratulations he expected, Carter got another brusque question.

"Did you do your best?" asked Rickover. Carter started to say yes, but memories of how he had sloughed off and taken it easy during those years came back to his mind. He had to answer honestly, "No, sir, I didn't always do my best." Then Admiral Rickover looked him in the eye and hit him with a question that burned into his soul, "Why not?"

Since that time Jimmy Carter has lived with the conviction that all God expects of us is that we do the best we can with what we have.

[Christian Century, Apr 9, 1997. Page 355.]

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

(Let Me Illustrate by Donald Grey Barnhouse)

When the jumble around the starting line of a certain yacht race cleared, the helmsman of the leading yacht remarked rather uneasily, "I never expected to find myself in the lead." He made the same remark several times, but his crew told him it was nothing to complain about. As they rounded the first mark, well ahead, he said, "I think we'll have to let this boat pass us." "No we'll not," said the crew, "we're doing fine." "The trouble is," said the helmsman, "that I don't know where to go next. I was so sure there would be other boats in front that I didn't take the trouble to study the course."

There are too many Christians who will have a poor place in heaven because they are living their Christian lives like this helmsman. They were meant to be conquerors, but the last shall be first and the first last because they did not study to show themselves approved unto God—workmen that need not be ashamed.

p. 47

Gallup Poll

A Gallup poll conducted some years ago revealed that 60 percent of Americans did not know what "the Holy Trinity" was. Sixty-six percent couldn't say who delivered the Sermon on the Mount, and 79 percent were unable to name a single Old Testament prophet. When people are questioned about the Bible on radio or television, it is remarkable and disconcerting to see their complete lack of knowledge on the subject. Some are almost as confused as the little boy who wrote on his test paper that "the epistles were the wives of the apostles, and that Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife."

(From *Parson's Technology*)

"There are a good many problems before the American people today, and before me as President, but I expect to find the solution of those problems just in the proportion that I am faithful in the study of the Word of God."

"I ask every man and woman . . . that from this day on they will realize that part of the destiny of America lies in their daily perusal of this great book."

—Woodrow Wilson 28th President

(From *Parson's Technology*)

Open the Love Letter

The Bible is actually a beautiful “love letter” from God, and the writer of Psalm 119 admonished us to delight in its message and to meditate upon its contents. How sad that many Christians neglect it!! Sadder still that countless lost souls have never opened the Book at all.

When Elizabeth Barrett became the wife of Robert Browning, her parents disowned her because they disapproved of the marriage. The daughter, however, wrote almost every week, telling them that she loved them and longed for a reconciliation. After 10 years she received a huge box in the mail that contained all the notes she had sent. Not one had been opened! Although these “love letters” have become an invaluable part of classical English literature, it’s really pathetic to think that they were never read by Elizabeth Barrett’s parents. Had they looked at just one, the broken relationship with their daughter might have been healed.

All of us are alienated from God because of sin. But He has provided a way of reconciliation. In the Bible He tells about it, and also expresses His earnest longing for fellowship with us.

If you are a born-again child of God, how precious His love message from Heaven ought to be to you! Are you reading it often? If you are not a believer and pay no attention to the Bible, you’re no different from Elizabeth Barrett’s parents. You’re cheating yourself, and someday you’ll stand before God condemned and lost forever. Then you’ll wish you had opened and read His “love letter” to you. Why not do it right now?

(From *Parson’s Technology*)

THE UNIVERSE AND PEANUTS

George Washington Carver once asked God to tell him about the universe. According to Carver, the Lord replied, “George, the universe is just too big for you to understand. Suppose you let Me take care of that.” Humbled, he replied, “Lord, how about a peanut?” The Lord said, “Now, George, that’s something your own size. Go to work on it and I’ll help you.” When Carver was done studying the peanut, he had discovered over 300 products that could be made with that little bit of God’s universe.

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

ONE THING I DO

In the book *The Vance Havner Devotional Treasury*, the author wrote, “I shall never forget Dr. R. A. Torrey saying to me as a young preacher, ‘Young man, make up your mind on one thing and stick to it.’” Havner comments, “The Christian life should be like a sword with one point, not like a broom ending in many straws. Such a single purpose forgets the past, reaches toward the future, and presses on. There is no time or place for side issues, diversions to the right or to the left. There is no place for hands on the plow with eyes looking back. Paul was a one-track man, but you can go a long way on one track!”

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

One great cause of failure of young men in business is the lack of concentration.
—Andrew Carnegie

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

Consider the postage stamp: its usefulness consists in the ability to stick to one thing till it gets there.
—Josh Billings

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

A leader is a person with a magnet in his heart and a compass in his head.
—Vance Havner

(From *Parson's Technology*)

Goals and plans are the magic keys to happiness and success! Only 3 percent of all people have goals and plans and write them down. Ten percent more have goals and plans, but keep them in their heads. The rest—87 percent—drift through life without definite goals or plans. They do not know where they are going and others dictate to them.

Let's examine these statistics further. The 3 percent who have goals and plans that are written down accomplish from fifty to one hundred times more during their life than the 10 percent who have goals and plans and merely keep them in their heads. These statistics alone should motivate you to set definite personal goals, establish a plan of action for their fulfillment, and then commit both your goals and plans to writing. Please note, the Creator committed his goals and plans to writing in the Holy Bible!

(From *Parson's Technology*)

As we move into the 21st century, the church should take note of the following: "The future belongs to those who see possibilities before they become obvious."

—*The Marketing Imagination*

(From *Parson's Technology*)

One of the things that the proclamation of "THE WORD OF TRUTH" does for us is that it:

ALLOWS US TO CONFRONT THE PROBLEM OF SIN.

(Experiencing Spiritual Breakthroughs: The Powerful Principle of the Three Chairs by Dr. Bruce H. Wilkinson)

Calvin, the cartoon theologian, introduces our topic for this chapter: "short-term, stupid self-interest."

p. 106

(Experiencing Spiritual Breakthroughs: The Powerful Principle of the Three Chairs by Dr. Bruce H. Wilkinson)

Call it a Personal Sin Profile if you will. The questions go something like this:

1. What day of the week do you sin the most?
2. What time of the day do you sin the most?
3. Where are you when you sin the most?
4. Who is with you when you sin the most?
5. What is the sin you commit the most in these circumstances?
6. What are the specific emotions you feel right before you sin?

p. 108

(Sport Shorts Calendar by Jay Carty)

Without organization and leadership toward a realistic goal, there is no chance of realizing more than a small percentage of your potential.

John Wooden, College Basketball Coach

(November 14)

(Diamonds in the Dust: 366 Sparkling Devotions by Joni Eareckson Tada)

We would take giant steps forward in our fellowship with the Lord if we would but take our eyes and hands off what is not permitted and place our eyes on Jesus and our hands on His Word.

(October 9)

(The Message: Proverbs by Eugene H. Peterson)

Proverb 21

Careful planning puts you ahead in the long run;
hurry and scurry puts you further behind.

p. 70

(The Key to Everything by Jack Hayford)

*God never tells us
that we can't have
dreams, desires,
longings or fulfillment.
He only warns us against
being controlled by
the fear of not having
them on our schedule
or of seeking them
on our own terms.*

p. 156

(God's Little Devotional Book on Success by Honor Books)

**There is nothing like
a fixed, steady aim,
with an honorable
purpose. It dignifies
your nature, and
insures your success.**

■ ■ ■

Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.
Ephesians 5:17

For a boy named Sparky, school was nearly impossible. He failed every subject in the eighth grade and later, in high school, distinguished himself as the worst physics student in the school's history. He also flunked Latin, Algebra, and English. He didn't find much success in sports and was awkward socially. He wasn't *disliked* by his peers; more accurately, nobody noticed him. He never had the nerve to ask a girl out on a date. He simply plodded along, knowing that he had the reputation of a loser.

One thing was important to Sparky, however. Drawing. He was proud of his own artwork even if no one else appreciated it. As a senior in high school, his cartoons were turned down by the editors of the school yearbook. In spite of this painful rejection, he believed he would one day become a professional artist. After graduation, he wrote to the Walt Disney Studios and sent samples of his work. He was rejected. So Sparky wrote his autobiography in cartoons, and soon, his portrayal of his own life was world famous.

Sparky, the nickname for Charles Schulz, had created the "Peanuts" comic strip. He *was* Charlie Brown.⁶⁴

Every person has at least one talent. And if you develop it, that's all it takes.

⁶⁴*Earl Nightingale's Greatest Discovery*, Earl Nightingale (NY: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1987), pp. 102, 103.
pp. 142-3

(Truth for Each Day: Meditations for Every Day of the Year by
Vance Havner)

29 DOING OR DABBLING?

... *This one thing I do.... Philippians 3:13*

PAUL DID ONE thing. Most of us dabble in forty things. Like butterflies we flit about looking into this and that but we are deeply concerned about nothing. We are like the Hollywood actress who said, "I'm interested in everything a little bit." All of Paul was going in one direction. His was not the sin of dissipated devotion. Too many church members today have only a smattering of spiritual knowledge. "Church" is just one of a score of interests like bridge and the lodge and the garden club and stamp collecting and politics and raising funds for the Sons and Daughters of I Will Arise. Such dabblers are sold out to nothing. Their energies are frittered in all directions. They aim at everything in general and hit nothing in particular.

When a man like Paul comes along he is very disturbing to such people. Really, they can't see why anybody should get so worked up over religion. Such red-hot devotion shows up their pale zeal and rebukes their lukewarmness. Our Lord made the terms of discipleship hard when he dealt with prospects who were not totally committed. The rich young ruler must sell out. No man could put his hand to the plow and look back. Let the dead bury their dead.

Many years ago when I was a dabbling young man, Dr. R. A. Torrey charged me to decide on one thing and stay with it. It was good advice and I have tried to follow it. Are you a doer or a dabbler?

pp. 108-109

(Boomerang Joy: Joy That Goes Around, Comes Around by Barbara Johnson)

As you dream, keep in mind these ABCs.

Aim high.
Believe in God.
Consider your options
Don't give up.
Enrich your soul.
Find faith in doubt.
Go for the grace.
Hang on.
Ignore discouragement.
Just let Jesus!
Keep trying.
Love life.
Make merry.
Never say, "I can't."
Open your mind.
Pray hard.
Quit whining.
Read the Bible.
Stay strong.
Take on the challenge.
Understand the obstacles.
Value virtue.
Wait patiently.
X-ccelerate hope.
Yield to the Holy Spirit.
Zero in on joy.

pp. 230-31

(Churchill on Leadership: Executive Success in the Face of Adversity
by Steven F. Hayward)

It was, Churchill said, a “fluid, friendly, but unfocused circle.” Since the committee had no power of final decision, its frequent internal disagreements were kicked back upstairs to the war cabinet for resolution, defeating the very purpose of the committee.

p. 56

It is always wise to look ahead, but difficult to look farther than you can see.
— WINSTON S. CHURCHILL, 1952

p. 79

(Getting the Right Things Right by Charlie Hedges)

John Sculley was a riser who had moved through the ranks and up the ladder of success at PepsiCo faster than anyone, ever. He had joined the company in 1967, and in just seven years, at the age of thirty-four, he became president of Pepsi Cola. In 1973 his picture was on the cover of *Newsweek* magazine, and he found himself quoted regularly by all the highly regarded business journals. It would seem he had “arrived.”

In the early eighties, Steve Jobs, the creative genius behind an almost unknown company called Apple Computer, approached Sculley with a radical idea. Jobs had decided that Sculley was the ideal executive to take Apple to the next level. His only problem was convincing Sculley. After several months of friendship building and unsuccessful wooing, a frustrated Jobs made his last-ditch appeal. On the penthouse floor of a New York City high-rise, Steve Jobs asked John Sculley the question that would change his life: *“John, do you want to spend the rest of your life selling sugared water, or do you want a chance to change the world?”*

Sculley was never the same. A short time later, to the shock of many, he resigned his position at Pepsi and became CEO of Apple Computer.

pp. 7-8

(The Power of Prayer in a Believer's Life by Charles Spurgeon, compiled and edited by Robert Hall)

All students of the Word will tell you that when the hammers of learning and biblical exegesis have failed to break open a flinty text, oftentimes prayer has done it, and nuggets of gold have been found concealed therein. To every student of the Word of God who would become a well-instructed scribe, we pass along this wise saying: with all your searchings of the commentaries, with all your diggings into the original texts, with all your research among biblical scholars, *minge much fervent prayer*. Rest assured that the old maxim, "To have prayed well is to have studied well," is worthy to be written not only upon the walls of our schools but also upon the tablets of our hearts. If you will place the Book of inspiration before your attentive eye and ask the Lord to open its meaning, the exercise of prayer itself shall be blessed by God to put your soul in the best position in which to get at the hidden meaning that lies concealed from the eye of the worldly wise. It is remarkable what is clearly manifested to meek and lowly souls when they reverently seek the guidance of their heavenly Father.

p. 78

(Are Christians Destroying America? How to Restore a Decaying Culture
by Tony Evans)

Why hasn't America been able to solve its racial problems after 250 years of discussions and legal wrangling? Because not enough people want to deal with the truth. And the church has helped to prolong the process by its own reluctance to come to grips with the truth.

When you deal with truth it doesn't take a quarter of a millennium to decide what's right. When you deal with truth you save a lot of time. When you deal with truth you can get to the bottom line in a hurry.

A few years ago a man in our church came to me upset because so many white people were coming. He said, "We're getting a lot of whites at Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship. I'm afraid they're going to take over. What are you going to do about it, Pastor?"

I said, "I'm not going to do anything. But if you're that worried and you want more blacks in here, then you had better go do some black evangelism."

He said, "Well, I'm upset and I'm leaving."

I said, "Bye." It wasn't hard. It didn't require any long counseling sessions. Now you may be saying, "He was probably raised that way. He just needed time."

Well, he may have needed time to adjust his heart, but the issue was that he needed to correct his speech right away because he wasn't acting according to truth. It's OK to give people time for their emotions to catch up. But you can insist that they adjust their actions immediately. We need to be able to make these distinctions because there is such a thing as truth.

p. 119

(The Game and the Glory: An Autobiography by Michelle Akers with
Gregg Lewis)

The team is looking good—fit, fast, and focused. We are going to win.
p. 194

(Illustrations Unlimited by James S. Hewett, editor)

GOALS SHORT-TERM

Charlie Brown is at bat. **STRIKE THREE.** He has struck out again and slumps over to the bench. “Rats! I’ll never be a big-league player. I just don’t have it! All my life I’ve dreamed of playing in the big leagues, but I know I’ll never make it.”

Lucy turns to console him. “Charlie Brown, you’re thinking too far ahead. What you need to do is set yourself more immediate goals.”

He looks up. “Immediate goals?”

Lucy says, “Yes. Start with this next inning when you go out to pitch. See if you can walk out to the mound without falling down!”

p. 156

GOD’S NEEDS

John Wesley once received a note that said: “The Lord has told me to tell you that He doesn’t need your book-learning, your Greek and your Hebrew.”

Wesley answered, “Thank you, sir. Your letter was superfluous, however, as I already knew the Lord has no need for my ‘book-learning,’ as you put it. However, although the Lord has not directed me to say so, on my own responsibility I would like to say to you that the Lord does not need your ignorance either.”

p. 315

(Shipwreck at the Bottom of the World: The Extraordinary True Story of Shackleton and the Endurance by Jennifer Armstrong)

On January 5, 1922, the *Quest* sailed into Grytviken Harbor and dropped anchor. As always, the air was filled with the smell of rotting whale carcasses and the sound of elephant seals bellowing and belching on the beach. Late in the night, with the summer twilight still brightening the sky, Dr. Macklin was called to Shackleton's cabin. Shackleton had had another heart attack.

“You’ll have to change your way of life, Boss,” Macklin said.

“You’re always wanting me to give up things. What is it I ought to give up?”

The one thing he had truly to give up was the Antarctic, and that he could not do. He died a few minutes after Macklin came to him.

He was buried there, on South Georgia Island.

Here’s to the long white road that beckons,
The climb that baffles, the risk that nerves.
And here’s to the merry heart that reckons
The rough with the smooth and never swerves.

—from a New Zealand school song,
one of Shackleton’s favorites

pp. 125-6

Truth

Familiarity breeds contempt. How accurate that is. The reason we hold truth in such respect is because we have so little opportunity to get familiar with it.

Mark Twain (1835-1910), U.S. author. *Notebook* ch. 31 (ed. by Albert Bigelow Paine, 1935), entry for 1898.

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(First Things First by Stephen R. Covey, A. Roger Merrill, & Rebecca R. Merrill)

We know not of the future, and cannot plan for it much. But we can hold our spirits and our bodies so pure and high, we may cherish such thoughts and such ideals, and dream such dreams of lofty purpose, that we can determine and know what manner of men we will be whenever and wherever the hour strikes that calls to noble action. . . . No man becomes suddenly different from his habit and cherished thought.

—Joshua L. Chamberlain, General Commander,
20th Maine, Union Forces, Battle of Gettysburg

p. 279

Goal setting is obviously a powerful process. It's based on the same principle of focus that allows us to concentrate rays of diffused sunlight into a force powerful enough to start a fire. It's the manifestation of creative imagination and independent will. It's the practicality of "eating our elephants one bite at a time," of translating vision into achievable, actionable doing. It's a common denominator of successful individuals and organizations.

p. 136

If we don't translate vision into action, we lose touch with reality, become idealistic dreamers, and lose credibility with ourselves and with others.

pp. 154-5

(First Things First by Stephen R. Covey, A. Roger Merrill, & Rebecca R. Merrill)

Viktor Frankl said we don't invent our mission; we detect it. It's within us waiting to be realized.

Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life; everyone must carry out a concrete assignment that demands fulfillment. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated. Thus, everyone's task is unique as his specific opportunity to implement it.

Nineteenth-century social reformer and writer William Ellery Channing had this to say:

Every human being has a work to do, duties to perform, influence to exert, which are peculiarly his, and which no conscience but his own can teach.

p. 110

Isaiah 43:18, 19

“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? . . .

Isaiah 43:25

“I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.

The verse we have been studying is the **KEY VERSE** to the whole book. May I say, it is the **KEY THOUGHT** to “**MAKING A FANTASTIC FINISH.**”

“**MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO PRESENT YOURSELF TO GOD, APPROVED, AS A WORKMAN WHO DOES NOT NEED TO BE ASHAMED, GUIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH ALONG A STRAIGHT PATH.**”

It is the Word of God which must be central in the heart and life of any individual who is anticipating “**MAKING A FANTASTIC FINISH.**”

It is time for us to be preparing for the finals by faithfully studying the Word of God in anticipation of that **FINAL EXAMINATION.**

It was Jacques Ellul who said:

“Hope is not inactivity, it is the strenuous reordering of one’s inner self in anticipation for the things to come.”
(source unknown)

If you are not presently making the Word of God **CENTRAL** in your priorities, you will not make a fantastic finish.

Mark 4:19

and the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

1 John 3:21, 22

Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

v. 16 But be avoiding profane, empty talk; for they will make further progress in ungodliness.

Whereas, the COMMAND in:

verse 14 was “These things be reminding them, charging them in the presence of God” involved Timothy’s MINISTRY,

verse 15 was “Make every effort to present yourself to God” has to do with the MAN himself, Timothy.

We now return to the PROBLEM in Ephesus with the COMMAND in:

verse 16—“BE AVOIDING PROFANE, EMPTY TALK” which has to do with the MENACE to the ministry there.

The word “BUT” forms the CONTRAST to what he has had to say in verse 15.

TWO THINGS happen when you begin to “dispute about words” in verse 14:

1. “not even one useful thing” comes from it and
2. “[is] ruining the ones who are hearing.”

We see TWO MORE THINGS that result from not “AVOIDING PROFANE, EMPTY TALK:”

1. “THEY MAKE FURTHER PROGRESS IN UNGODLINESS” in verse 16 and
2. “THEIR WORD WILL SPREAD AS DOES CANCER” in verse 17.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Timothy was to **avoid godless chatter** . . . which only advances ungodliness like **gangrene** . . .
p. 754

1 Timothy 6:20 (DAV)

O Timothy, guard the deposit, turning away from profane and empty talk and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge—

Griffiths says:

Lazy Christians who misuse Scripture through shoddy preparation hinder the progress of the gospel.

Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly (verse 16). There are unapproved workmen, who (literally) ‘will advance’, perhaps a slogan of the false teachers, who will indeed make progress (ironically), but in the wrong direction towards ungodliness! Paul has a gift with words.

p. 188

Knight says:

“They will arrive at an ever greater measure of godlessness’ = become more and more involved in godlessness” . . . It may be that these people regarded themselves as “progressives” and that Paul picks up the verb from their usage, ironically indicating that their progress is in ungodliness.

p. 413

Matthew Henry says:

The way of error is down-hill. The infecting of one often proves the infecting of many, or the infecting of the same person with one error often proves the infecting of him with many errors.

p. 1896

Liefeld says:

Verse 16 deals once again with the activities of the false teachers. Verse 14 had warned against useless, destructive quarreling, verse 15 urged a correct handling of the truth, and verse 16 counsels against “godless chatter” . . . This empty talk is devoid of religious value and consequently leads “into more and more impiety” (NRSV). Such talk is to be avoided, and there will be a progression downward toward ungodliness (a sarcastic statement). In contrast, 1 Timothy 4:15 describes true progress in godliness (using a similar word).

p. 258

1 Timothy 4:15, 16

Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress may be evident to all. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things; for as you do this you will insure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.

Larson says:

The phrase “godless chatter” describes the empty babbling of false teachers. Their doctrines may have been quite organized and intricate, but Paul labeled them “chatter” because they were without substance.

p. 286

Quinn & Wacker say:

Steer clear, however, of “profane drivel,” for it progresses ever more deeply into godlessness. With an abrupt contrast (de) [or but], the correct exposition of the apostolic gospel by Timothy is coupled with the once-for-all (aorist) admonition . . . “Steer clear,” . . .

p. 677

Hughes says:

Having instructed Timothy to warn the Ephesians about mishandling God's Word in their word fights, and having instructed Timothy on how to correctly handle the Word of truth, Paul returns to the subject of mishandling it through too much talk: "Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly" (v. 16).

p. 211

Lea & Griffin say:

Paul urged Timothy to make a positive contribution to the fight against false teaching. He was continually to keep away from "godless chatter." The use of the present imperative for "avoid" suggests that Timothy had to remain continually alert to the threat of heresy.

p. 215

They then say:

The term "godless" shows that the debates of the heretics had nothing to do with real godliness. The term "chatter" pictures the discussions of the heretics as aimless and empty. Paul had used the same words in 1 Tim 6:20.

p. 215

Fee says:

With this imperative Paul moves back to those who are not "approved," because they do not "correctly handle the word of truth" (v. 15).

p. 255

Milne says:

These are empty noises full of high-sounding terms but signifying nothing. The people who engage in this kind of blabbering ruin their own lives by becoming increasingly ungodly. Falsehood ruins morals. The only wise and safe response when confronted by religious novelty and speculation is to have nothing to do with it.

p. 152

Towner says:

False teaching bears fruit, but the fruit is rotten. It produces death or separation from God, and a way of life so marked. (2) *Ungodliness* depicts this way of life as the exact opposite of genuine Christianity, which Paul defined with the term “godliness.”

p. 183

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown say:

[To] **shun**—lit., “stand above,” separate from, and superior to. **vain**—opposed to “the truth” (vs. 15).

p. 1377

They, speaking on the word “increase,” say:

increase—*Greek*, “advance”; lit., “strike forward”: an image from pioneers *cutting* away all obstacles *before* an advancing army. They pretend *progress*; the only kind of *progress* they make is to a greater pitch of impiety.”

more ungodliness—*Greek*, “a greater degree of impiety.”

p. 1377

1 Timothy 4:1, 2

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own consciences as with a branding iron,

2 Timothy 3:1-7

But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these. For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

“DON’T WORRY ABOUT IT!”

Over fifty years ago, Japanese planes bombed Pearl Harbor. The United States suffered tremendous losses, including the death of 2,400 military personnel. Franklin D. Roosevelt described December 7, 1941, as “a date which will live in infamy.”

Enemy planes were still 50 minutes away when two U. S. soldiers manning a small radar station in the Pacific saw many dots show up on their radar screen. They immediately reported it to their superior officer, a young lieutenant. Assuming that the dots were U.S. planes, he said, “Don’t worry about it.” Tragedy followed! Someone has said that that one man, “at the most responsible moment of his career, failed the nation.”

Most of us will never face such a severe test. We all, however, come in contact with people who need to be warned. People all around us need to hear before it’s too late.

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

One of the hardest things in this world to do is to admit you are wrong.
And nothing is more helpful in resolving a situation than its frank admission.
<Unknown>

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

The three foundations of learning: seeing much, suffering much, and studying much.

—Caterall

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

Preach the Word

The story is told about an Old American Indian who attended a church service one Sunday morning. The preacher's message lacked real spiritual food, so he did a lot of shouting and pulpit pounding to cover up his lack of preparation. In fact, as it is sometimes said, he "preached up quite a storm." After the service, someone asked the Indian, who was a Christian, what he thought of the minister's message. Thinking for a moment, he summed up his opinion in six words: "High wind. Big thunder. No rain." Yes, when the Scriptures are neglected, there is "no rain." Only when preaching is based on God's Word are His people blessed and refreshed.

(From *Parson's Technology*)

Once a spider built a beautiful web in an old house. He kept it clean and shiny so that flies would patronize it. The minute he got a “customer” he would clean up on him so the other flies would not get suspicious.

Then one day this fairly intelligent fly came buzzing by the clean spider web. Old man spider called out, “Come in and sit.” But the fairly intelligent fly said, “No, sir. I don’t see other flies in your house, and I am not going in alone!”

But presently he saw on the floor below a large crowd of flies dancing around on a piece of brown paper. He was delighted! He was not afraid if lots of flies were doing it. So he came in for a landing.

Just before he landed, a bee zoomed by, saying, “Don’t land there, stupid! That’s flypaper!” But the fairly intelligent fly shouted back, “Don’t be silly. Those flies are dancing. There’s a big crowd there. Everybody’s doing it. That many flies can’t be wrong!” Well, you know what happened. He died on the spot.

Some of us want to be with the crowd so badly that we end up in a mess. What does it profit a fly (or a person) if he escapes the web only to end up on the glue?

—*The Log*, Published by the Navigators

(From *Parson’s Technology*)

(Sport Shorts Calendar by Jay Carty)

Don’t tell me how rocky the sea is.

Just bring the ship in.

Lou Holtz, College Football Coach

(May 6)

We have a choice of two game plans in life:

God’s way or man’s way. God’s way leads to victory and man’s way leads to death.

William White, NFL Safety

(May 22)

(God's Little Devotional Book for Men by Honor Books, Inc.)

**A man who wants
to lead the
orchestra must
turn his back
on the crowd.**

n n n

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord.
2 Corinthians 6:17

A biologist once experimented with what he called “processional caterpillars.” He lined up caterpillars on the rim of a pot that held a plant so that the lead caterpillar was head-to-tail with the last caterpillar, with no break in the parade. The tiny creatures walked around the rim of the pot for a full week before they died of exhaustion and starvation. Not once did any of the caterpillars break out of the line and venture over into the plant to eat. Food was only inches away, but the follow-the-leader instinct was even stronger than the drive to eat and survive!

When we find ourselves in a rut, we do well to ask ourselves these three questions:

1) *Is this rut of my own making?* We tend to choose a rut because it's comfortable and requires no risk. To get out of a rut, make new choices!

2) *Who am I following?* We adopt certain patterns in our lives because someone has taught them to us directly or by example. Make sure you are following good leaders; don't simply follow the crowd.

3) *Where am I going?* Ruts develop when we lose a sense of vision for our lives . . . when we are “just traveling” through life and not attempting to arrive at a destination. Goals take you somewhere!

pp. 122-3

(Churchill on Leadership: Executive Success in the Face of Adversity
by Steven F. Hayward)

[It was Winston Churchill who said:]

Early in World War II he had the same complaint: “We have never done anything but follow the line of least resistance. That leads only to perdition.”
p. 86

(Inspiring Quotations compiled by Albert M. Wells, Jr.)

I am more and more impressed with the fact that it is never the ink of the theologian but always the blood of the martyr that is the seed of the church. Let's not despise the ink. . . . But let's not pretend it's blood.

—**Elwyn Davies**

p. 202

(Illustrations Unlimited by James S. Hewett, editor)

LISTEN WHILE SHUT

It's impossible for a worthwhile thought to enter your mind through an open mouth.

p. 318

(Lighten Up! by Ken Davis)

I felt like Charlie Brown in that "Peanuts" cartoon in which the characters are lying on the ground watching clouds. "That cloud looks like a reproduction of Rembrandt's 'The Night Watch,'" observed Lucy.

"I see Michaelangelo's 'David,'" says Linus. "What do you see, Charlie Brown?"

Charlie Brown hesitates. "I was going to say I saw a ducky and a horsey, but never mind."

p. 207

"BUT BE AVOIDING PROFANE, EMPTY TALK."

The REASON for this COMMAND is:

"FOR THEY WILL MAKE FURTHER PROGRESS IN UNGODLINESS."

v. 17 And their word will spread as does cancer. Of whom are Hymenaeus and Philetus,

The word “AND” here CONNECTS the thoughts of verse 17 with those of the previous verse. Not only will they “make further progress in ungodliness” BUT:

“THEIR WORD WILL SPREAD AS DOES CANCER.”

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

The medical image is striking. Participating with those who engage in such profane speculations will only, literally, “give their words a feeding place like gangrene.” They must be amputated instead. Two who deserved such treatment were **Philetus** about whom nothing is known, and **Hymenaeus**, whom Paul had already “delivered over to Satan” for chastisement (1 Tim. 1:20).

p. 754

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown say:

They pretend to give rich spiritual *pasture* to their disciples: the only *pasture* is that of a spiritual cancer feeding on their vitals.

p. 1377

Towner says:

This medical imagery depicts false teaching as utterly unhealthy, unsound, destroying wholeness, in contrast to the health-producing gospel (see on 1 Tim 1:10).

p. 183

Milne says:

In Ephesus two individuals stood out as ringleaders in the growth of the new ideas—**Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus**. Hymenaeus had already been put out of the church for his rejection of Christian morality (1 Tim. 1:20), here he is putting false interpretations on the Christian doctrine of the resurrection (verse 18).

p. 153

Fee says:

Two of these teachers are now identified: **Hymenaeus and Philetus**. Since **Hymenaeus** is not a common name, this must be the same man whom Paul “handed over to the power of Satan” in 1 Timothy 1:20 but who is still at work **destroying the faith of some**. He is now joined by a **Philetus**, of whom nothing more is known.

p. 256

Lea & Griffin say:

Not only would these people advance in ungodliness, but their teaching would spread to cause ruin. The spread of their heresy furthered the spread of ungodliness. Their influence on other believers would be disastrous. The term “spread” is an idiom with the literal meaning of *have pasture*. Alford suggests that “pasture” is “the medical term for the consuming progress of mortifying disease.”⁷ Paul compared the spread of the heresy to the spread of gangrene through the body. The term for gangrene, used only here in the New Testament, describes the death of bodily tissues due to the loss of blood supply. Just as gangrene progressively brought death to the human body, the sickening progress of the heretical teaching worked havoc with the body of Christ in Ephesus.

⁷H. Alford, “The Second Epistle of Timotheus,” *GT*, 5th ed. (Boston: Lee and Shepherd, 1888), 3:385.

p. 216

Lea & Griffin say further:

Paul presented the names of two heretics. Hymenaeus was not a common name, and he was probably the same as the “Hymenaeus” of 1 Tim 1:20. Apparently he was brazen enough in his impiety to have ignored Paul’s earlier ban. The fact that he could ignore Paul’s earlier ban demonstrates the circumstances in Ephesus. Nothing more is mentioned in the Bible about Philetus.
p. 216

Larson says:

Just as the teaching they followed was rotten, so its foul and corrupt nature infected more and more people. In contrast, truth is always life producing, creating wholeness and health. Paul gave two examples of leaders who abandoned the faith and whose spurious teachings brought destructive results: **Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have wandered away from the truth.**
pp. 286-7

Larson says:

“True Christian behavior is not a means to an end.
It is the expression of reality—of who we really are
and of who God is.”
Peter Haile

p. 278

Knight says:

The coordinating $\chi\alpha\iota$ [which is translated “and”] joins the first clause of this verse to the preceding clause as the second reason for avoiding “godless empty talk” (v. 16). This time Paul speaks of the effect on others of such talk, “implying,” under the image of a spreading disease, “that their teaching will feed upon, or eat away at, the life of the church” (Fee).
p. 413

Guthrie says:

. . . ‘Their teaching finds pasture (i.e. a grazing ground) as easily as a gangrene spreads in the human body’. Both the expressins *nomēn echein* (to have a pasture and *gangraina* (*gangrene*) belong to the current medical vocabulary. The metaphor illustrates insidiousness and nothing could more suitably describe the manner of advancement of most false teaching, whether ancient or modern.

p. 149

Barnes says:

The words rendered “will eat,” mean *will have nutriment*; that is, will spread over and consume the healthful parts. It will not merely destroy the parts immediately affected, but will extend into the surrounding healthy parts and destroy them also. So it is with erroneous doctrines. They will not merely eat out the truth in the particular matter to which they refer, but they will also spread over and corrupt other truths.

p. 226

He then says further:

They have gained an undesirable immortality, destined to be known to the end of time only as the advocates of error.

p. 226

Wiersbe says:

Much as gangrene spreads, infects, and kills other tissue, so false doctrine spreads and infects the body of believers, the church. This infection must be exposed and removed. Only the “sound [healthy] doctrine” of the Word of God can keep a church healthy and growing.

p. 135

Gaebelein says:

How true it is that error is like a gangrene, spreading vileness and corruption everywhere.

p. 190

King says:

False teaching is not an isolated blow; it is an accumulating, growing thing. “They will increase unto more ungodliness”, more impiety, as our passage says—deeper into error, further into sin. Let us not forget that there is a close connection between what we believe and how we behave. Sometimes the question is asked, Does it matter what we believe? There are several answers to that silly question; one of them is this very fact, that, sooner or later, belief is bound to affect behaviour. “Shun” it, says Paul, give it a wide berth, as you would a poison or a plague.

pp. 66-67

Kelly says:

It is not just the dangers of false teaching to its adherents that worry Paul, but its insidious tendency to spread and infect other people, just as gangrene spreads to and eats up the neighbouring tissues.

p. 184

Isaiah 44:20

He feeds on ashes, a deluded heart misleads him; he cannot save himself, or say, “Is not this thing in my right hand a lie?”

What is happening today in many of our standard brand denominations? One of the first exposes of the beliefs of our future ministers was made by *Redbook* magazine in August of 1961. The publishers hired one of the top pollsters in the nation to survey a full representation of our seminaries which are supposedly preparing men for Christian service in the Protestant churches. Here are some of the results—compare them carefully with what the Bible says about apostasy.

Of the ministers in training, 56 percent rejected the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, 71 percent rejected that there was life after death. 54 percent rejected the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. 98 percent rejected that there would be a personal return of Jesus Christ to this earth.

(From *Parson's Technology*)

(Seeing Through: Reflecting God's Light in a Dark World by David Roper)

*Truths would you teach, or save a sinking land?
All fear, none aid you, and few understand.*
—ALEXANDER POPE

p. 121

(1001 Great Stories & "Quotes" by R. Kent Hughes)

Massive Defection

The startling spread of secular theory continues as a major phenomenon of the twentieth century. No Christian states-man foresaw in 1900 that our era would be marked by a massive defection, unparalleled in history, by descendants of Christian parents; instead, evangelicals spoke of winning the world for Christ in a single generation. From a mere 0.2 percent of the world population in 1900, atheists grew in number to 20.8 in 1980; increasing by 8.5 million a year, atheists by 1984 totaled one billion, a number that includes liberal humanists and skeptical nonbelievers as well as dialectical materialists. More rather than less countries than in 1970 are now officially atheistic; in fact, during the last fifteen years atheism added sixty million adherents.

*Carl F. H. Henry, Twilight of a Great Civilization
(Westchester, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1988), 25.*

p. 13

v. 18 who missed the mark concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they are upsetting the faith of some.

The “WHO” points us BACK to:

“Hymenaeus and Philetus” in verse 17.

TWO THINGS are said about their teaching:

1. “[They] MISSED THE MARK CONCERNING THE TRUTH”
and
2. “THEY ARE UPSETTING THE FAITH OF SOME.”

As far as the “TRUTH” is concerned:

THEY RAN IT IN THE DITCH!

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

These two had **wandered away from the truth** (lit., “concerning the truth missed the mark”; . . .) regarding the crucial doctrine of **the resurrection**. . . . The heresy of Philetus and Hymenaeus probably involved the idea that resurrection was a purely spiritual affair which occurred at conversion or baptism. But bodily resurrection is the keystone of Christian doctrine, as Paul showed (1 Cor. 15). Without it, the entire edifice of the gospel collapses. Little wonder then that Paul said that these two false teachers **destroy the faith of some** . . .

p. 754

1 Peter 1:3, 4

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

Kelly says:

By teaching such distortions, Paul claims they **are undermining people's faith**. Inevitably so, since belief in the bodily resurrection is the keystone of Christianity; without it, as he had assured the Corinthians (I Cor. xv. 17), 'Your faith is vain, and you are still in your sins'.
p. 185

Knight says:

. . . is used here figuratively of "overturning, upsetting, or destroying" the faith of some. Indefinite . . . "of some," indicates that some but not all of the Christians were affected in this way.
p. 414

Lea & Griffin say:

The Ephesian teaching concerning the resurrection may have denied a future bodily resurrection. It probably asserted that the resurrection had already occurred in the spiritual renewal of the believer by regeneration.
p. 217

Demarest says:

The contrast of the two kinds of teaching is portrayed in the phrases "*rightly dividing the word of truth*" (v. 15), and "*stayed concerning the truth*" (v. 18). To "*rightly divide*" is literally "to cut straight." The verb, stray, comes from the word for a target. The Greek verb literally means "to miss the target." The goal of every Christian teacher, then, is to cut straight and to hit the mark.
p. 266

Stott says:

The word of truth is a target. As he shoots at this target, he will either hit it or miss it.

The word of truth is a road. As he cuts this road through the forest, he will make it either straight or crooked.

As a result of what he does, that is, how he teaches, others are bound to be affected, for better or for worse.

p. 68

Hawthorne & Martin say:

But while there is this clear revelation of the truth and this provision for sinners to be saved through the truth of the gospel, Paul regretfully sets forth the truth that sinners often refuse to receive the truth. They have missed it or turned from it (2 Tim. 2:18).

p. 954

WORKING OUT THE DETAILS

It happened in the city of Detroit, Michigan. After applying for a marriage license, a man failed to reappear at the county clerk's office until 11 years later to claim the important document. When asked why he and his fiancée had waited so long to get married, he explained, "We had a few disagreements about details."

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

INTERPRETIVE BIAS

Michael Hodgin says, “Whenever we interpret Scripture, we tend to lean toward our own bias. We need to acknowledge the reality of such biases that we all have. [It’s like] the story of the driver of a tour bus in Nashville, Tennessee.

“The driver was pointing out the sites of the Civil War Battle of Nashville. He said, ‘Right over here a small group of Confederate soldiers held off a whole Yankee brigade.’ A little farther along, he said, ‘Over there, a young Confederate boy, all by himself held off a Yankee platoon.’ This went on and on until finally a member of the tour group asked, ‘Didn’t the Yankees win anything in the Battle of Nashville?’

“The bus driver replied, ‘Not while I’m the driver of this bus, they didn’t!’”

[1001 Humorous Illustrations for Public Speaking by Michael Hodgin. Zondervan, 1994. Page 196.]

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

Whatever is only almost true is quite false, and among the most dangerous of errors, because being so near truth, it is the more likely to lead astray.
—Henry Ward Beecher

Error always rides the back of truth.
—R. E. Philips

There is no error so crooked, but it hath in it some lines of truth.
—M. Tupper

The trouble with the world is not that people know too little, but that they know so many things that ain’t so.
—Mark Twain

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

(Renewed Day by Day: Daily Devotional Readings: Volume I by A. W. Tozer,
compiled by Gerald B. Smith)

An ineffective, half-alive minister is a better advertisement for hell
than a good man dead!
(November 29)

(Bits and Pieces by M. B. “Billy” Dunn)

This next one is called “The Captain and Queen,” and it’s dedicated to boys
and girls and young men and women everywhere.

“The Captain and Queen”

This is the tale of the captain and queen,
The most perfect couple you’ve ever seen.
He played football and was called the king,
And over homecoming she reigned supreme.

They passed sweet notes in the study halls,
Wrote I love you on the sidewalks and walls.
Made a daily dozen telephone calls,
Went nightly to drive-ins, movies, or balls.

A chain around her neck held his class ring,
And they gave one another everything.
To them each day became the first of spring,
And they couldn’t wait for the bell to ring.

They married just after graduation,
And received from all congratulation.
And they always had their adulation,
The perfect couple for admiration.

They both started to work as well as school,
And then each began to feel like a fool.
Husband and wife roles were tougher than school,
And they soon found marriage too strict a rule.

With every day they grew further apart.
Their blazing love fires white hot at the start,
Began to flicker to a tiny spark.
And the life they were missing broke their heart.

She developed interests with new-found friends,
 And he set himself to achieve other ends.
 She fell in love with one of her new friends,
 While he lost himself pursuing his ends.

This is the tale of the captain and queen,
 The most perfect couple you've ever seen.
 He played football and was called the king,
 And over homecoming she reigned supreme.

Then one day, they had nothing else to say,
 They made up their minds to go their own way.
 For the captain and queen had had their day,
 And the curtain fell on their one-act play.

(God's Little Devotional Book for Dads by Honor Books, Inc.)

A person once said, "I would rather attempt to do something great for God and fail, than to do nothing and succeed." Another has said, "Shoot for the moon. Even if you don't make it, you'll land among the stars."
 p. 161

(Are Christians Destroying America? How to Restore a Decaying Culture
 by Tony Evans)

How can we have all the Christian activity and yet have all this cultural mess? As we used to say, there's a dead monkey on the line somewhere!
 p. 15

Some churches want to build a skyscraper on the foundation of a chicken coop. They want to have awesome ministries with no truth, no standard to govern what they believe and teach.
 p. 116

(A Gentle Thunder: Hearing God Through the Storm by Max Lucado)

The Bible is the story of two gardens. Eden and Gethsemane. In the first, Adam took a fall. In the second, Jesus took a stand. In the first, God sought Adam. In the second, Jesus sought God. In Eden, Adam hid from God. In Gethsemane, Jesus emerged from the tomb. In Eden, Satan led Adam to a tree that led to his death. From Gethsemane, Jesus went to a tree that led to our life.

Satan was never invited to the Garden of Eden. He did not belong there. He was not wanted there. He slithered as a snake into God's garden and infected God's children.

pp. 51-52

(Inspiring Quotations compiled by Albert M. Wells, Jr.)

Lord, fill my mouth with
worthwhile stuff,
And shut it when I've said
enough.

Preach the gospel, brother,
preach it,
Put it high, where men can teach it;
Put it low, where men can reach it,
But preach the gospel, brother,
preach it.

His sermon had the usual heads,
And subdivisions fine;
The language was as delicate
And graceful as a vine.

It had its proper opening;
'Twas polished as a whole.
It had but one supreme defect—
It failed to reach the soul

p. 163

v. 19 Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this inscription: “The Lord knows those who are His, and let everyone who is naming the name of the Lord abstain from wickedness.”

Even though:

there are those who are being ruined by the false teaching,
 they are progressing more and more toward “ungodliness,”
 following the disease of error,
 missing “the mark [of] truth,” and
 “upsetting their faith,”

“NEVERTHELESS, THE FIRM FOUNDATION OF GOD STANDS.”

Matthew 16:18 (version unknown)

you are Peter, a rock, and upon this rock I will build My church; and all the powers of hell shall not prevail against it.

Century follows century, there it stands.
 Empires rise and fall and are forgotten, there it stands.
 Dynasty succeeds dynasty, there it stands.
 Kings are crowned and uncrowned, there it stands.
 Despised and torn to pieces, there it stands.
 Storms of hate swirl about it, there it stands.
 Agnostics smile cynically, there it stands.
 Profane prayerless punsters caricature it, there it stands.
 Unbelief abandons it, there it stands.
 Thunderbolts of wrath smite it, there it stands.
 The flames are kindled about it, there it stands.
 The arrows of hate are discharged against it, there it stands.
 Radicalism rants and raves against it, there it stands.
 Fogs of sophistry conceal it temporarily, there it stands.
 The tooth of time gnaws, but makes no dint, there it stands.
 Modernism tries to explain it away, there it stands.

(source unknown)

This FOUNDATION has the following inscription:

“THE LORD KNOWS THOSE WHO ARE HIS, AND LET EVERYONE WHO IS NAMING THE NAME OF THE LORD ABSTAIN FROM WICKEDNESS.”

The first INSCRIPTION speaks of the HERITAGE:

“THE LORD KNOWS THOSE WHO ARE HIS.”

The second part of the INSCRIPTION speaks of HOLINESS:

“AND LET EVERYONE WHO IS NAMING THE NAME OF THE LORD ABSTAIN FROM WICKEDNESS.”

They “ARE HIS” and they are HOLY.

1 Corinthians 6:19, 20

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

Isaiah 44:22

I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you.”

The BACKGROUND for this INSCRIPTION is found in:

Numbers 16:1-7

Korah son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and certain Reubenites—Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, and On son of Peleth—became insolent and rose up against Moses. With them were 250 Israelite men, well-known community leaders who had been appointed members of the council. They came as a group to oppose Moses and Aaron and said to them, “You have gone too far! The whole community is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is with them. Why then do you set yourselves above the Lord’s assembly?” When Moses heard this, he fell facedown. Then he said to Korah and all his followers: “In the morning the Lord will show who belongs to him and who is holy, and he will have that person come near him. The man he chooses he will cause to come near him. You, Korah, and all your followers are to do this: Take censers and tomorrow put fire and incense in them before the Lord. The man the Lord chooses will be the one who is holy. You Levites have gone too far!”

Numbers 16:19-35

When Korah had gathered all his followers in opposition to them at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, the glory of the Lord appeared to the entire assembly. The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Separate yourselves from this assembly so I can put an end to them at once." But Moses and Aaron fell facedown and cried out, "O God, God of the spirits of all mankind, will you be angry with the entire assembly when only one man sins?" Then the Lord said to Moses, "Say to the assembly, 'Move away from the tents of Korah, Dathan and Abiram.'" Moses got up and went to Dathan and Abiram, and the elders of Israel followed him. He warned the assembly, "Move back from the tents of these wicked men! Do not touch anything belonging to them, or you will be swept away because of all their sins." So they moved away from the tents of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. Dathan and Abiram had come out and were standing with their wives, children and little ones at the entrances to their tents. Then Moses said, "This is how you will know that the Lord has sent me to do all these things and that it was not my idea: If these men die a natural death and experience only what usually happens to men, then the Lord has not sent me. But if the Lord brings about something totally new, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them, with everything that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the grave, then you will know that these men have treated the Lord with contempt." As soon as he finished saying all this, the ground under them split apart and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, with their households and all Korah's men and all their possessions. They went down alive into the grave, with everything they owned; the earth closed over them, and they perished and were gone from the community. At their cries, all the Israelites around them fled, shouting, "The earth is going to swallow us too!" And fire came out from the Lord and consumed the 250 men who were offering the incense.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Yet the defection of these two, [that is Hymenaeus and Philetus] and their followers, must not shake Timothy's confidence. **God's solid foundation** (i.e., the church . . .) **stands firm**, with two inscriptions as a "seal" to indicate the structure's authenticity and integrity . . .
pp. 754-5

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says further:

The first is a reference to the rebellion of Korah in which the Lord differentiated between the true and the false (Num. 16:5 . . .). The second inscription is possibly a loose reference to Numbers 16:26 or more likely some other Old Testament passage such as Isaiah 52:11. The two inscriptions emphasize respectively both God's sovereign control over the church and every Christian's responsibility to turn away from evil. Thus Timothy did not need to fear for the destiny of God's work, but he was to make every effort to keep himself free from the contamination of the false teachers.
p. 755

Isaiah 52:11

Depart, depart, go out from there! Touch no unclean thing! Come out from it and be pure, you who carry the vessels of the Lord.

Lange says:

Since the Lord knows indeed them that are His, so also, in point of fact, He distinguishes them from those who do not belong to Him, and will never permit Himself to make any mistake through the mere outside of these latter. If every one who names His holy name must depart from all unrighteousness, then sin can never succeed, even when it has already crept into the temple of the Lord, in destroying it wholly.
p. 100

Patrick & Lowth say:

Nevertheless the foundation of God (*the hope and promise of the resurrection*) standeth sure, having this (*as the*) seal (*of it*), The Lord knoweth them that are his. And (*therefore*), Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

p. 862

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown say:

Nevertheless—Notwithstanding the subversion of *their* faith, “the firm foundation of *God* standeth” fast . . .

p. 1377

They say further about the word:

depart—*Greek*, “stand aloof.” **from iniquity**—(Isa. 52:11).

p. 1378

Matthew Henry says:

The unbelief of men cannot make the promise of God of no effect. The prophets and apostles, that is, the doctrines of the Old and New Testament, are still firm; and they have a seal with two mottoes upon it, one on the one side, and the other on the other, as is usual in a broad seal. One expresses our comfort—that *the Lord knows those that are his*. He will never lose them. Another declares our duty—that everyone who names the name of Christ must depart from iniquity. We must depart from iniquity, else he will not own us.

p. 1896

Quinn & Wacker say:

God’s solid foundation stands, nevertheless. Lit. “Still God’s firm foundation stands . . .,” . . .

p. 660

Griffiths says:

The solid foundation of the church, *the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth* (1 Timothy 3:15; Ephesians 2:20-22), has been laid by God himself. On this foundation stone Paul imagines two inscriptions, both based on Old Testament teaching.

p. 189

A. T. Robertson says:

. . . “Let every one stand off from.” Probably another echo of the rebellion of Korah.

p. 620

Lenski says:

Nevertheless, although some miss the mark and turn away as did the two that are named, **the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: The Lord did know those who are his; and: Stand off from unrighteousness, everyone naming the Lord’s name!**

p. 802

Wilson says:

But despite the false teachers and their deluded followers, Paul assures Timothy that God’s firm foundation still stands secure—i.e. the true church remains unmoved by such errors [cf I Tim 3.15]—because its inviolability is guaranteed by the divine seal.

p. 146

Wilson says further:

As applied to the present crisis, the first inscription underlines the eternal security of the church, while the second stresses the purity which is required to provide public proof of its secret election. There are but two sides of the same coin, for God's election is always to holiness [Eph 1.4]. Hence the Lord's true servants will show that they are really known of God by forsaking wickedness, which in this context refers to the false teaching that is both dishonouring to God and ruinous to men.

p. 146

Hendriksen says:

This harmonizes most beautifully with the context: God's *true* church consists of those who are his, those who stand aloof from unrighteousness (note the seal!). By calling the church "God's *solid foundation*," Paul stresses its permanency and immobility. Some, indeed, have wandered away, etc., but the *true church* is immovable!

p. 267

MacArthur says:

Paul again makes his point by contrast. **Nevertheless**, he continues, **the firm foundation of God stands**. Unlike those who trust in a satanic scheme of religion, those who are truly saved, who are God's spiritual children and genuine disciples of Jesus Christ, are part of **the firm foundation of God**.

In this context, **the firm foundation of God** seems most likely to refer to the church.

p. 81

He says further:

God's **seal** of ownership is on the church in two ways. First, every member of the body of Christ, the church, has God's divine assurance of election, in that "**the Lord knows those who are His**."

p. 82

MacArthur says finally:

The second way in which God has placed His **seal** on the church is through personal sanctification, personal holiness.
p. 82

Barclay says:

The Church consists of those who belong to God and of those who have dedicated themselves to the struggle for righteousness.
p. 204

Lock says of verse 19, it is:

Reassurance to Timothy—in spite of the false teachers' work, . . . the foundation is firmly set and has its mark upon it; God knows his own, and they will depart from iniquity.
p. 100

Joseph Parker says:

Timothy was young; Timothy therefore was exposed to intellectual ambition and temptation. Paul knew all this, and he said, "Shun profane and vain babblings; for they will increase unto more ungodliness": shun old wives' fables; have nothing to do with mere word-splitting, it tendeth to more and more ungodliness: keep to great principles. "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his:" Timothy, keep to that which is sure. The word "sure" has been etymologically traced to a Hebrew word which means rock; therefore Paul would say to his dearly beloved son Timothy, Stand on the rock: I do not say do not sometimes launch out into the deep, and see what is beyond the rolling waves, but have a rock to return to.
p. 155

Demarest says:

The inscriptions for the foundation of God are set forth in verse 19. It is likely that these are all taken from the story of the rebellion against Moses led by Korah, Abiram, and On (Numbers 16). The first inscription is based on Num. 16:5, and the second on Num. 16:26.
p. 266

Lea & Griffin say:

Although Paul was saddened at the denial of Christian truth by Hymenaeus and Philetus, he recognized the durability of the main structures of Christianity. God's solid foundation is unshakable.
p. 217

They say further:

A seal is a sign or a stamp of approval that shows genuineness or attests ownership. Paul pictured God's people as stamped with two seals.
p. 217

They say further:

First, God owns and cares for his people. The statement is a reference to Num 16:5, which was spoken on the occasion of the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. "Paul's object in citing it was to give encouragement to Timothy, and others who were worried by backsliding in the community, by reminding them that God can be relied upon to discriminate between his loyal and disloyal servants."¹²

Second, God's true servants must practice holiness. The statement reflects the sentiment of Ps 34:14 and Prov 3:7. God's action in salvation demands a response of holy commitment (2 Cor 5:15). Paul was effectively saying that Hymenaeus and Philetus did not belong to the people of God. God knew who his true people were. Those who were truly God's people would turn away from the false teaching in Ephesus.

¹²J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (1963; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 186.
p. 218

King says:

First, on the obverse side, GODWARD—“The Lord knoweth them that are His”. And that “knoweth” implies that He loves them, cares for them, surrounds them, supplies them, saves them. All this, and all else, is in the thought as in the similar words of the Saviour Himself, in John [10] x. 14, “I . . . know My sheep”. He knows; He cares—what comfort is this!
p. 67

He says further:

Those who name His Name—that is, who are His—should be easily recognised by the holiness of their walk, they should “depart from iniquity”. Attached to the house, as descriptive of its inhabitants, is the two-faced seal—one side says of them, “His”; the other, “Holy”. It is for every member of the household to level up consistently to those two qualities.
p. 68

Gaebelein says:

But in the midst of the declension and perversion of the Truth of God, as it began in apostolic days, and is now more fully developed in our own times, there is the foundation of God, which stands firm and unmovable. Christ is the foundation of faith, and of His church.
p. 190

Gaebelein says further:

There is a double seal. “The Lord knoweth them that are His”—this is the divine side. This statement is given for the comfort of His own, and it is a most precious comfort, “the Lord knoweth them that are His.” But this comforting assurance must lead us into communion with Himself. If He knoweth us as His own, we also know Him and delight ourselves in His fellowship. And so we also know in the days of decline and departure from the truth, that the Lord knows and keeps those who belong to Him. But there is also another side, “Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.” This is the solemn responsibility of every one who nameth that blessed Name, which is above every name. This is the true evidence that we walk in real fellowship with Him, that He knows us and we know Him.

p. 190

Barnes says:

The meaning is, that though some had been turned away by the arts of these errorists, yet the foundation of the church which God had laid remained firm; comp. Eph. ii. 20, “And are build upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.” As long as this foundation remained firm, there was no reason to be troubled from the few instances of apostasy which had occurred; . . .

p. 226

He says further:

It always stands there, no matter who apostatizes. It is at the same time a fearful inscription—showing that no one can deceive God; that he is intimately acquainted with all who enter that building; and that in the multitudes which enter there, the friends and the foes of God are intimately known. He can separate his own friends from all others, and his constant care will be extended to all who are truly his own, to keep them from falling.

p. 227

Barnes then says finally:

The meaning is, that it is an elementary principle in the true church, that all who become members of it should lead holy lives. It was also true that they *would* lead holy lives, and amidst all the defections of errorists, and all their attempts to draw away others from the true faith, those might be known to be the true people of God who *did* avoid evil.
p. 227

Guthrie titles this final verse and then says:

Ultimate certainties (ii. 19). In contrast to the insecurity of the false teaching, the stability of Christian doctrine is brought into focus.
pp. 149-50

He says further:

The word seems to be used to represent the whole structure, in order to show that the major question was the security of the building as a whole and not the instability of a few isolated 'stones'.
p. 150

He says finally:

The thought seems to be that since men like Hymenaeus and Philetus had not departed from iniquity, as was clear from their injurious doctrine, they cannot be God's true children.
p. 151

Larson says:

It would seem gloomy indeed if Paul had stopped with the description of the growing influence of these false teachers. But he sounded a loud note of hope and courage as he wrote, **Nevertheless, God’s solid foundation stands firm.**
p. 287

He then says:

Only God knows the inward working of the heart, but **everyone who confesses the name of the Lord** will evidence increasing godliness—they **must turn away from wickedness.** Both inward and outward change are necessary components of a true believer in Jesus Christ. Timothy and others might have difficulty discerning the faithful from the faithless, but God cannot be fooled. He knows those who belong to him.
p. 287

Fee points out:

With a strong adversative **nevertheless**, Paul affirms that, despite some defections and falling away, **God’s solid foundation stands firm.**
p. 257

He then says:

Since the metaphor stands in sharp contrast to the fact that the faith of some is being overturned, Paul clearly intends it to affirm the opposite: What God is doing in Ephesus, saving a people of his own (cf. Titus 2:14) for eternal glory, cannot be thwarted by the activity of the false teachers. In that sense, of course, the implied “building” refers to the church in Ephesus, his chosen people (v. 10).
p. 257

Milne says:

Although it might appear that the new theologians had won the day, Paul builds his hopes for the church and the gospel on the sovereignty of God.
p. 154

He continues:

This motto guarantees the eternal security of those who are true believers, because they have been loved, chosen and are known by God in his sovereign purpose of mercy (John 10:27ff.; Rom. 8:28-39).
p. 154

Milne continues to say:

In Timothy's situation Hymenaeus and Philetus are re-enacting the history of Korah by resisting the gospel preachers and challenging their claims to truth. The end of these men will be the same as it was for Korah and his supporters, while God's people will continue to live godly lives in the truth.
p. 154

He says finally:

Taken together, these two mottos provide a perfect blend of teaching about the church of God in the world at any time. The true church is built on God's secret choice of his people (Rom. 8:29), but those who are chosen in Christ strive for holiness, the sure sign of their election (2 Pet. 1:10). The true church is founded on the sovereignty of God and the responsible action of believers. The one guarantees that it will always exist, the other guarantees that it will always persevere. Because this is the case, believers can be confident about the survival of the church throughout history, even when it is infiltrated by those who deny the truth on which it is founded. God's solid foundation will always stand firm.
pp. 154-5

Towner says:

Now let us consider the core of this passage. How can all of this go on and God's promises continue to be good? Is not the success of false teachers evidence that God's plan has failed? Unsettling questions like these occurred to Timothy, just as they may occur to us. Paul therefore drops an anchor into this turbulent sea that holds the church in place.

p. 184

Knight says:

Lest Timothy and the Christians in Ephesus be discouraged about the inroads of this false teaching and its effect on some and perhaps even begin to wonder if a massive falling away is to follow, Paul reminds them about the stability and permanence of God's work. He bases this encouragement on two things: God's electing knowledge of his own and the fact that such true believers will abstain from wickedness.

pp. 414-15

He says further:

As sad as the episode of Korah's rebellion was, it did not devastate the congregation of Israel, and false teaching will not devastate the church at Ephesus. The statement quoted here affirms God's ability to differentiate between true and false believers and becomes here the reason for believing that God's foundation stands firm in the present situation.

p. 416

He says finally:

Therefore, the concrete application for the Christians in Ephesus is that they turn away from the errors of thought and practice of those who have gone astray from the truth (cf. v. 18).

p. 417

HE KNOWS YOUR NAME

Marvin Rosenthal, writing in *Israel My Glory*, tells about a mother who was asked by a census taker how many children she had. She responded, “Well, there’s Billy and Harry and Martha and—” “Never mind the names,” the man interrupted. “Just give me the number!” The mother, becoming indignant, replied, “They haven’t got numbers, they’ve all got names.” That’s the way it is in our relationship with the Lord. Paul, writing to Timothy gave the assuring word that “the Lord knows those who are His” (2 Tim. 2:19). And Jesus indicated that “the very hairs of your head are all numbered” (Matt. 10:30).

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

BUILDING TO CODE

In 1992, Hurricane Andrew destroyed thousands of homes in South Florida. Yet in an area where the wreckage looked like a war zone, one house remained standing, still firmly anchored to its foundation.

When a reporter asked the homeowner why his house had not been blown away, he replied, “I built this house myself, and I built it according to Florida state building code. When the code called for 2”x6” roof trusses, I used 2”x6” roof trusses. I was told that a house built according to code would withstand a hurricane—and it did.”

Jesus talked about the importance of building our lives on a solid foundation. He said that the person who obeys His Word is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. If we build according to His code of obedience, we will not be swept away when crises hit with hurricane-like force.

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

Knowing Where to Hit

A small factory had to cease operations when a vital piece of machinery broke down. The firm's own mechanics couldn't get a thing working again so an outside expert was called in. He looked the situation over for a couple of minutes and then took a hammer and tapped the machine in a certain spot and it started running beautifully. When he submitted a bill for \$100 the plant owner figuratively hit the ceiling and demanded an itemized bill, which subsequently was forthcoming as follows: \$1.00 for hitting machine; \$99.00 for knowing where to hit. God uses His word to "hit" us where we need fixing. (Hebrews 4:12)

(From *Parson's Technology*)

(Collected Verse of Edgar A. Guest by Edgar A. Guest)

The Eighteenth Hole

The eighteenth hole and the evening gloam,
The end is near and I'm getting home!
The club house looms in the twilight shade,
Where the boys will ask me with whom I played,
And just what sort of a score I made.

It's the eighteenth hole and the game is done;
What matters it now have I lost or won?
In many a pit and trap I've been,
I've had the thrill of a contest keen,
But I'm coming home with my record clean.

The best and worst of the sport I've had—
Some shots were good and a few were bad.
I made mistakes which I couldn't mend,
I've lost many a hole but never a friend,
And now I've come where the fairways end.

Lord, when I come to the eighteenth hole
And my last putt drops, as I homeward stroll,
May I be met at the club house door
By the boys who have all holed out before,
And be welcomed there though I failed to score !
p. 766

(A Small Book About God by Roy Hicks, Jr.)

Out on the water, in the deep waters of the Sea of Galilee, the net is filled. And then the fish begin to break the net and threaten to sink the boat. Peter is as much horrified and ashamed as he is overwhelmed by what is taking place. And then comes his heartfelt cry, “Stand away from me, I am full of sin. Get away from me, because I know this is a miracle, and I don’t deserve this.”

I hear myself saying it all the time: *Lord, I’m full of sin. I’m not worthy of what is happening to me. I don’t belong in this crowd—I know the stuff that’s in me, and I’m figuring out what’s in You—and we shouldn’t be anywhere near each other! Get away from me.*

So often, we cry out with thoughts of unworthiness or we compare ourselves with others. We cry, “I’ll never be like him. I’ll never be like her. I’m not worthy of net-breaking, boat-sinking miracles.”

p. 127

(Rachel's Tears: The Spiritual Journey of Columbine Martyr Rachel Scott
by Beth Nimmo, Darrell Scott, and Steve Rabey)

In one of the many songs she wrote, she described her sense of worthlessness, contrasting that with her deep conviction of God's loving work in her life. All of us need to understand this message. Sorrow and failure—even on the grand scale of Columbine—are not the end. They are simply a new beginning for God's redeeming grace.

Break me of my pride, Oh God,
Tear down my string of sins,
This life of filth and worthlessness,
Unto You I willingly give.
Take it from me, all of it,
Do with it what You will.
Take me and mold me God,
Your foundation, begin to build.

Chorus

My life has brought me only shame,
Through it Your Will be done,
What once was sorrow and endless blame,
Now the start of things to come.
My story now a testimony,
A thing nothing short of God,
I keep His Name forever holy,
For my life, with His blood, is bought.

Chorus 2 x's

p. 66

The Solid Rock

My hope is built on nothing less
 Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
 I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
 But wholly lean on Jesus' name.

When darkness veils His lovely face,
 I rest on His unchanging grace;
 In ev'ry high and stormy gale,
 My anchor holds within the vale.

His oath, His covenant, His blood
 Support me in the whelming flood;
 When all around my soul gives way
 He then is all my hope and stay.

When He shall come with trumpet sound,
 O may I then in Him be found;
 Dressed in His righteousness,
 Faultless to stand before the throne.

Refrain

On Christ the solid Rock I stand;
 All other ground is sinking sand.
 All other ground is sinking sand.

("The Solid Rock" by Edward Mote. *The New Church Hymnal*, Lexicon Music, Inc., 1976. #54)

(Is It Time to Make a Change?: Positive Thoughts for When Life Presents You with a New Direction by Deanna Beisser)

Great Achievers

I am fascinated by other people's
creativity and productivity.
I am in awe of their dedication
and determination to fulfill
their talents and desires.
Great achievers are those who
follow the yearnings of their souls.
They are those who challenge themselves
with daily sacrifices
and relentlessly endure the
inconveniences and consequences
that occur as a result of their goals.
They are focused on developing themselves,
mastering their unique abilities,
and making their dreams a part
of their lifestyles.
They create their own lives
by never wasting a single day
and possessing the inner strength
to carry on through all of life's changes
with an open mind
and a hopeful heart.

(Diamonds in the Dust: 366 Sparkling Devotions by Joni Eareckson Tada)

The Puritans prayed, "Oh my Lord, may I arrive where I need no more to weep or watch or be tempted. Where nothing defiles, where there is no grief, sorrow, sin, separation, tears, or consuming cares. Where there is personal completeness. Where the more perfect the sight, the more beautiful the object. The more perfect the appetite, the sweeter the food. The more complete the soul, the more happy its joys, where there is full knowledge of Thee."
(October 28)

CONCLUSION:

What lessons did you learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Do not focus on what was but on what will be.

LESSON #2: “Do not focus on what you do not have, focus on what you do have and be grateful for it.” (Joan Lunden).

LESSON #3: The essence of chastity is not the suppression of lust, but the total orientation of one’s life towards a goal.” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

LESSON #4: Lord, keep me from getting distracted by “disputing about words” (verse 14).

LESSON #5: Have you ever made a presentation of yourself to God with no strings attached, total commitment without reservation?

LESSON #6: In order to make a fantastic finish, it is absolutely necessary to be in the “word of truth” on a daily basis (verse 15).

LESSON #7: It is required that a fantastic finisher is well acquainted with the contents of the Bible before he takes his finals.

LESSON #8: Can you say that you are focused on the “word of truth” and this one thing I do? (verse 15).

LESSON #9: False teaching progresses toward greater “ungodliness” and “spreads as does cancer” (verses 16 & 17).

LESSON #10: Do you know for sure that you are His and that you are progressively being made more holy?

LESSON #11: Have you deviated from the “truth”? (verse 18).

LESSON #12: “Lord, grant that whatever I may need to lay aside to fulfill Your will may not be seen as a sacrifice, but rather as the pathway to true achievement.”

I was reading in my devotions the other day:

Isaiah 49:4

But I said, “I have labored to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing. Yet what is due me is in the Lord’s hand, and my reward is with my God.”

It is possible to never have to utter these words if you are following this step for A FANTASTIC FINISH. That is getting:

FOCUSED—This One Thing I Do.

(Churchill on Courage: Wisdom for Perseverance by Frederick Talbott)

You ask: “What is our aim?” I can answer in one word: It is victory, victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory, however long and hard the road may be; for without victory there is no survival.

Winston Churchill
House of Commons, May 13, 1940

(quote 53)

Wars are not won by evacuations.

Winston Churchill
House of Commons, June 4, 1940

(quote 57)

(Seeing Through: Reflecting God’s Light in a Dark World by David Roper)

We must get up and get going. There’s always something God is asking us to do, something as simple as fixing our face or fixing a meal. He only asks us to do what he empowers us to do. We must shake off our lethargy and, like that other cripple whom Jesus restored, get up from our beds and *walk*. It’s necessary for us to take that first step, for God “will carry us in his arms till we are able to walk and he will carry us in his arms when we are weary and cannot walk; but he will not carry us if we will not walk” (George MacDonald).

p. 172

(Truth for Each Day: Meditations for Every Day of the Year by
Vance Havner)

THE REST OF THE WAY

*For this God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide
even unto death.* Psalm 48:14

SOME OF US have been on life's long road for quite a stretch by now. Sometimes we grow fearful and wonder how it will be with us the rest of the way. The early fires of youth have died and there are so many things we may no longer do. Will old age find us unwanted? Will our services be no longer in demand? How will it be with us in the last chapter of life's little book?

We need not fear. The God of the Hitherto is the God of the Henceforth. Our Lord will be with us all the days and that includes the rest of the days! We may no longer mount up with wings as eagles or run and not be weary but we can walk and not faint. There are some things that only age and experience can know and do. The rest of the way can be the best of the way.

pp. 152-3

(Charles Wesley: Man With the Dancing Heart by T. Crichton Mitchell)

The tender power of their united ministry is summed up in Charles's prayer, so abundantly granted by the Lord of the Church:

*I want an even, strong desire,
I want a calmly present zeal,
To save poor souls out of the fire,
To snatch them from the verge of hell,
And turn them to a pardoning God,
And quench the brands in Jesus's blood.*

*I would the precious time redeem
And longer live for this alone,
To spend and to be spent for them
Who have not yet my Saviour known:
Fully on these my mission prove,
And only breathe to breathe thy love. . . .*

*My every sacred moment spend
In publishing the Sinner's friend. . . .*

*And lead them to thy open side,
The sheep for whom their Shepherd died.³*

3. *The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley*, 105-6. This is part of Hymn 12: "For a Preacher of the Gospel."
pp. 87-88

Spurgeon says:

What a blessed thing it will be for you, if you should meet with an accident to-morrow, to say, "Blessed be God, it was all settled last night. I gave my heart to Jesus, I yielded myself to His divine love and mercy, and I am saved." O Holy Spirit, grant it may be so, and Thou shalt have the praise. Amen and Amen.

p. 868

(Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions
by Kenneth W. Osbeck)

The author of this text, Bourne Draper, was a Baptist minister who served most of his life in the Baptist church in Southampton, England. Although he authored a number of other works, Draper is best known today for this one hymn written as a young man while he was preparing for the Christian ministry.

Ye Christian heralds, go proclaim salvation through Emmanuel's
name;
to distant climes the tidings bear, and plant the Rose of Sharon there.

God shield you with a wall of fire; with holy zeal your hearts inspire;
bid raging winds their fury cease, and calm the tempests into peace.

And when our labors all are o'er, then we shall meet to part no more;
meet with the ransomed throng to fall, and crown our Savior Lord of
all!

p. 304

(Great Souls at Prayer: Fourteen Centuries of Prayer, Praise and Aspiration
by Mary W. Tileston)

O Lord, this is all my desire—to walk along the path of life that Thou hast appointed me, even as Jesus my Lord would walk along it, in steadfastness of faith, in meekness of spirit, in lowliness of heart, in gentleness of love. And because outward events have so much power in scattering my thoughts and disturbing the inward peace in which alone the voice of Thy spirit is heard, do Thou, gracious Lord, calm and settle my soul by that subduing power which alone can bring all thoughts and desires of the heart into captivity to Thyself. All I have is Thine; do Thou with all as seems best to Thy divine will; for I know not what is best. Let not the cares or duties of this life press on me too heavily; but lighten my burden, that I may follow Thy way in quietness, filled with thankfulness for Thy mercy, and rendering acceptable service unto Thee—Amen.

Maria Hare.

p. 20

(Experiencing Spiritual Breakthroughs: The Powerful Principle of the Three
Chairs by Dr. Bruce H. Wilkinson)

*Dear Lord,
I humble myself before Your holiness.
I enter Your courts and ask for Your grace and mercy.
I am in a time of real need; I plead for Your help.
Please help me!
I want to obey Your command to cleanse myself of all sin.
I want to become holy as You are holy in all of my conduct.
I want to please You and make a new start in my life.
Would You please reveal to me every sin in my stockpile?
Show me what You see hidden in my heart.
Bring to my memory, Holy Spirit,
everything that grieves You.
I hereby promise that, with Your help,
I will do my part to cleanse every one.
In Jesus' name, Amen.*

p. 98

It's been 50 years now since God transplanted me from the pulpit to the classroom, and I have the urge to pass along a few keys to making it all worthwhile and fulfilling. I think they are ripe for sharing, so let me start with the foundation of them all . . . FOCUS.

Paul riveted me many years ago with his words, *One thing I do . . .* (Phil. 3:13). For him the past was forgettable and his future was fueled by his present center of gravity; i.e. *the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus*. What a formula for success in ministry!

. . . I heard Dr. A. W. Tozer say, "What comes into your mind when you think about God is the most important thing about you." I've never recovered from that.

Jesus told Martha that . . . *only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her* (Luke 10:42). That tells me that I have to make tough choices. So many "goods" and "betters" have to be discarded in favor of the *one thing*. . . .

If anything has kept me on track all these years, it's been skewered to this principle of central focus. You might remember my inverted triangle; there are many things I can do (and you can especially), but I have to narrow it down to the *one thing* I must do. The secret of concentration is elimination.

Our flesh keeps right on trying to con us into saying "yes" when we should say "no." It will always be a struggle. It has been for me. Just wanted you to know that down the road where I am, it's an A-1 priority. Keep your eye on the target.

Focused on Christ,
Howard G. Hendricks

(Excerpts from November 2000 letter from Howard G. Hendricks)

(Drawing Closer, Growing Stronger by Donald E. Anderson)

IT MAY BE LATER THAN YOU THINK

Jean awakened from a deep sleep and realized it was time to meet with her first love, the Lord Jesus. She turned toward Charles, her husband of forty-four years and whispered: “Good morning, sweetheart!”

Later in her quiet time she read, “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.’ Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a while and then vanishes away” (James 4:13-15).

Jean could have endlessly mused about her sixty-seven years. How good God had been! After leaving Decatur, Texas, she had met Charles at Wheaton College in Illinois. His contagious enthusiasm ignited her life with joy. He meant everything to her.

His tireless energy propelled them as a couple through his training in dental school, five years of medical missionary service in the Belgium Congo, and into his professorship of Dental Radiology at a major university.

As a supportive wife, Jean, also a registered nurse, conscientiously balanced her career with mothering their four daughters. Remembering the death of one infant daughter often brought tears, but Jean remained steadfast in faith throughout life’s trials.

As a bold intercessor, Jean often prayed for the lost and dying, especially in India. She prayed for the hill-country pastors whom she and Charles had met four months earlier while visiting the Hindustan Bible Institute.

The morning passed quickly as Charles called Jean to breakfast. They prayed together, ate quickly, and hastily prepared for an engagement to complete the paperwork for their Social Security benefits.

Heavy freeway traffic almost detained them, but they arrived just in time for their 9:00 A.M. appointment on April 19, 1995, at the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

“Welcome home my children.
Your condo and table are ready!”

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