

6. Are you on the right course?

April 11, 2010

Let's say that Brian Sinclair wanted to take all of us to Hawaii. So he chartered a private jet to fly us from Tucson International Airport. So we all got on board. Then as we're buckling our seatbelts and the plane is taxiing down the runway, the voice of the captain comes over the intercom and says, "Welcome, Calvary Chapel of Sahuarita, to Fly-by-night Airline flight 262 with service to Honolulu, Hawaii. We are experiencing a tiny problem with some of our navigational devices and GPS system. I think that they seem to be a few degrees off. I'm not really that worried about it. I think we will be okay. Enjoy your flight."

That's ludicrous. Hawaii is just a speck in the middle of the gigantic Pacific Ocean. If the navigational devices are not working properly and the plane is just a few degrees off, it will be hundreds of miles off course by the time it's supposed to land. So you might be a little off course now, but you'll be swimming many, many miles later on.

In the same way we must know what we believe. We must know what God has revealed to us through His Word. If we don't know sound theology, we may find ourselves further from the truth than we truly want to be.

In the beginning of my Christian walk with the Lord Jesus, our family started in a charismatic denomination. One of the drawbacks of some charismatic denominations is that they have a tendency to neglect theology while the other denominations concentrate on theology so much that they neglect the Holy Spirit and His works.

At that time, I often thought, in my ignorance, I didn't want to deal with theology. I used to say, "I don't care about theology. I just love Jesus."

That might have been a sweet sentimental comment, but it was a dangerous one. We need to care about sound theology. Theology is the study of what God has revealed to us. If we don't know what God has revealed to us, then we won't have a spiritual or moral compass to guide us through life. Without a spiritual compass, we may be off course just a bit today, but we'll be entirely lost by the time tomorrow rolls around.

This morning, apostle Paul is telling his spiritual son to be approved by the Lord rather than men.

A. KEEP FOCUSED, NO DISTRACTIONS

2 Timothy 2:14 Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers.

After reminding Timothy of the essential points of the Gospel in the previous verses, Paul adds that Timothy must always remind his church congregation to be focused on the Gospel of Jesus.

I took this advice of Paul seriously from the beginning of our church. If you've been with us for a long time, I am sure that you've noticed that I continuously go back to the teaching of the Books of the Gospel of Jesus. So far, we've finished Matthew, Mark, Luke and 40 Books of the Bible in ten years. After we finish this Book 2 Timothy, we are going to start to study the Book of John on Sundays. Then, we will

study a few other Books from the OT and NT, followed by the study of the Book of Acts, After a few other Books, we will get into the harmony of the Gospels of Jesus. I am sure that before we go through all those Books the rapture will happen.

Satan and his cohorts constantly tempt the church to get off its course. They want us to forget that the message of Jesus what really matters. Satan doesn't care one bit if the church becomes an entertainment center, a social service agency, or any number of other things. How many major denominations have become nothing more than social service agencies and mutual admiration societies! This temptation must be resisted and stay focused on Jesus.

1 Corinthians 2:2 For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

At the same time, Paul warns Timothy not to focus on something. We must not get into debating or arguing about petty theologies that are nothing more than the very effective divisive tools of satan. For example: eternal security of salvation, speaking in tongue, using KJV Bible only, or trying to figure out "How many angels can stand on a pin head?", etc. These arguments are completely a waste of time and divisive. I will not be sucked into them, nor should you.

Rather than getting into endless arguments, we should put our hearts into the things that matter – such as discipleship, servanthood, obedience to the Lord, loving one other, and so on.

B. APPROVED BY THE LORD

2 Timothy 2:15a Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed,

Obviously Timothy had to be reminded more than once about being diligent for whatever reason.

Though there was a place for being cordial and personable as a pastor and a Christian, Timothy's goal was not to present himself approved to people, rather to God.

It seems that many pastors or churches are into a popularity contest for the last twenty years. A famous pastor of a gigantic seeker-sensitive church said once, "At the end of the services, my face hurts because I had to smile so much." Not all God's truth bring smiles on our faces. Actually, most of God's truth do not bring smiles on our faces at all because they are against our carnal nature.

This is not just for a pastor. You, as the ambassadors of Jesus Christ are to be approved by the Lord, the workers who do not need to be ashamed.

It is embarrassing to do a job poorly and then to have our work examined by the Lord. The Bible warns us that the work of each Christian will be examined at the judgment seat of Christ. I think that it is a good motivation for us to do everything with excellence for the Lord, don't you?

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

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, "Prayer, study and suffering make a pastor," and this is true. It is not just for a pastor, but it applies to every single Christian. We cannot be approved unless we are tested.

C. RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH

2 Timothy 2:15b rightly dividing the word of truth.

This was to be the focus of Timothy's work. He was to work diligently so that he could rightly divide the Word of God to teach his congregation properly. As their pastor, he had to know the Scripture with a lot of studies, prayers and meditations.

With that in mind, some of you may think that this command is not for you since you are not a pastor or a Bible teacher. Not so fast, buckaroo!

If you only read the Bible during the church services without your own prayers, daily devotions and meditations upon the Word of God everyday, it is like eating the foods that were chewed by someone else. I know it sounds gross, but please hear me. While you chew the food, you get to have a lot of nutrition before even digesting happens in your stomach. Besides, if you don't chew, you don't get to have all the yummy flavors of the food. While you chew the Word of God during your devotion and meditation, you get to have a lot of great spiritual flavor and nutrition from the Lord. How can you do that? By rightly dividing the Word of Truth.

Since Paul mentioned about rightly dividing, there is such a thing as wrongly dividing. We must understand that biblical truth is not just an issue left up to everyone's interpretation. There is a right way as well as a wrong way to understand the Bible.

The right way to understand and interpret the Bible is through the Bible by cross referencing. You can use Strong's Concordance, Treasury of Scripture Knowledge or the verses noted in your Bible's margin. These things will help you understand the Word of God more clearly.

Speaking of interpreting the Bible, I am sure that many of you have come across someone who tells you, "Well, that is just your interpretation of the Bible. You interpret it your way, I do it my way. We can not really be sure what it means, so don't judge me with your Bible interpretation." How many of you have heard that? A lot of us.

Many people try to twist the Bible truth to fit their needs if they do it out of context. That is how we can wrongly divide the Word of Truth. We cannot just pick the interpretation that seems most comfortable to us and claim it as true. It must be consistent with what the Bible says in the specific passage and with the entire message of the Scriptures.

D. THE PRICE OF NOT KEEPING FOCUS

2 Timothy 2:16-18 But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. 17 And their message will spread like cancer.

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

The word 'profane' comes from a Greek word 'bebelos' which means 'godless'. What is 'godless'? Man's opinions, teachings, stories and programs without the Holy

Spirit's guidance and empowerment to compare to the simple Word of God. When these things become the focus of the message from the pulpit, it will increase to more ungodliness.

These ungodly messages spread like cancer – spreading fast and becoming popular. They capture itching ears of the spiritually ignorant and carnal people. A great example is the emergent church movement.

The Emerging Church movement is wildly popular with people who are dissatisfied with Christian fundamental doctrine, organized church setting and traditional worship. People who are drawn to the Emerging Church generally place high value on ambiguity and mystery.

The result is a movement that thrives on disorganization, lends itself to mysticism, distrusts authority and dislikes preaching, feeds intellectual pride and recognizes few doctrinal or moral boundaries. They talk about the love of God without the holiness of God; they teach the forgiveness of God without the repentance of our sins; they sugarcoat sins with no consequences. In results, it attracts hundreds, thousands of people around the world.

The Emergent Movement started with godless and idle babblings by a handful of people who are henchmen of satan – such as Brian McLaren, Rob Bell and Tony Jones. They call themselves evangelicals, what they do and believe are anything but godly and down right blasphemous. Even the oldest son of the founder of Calvary Chapel pastor Chuck Smith, Chuck Smith, Jr. chose to get into this Emergent Movement and became a leading man. They are false teachers and they are wolves in sheep clothing.

Some of you might be thinking now, "How can you label those people as false teachers so harshly?" For two reasons:

1) Jesus didn't have a bit of problem naming the Pharisees as false teachers, apostle Paul didn't hesitate to name these two Hymenaeus and Philetus in the same category. They are my examples.

2) What am I supposed to do if I have harmful materials in the church, such as strong harmful cleaning chemicals or rat poison, should I let your children wonder around and take a big swig? No, lock those chemicals away from the young ones and teach them not to touch, nor drink. As the pastor of this church, I have a solemn duty and obligation to let you, especially spiritually young people, regardless of their physical ages, know which false teachers' doctrines are poisonous and harmful. If I have to label them, I will do it without any hesitation.

Just like Hymenaeus and Philetus destroyed some people's faith, McLaren, Bell and Smith, Jr. have destroyed their followers' faith with satan's confusion and masquerade. Their people's blood is on their hands.

Many today accept and honor teachers who are way off in one area or another; and they justify it by saying, "I eat the meat and spit out the bones." This kind of thinking will certainly overthrow the faith of some, because some will certainly choke to spiritual death on the bones they say they spit out.

E. APPLICATIONS

- 1) Do not get on worthless subjects that would cause division, contention and anger with your brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus.
- 2) While we live on this earth, we need to remember that our earthly lives should reflect the Father in heaven.
- 3) Keep the Word of God in context all the time.