

2 Timothy 3:1–4:8 and Speaking the Word to One Another

Prayer

Introductory Questions

- How would you respond if a relatively new Christian asked you, “What is the Bible?”?
- How would you describe a *Word-centered individual*? A *Word-centered relationship*?

Overview of the Lesson

2 Timothy 3:1–4:8 focuses on the importance of thinking, speaking, and acting according to the Bible. Why do Christians place such a high value on the Bible and submit to its teachings?

- **It is *inspired* by God:** “All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable...” (2 Tim. 3:16).
- **It is *true* in all that it affirms and denies:** “The words of the LORD are pure words, like silver refined in an earthen furnace, purified seven times” (Ps. 12:6).
- **It is *authoritative* for our lives:** “2 For you know what commands we gave you through the Lord Jesus 3 ...that you keep away from sexual immorality” (1 Thess. 4:2–3).
- **It is both *necessary* for salvation and *sufficient* to know God’s will for our lives:** “You have known the sacred Scriptures, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:15; see Deut. 4:2).
- **It is *powerful* to create change in our lives:** “When you received the word of God that you heard from us, you welcomed it not as a human message, but as it truly is, the word of God, which also works effectively in you who believe” (1 Thess. 2:13) (Allison, *50 Core Truths of the Christian Faith*, chapters 1–4, 6).

Because these statements are true, we must strive to be Word-centered, both individually and collectively. This lesson explains how we can do that in concrete ways.

We organize 2 Timothy 3:1–4:8 into three main sections: (1) Ungodly Living in the Last Days (3:1–9), (2) The Call to Godly Living (3:10–17), and (3) The Ministry of the Word (4:1–8). We conclude this lesson by summarizing ways we speak the Word to one another.

1. Ungodly Living in the Last Days

- “But know this: Hard times will come in the last days.” (2 Tim. 3:1)
- “2 For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, proud, demeaning, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 unloving, irreconcilable, slanderers, without

self-control, brutal, without love for what is good, 4 traitors, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 holding to the form of godliness but denying its power. Avoid these people.” (2 Tim. 3:2–5)

- “6 For among them are those who worm their way into households and deceive gullible women overwhelmed by sins and led astray by a variety of passions, 7 always learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. 8 Just as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so these also resist the truth. They are men who are corrupt in mind and worthless in regard to the faith. 9 But they will not make further progress, for their foolishness will be clear to all, as was the foolishness of Jannes and Jambres.” (2 Tim. 3:6–9)

Second Timothy records Paul’s last words to Timothy, his beloved disciple and friend. Paul introduces the topic of godlessness “in the last days”—the time between Christ’s first and second coming (v. 1; Acts 2:17; Heb. 1:1–2). Paul then describes nineteen traits of those who will not submit to God and his Word, with an emphasis on false teachers. Five of the traits address misdirected love: “lovers of self” and “lovers of money” (v. 2), “unloving” and “without love for what is good” (v. 3), and “lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God” (v. 4). Eight traits focus on *the lack of virtue*: “boastful (lack of humility)...disobedient to parents (lack of obedience), ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable (unforgiving)...without self-control...without love for what is good” (vv. 2–3). They are “proud” and “demeaning” (v. 2), are “slanderers” and “brutal” (untamed) (v. 3), are “traitors, reckless, conceited” (v. 4), and give the appearance of godliness but deny its power (v. 5) (Köstenberger, *Commentary on 1–2 Timothy & Titus*, 253–256). We must avoid such false teachers (v. 5). Paul then describes their actions in more detail, such as how they exploit vulnerable, guilt-ridden women (vv. 6–7). They are no different than the Egyptian magicians Jannes and Jambres, who resisted Moses and God’s truth, and showed themselves to be corrupt and foolish (vv. 8–9; Ex. 7:8–13).

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways do these verses describe your life in the past or in the present? • By God’s grace, how did you change or how can you change? |
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2. The Call to Godly Living

10 But you have followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, and endurance, 11 along with the persecutions and sufferings that came to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. What persecutions I endured—and yet the Lord rescued me from them all. 12 In fact, all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. 13 Evil people and impostors will become worse, deceiving and being deceived. 14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed. You know those who taught you, 15 and you know that from infancy you have known the sacred Scriptures, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is

inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:10–17)

Paul calls Timothy (and us!) to imitate him as a role model of Christian character and ministry—including “his teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, and endurance, along with the persecutions and sufferings” (vv. 10–11; 1 Cor. 11:1). In fact, persecution awaits all who desire to live a godly life (v. 12). By contrast, evil people (in general) and evil teachers (in particular) get worse and worse in their character (v. 13). Timothy needed to continue in his faith (v. 14)—a faith rooted in the Scriptures, which provide wisdom for salvation through faith in Jesus (v. 15). All Scripture is inspired (God-breathed) and profitable for ministry, so that each Christian will be morally complete and equipped for good works (vv. 16–17).

- In light of verses 10–11, in what ways do you want to imitate the apostle Paul?
- How can we continue in our faith and ministry as opposed to falling away?

3. The Ministry of the Word

- “1 I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus, who is going to judge the living and the dead, and because of his appearing and his kingdom: 2 Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and encourage with great patience and teaching.” (2 Tim. 4:1–2)
- “3 For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, will multiply teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear what they want to hear. 4 They will turn away from hearing the truth and will turn aside to myths. 5 But as for you, exercise self-control in everything, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” (2 Tim. 4:3–5)
- “6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time for my departure is close. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 There is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me, but to all those who have loved his appearing.” (2 Tim. 4:6–8)

Because of Jesus’s coming judgment, his return to earth, and his kingdom, Timothy must *preach* (proclaim or herald or announce) *the Word*—which we use to correct, rebuke, and encourage one another (vv. 1–2). The time is now here when people will not want to hear from God through his Word, but only what their sinful desires want to hear (vv. 3–4). Timothy, however, must exercise self-control, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist (a proclaimer of Jesus’s death and resurrection), and, in broadest terms, fulfill his ministry responsibilities (v. 5). Paul finished his life well, in large part by looking forward to God’s final declaration of righteousness, a reward that Jesus promises to all who love and long for his return (vv. 6–8).

- What advice do you have for a younger generation of Christians?
- Do you eagerly desire for Jesus to return (v. 8)? Why or why not?

Sound Doctrine: Speaking the Word to One Another

Below are seven ways we use the Word of God to speak to one another in community.

1. **We pray for one another according to the Word.** The Bible records over 600 prayers to God. They teach us about God, his promises, and our needs. But they also model for us how to pray for one another. For example, we can pray the words of Paul back to God on behalf of one another: “9 And I pray this: that your love will keep on growing in knowledge and every kind of discernment, 10 so that you may approve the things that are superior and may be pure and blameless in the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God” (Phil. 1:9–11).
2. **We preach the Word to one another.** Preaching focuses on *proclaiming, heralding, or announcing the Word of God*. When we preach the Word to one another (pastor to congregant, friend to friend, family member to family member) we declare to one another the glorious truths of God (Matt. 4:17; Rom. 10:14; 2 Tim. 4:2).
3. **We teach the Word to one another.** There is an overlap of meaning between *preaching* and *teaching* in the Bible. But teaching the Bible emphasizes the act of *explaining the Word of God* to God’s people (Mark 6:34; Acts 15:35; 2 Tim. 4:2).
4. **We encourage one another with the Word.** Encouragement is the supernatural act of *applying the Word of God* to others’ lives—truth that brings guidance, comfort, and strength (Acts 13:15; Rom. 15:4; 1 Thess. 4:18; 5:11).
5. **We correct one another with the Word.** No one on earth is perfect, and often we don’t see our sinful actions. We therefore use the Word to correct one another (2 Tim. 3:16).
6. **We train one another with the Word.** We use the Word to train one another to be righteous in our character, but also to do good deeds (1 Tim. 4:6–8; 2 Tim. 3:16).
7. **We sing to and with one another with the Word.** God calls us to speak “to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making music with your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19; see Col. 3:16). Our Bible-shaped words of praise are the very words we speak to one another, such as “The LORD is my shepherd; I have what I need!” (Psa. 23:1).

- What questions or comments do you have about this lesson?
- Explain one or more ways that you could be more Word-centered with those you love.

Prayer

Applying God's Word

Use these two pages to reflect on and apply this lesson. Schedule a time to discuss your answers and pray with family members and friends during the week, and/or as part of your next group meeting.

1. Renew Your Mind

- a. What did you learn about **God the Father, God the Son, and/or God the Holy Spirit** (concerning their character qualities, words, and/or actions)?
- b. What did you realize about **your sinful tendencies** (concerning your desires, values, thoughts, words, and/or actions)? "I sin against God by _____."
- c. What did you learn about **God's will for your life** (concerning your desires, values, thoughts, words, and/or actions)? "God desires that I _____."

2. Memorize the Word

Identify one or more verses of Scripture from this lesson that you plan to memorize and write them out below.

3. Obey the Word

In response to this lesson:

- a. How do you want to grow in **your character**? “By God’s grace, I want to become more (or less) _____. I will work on that by _____.”
- b. How can you apply this information in **your words and/or actions** (with your family, church community, neighbors, and/or coworkers)? “By God’s grace, I will _____.”

4. Express Your Desires

- a. Write out one or more prayers to God in response to this lesson.
- b. What other prayer requests do you want to share with your family and friends?