

Diligent  
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2 Timothy 2:14-26

Opening: How would you describe someone who is diligent in his or her job?

- The dictionary: “**dil•i•gent** \ 'di-lə-jənt\ *adjective* characterized by steady, earnest, and energetic effort: painstaking”<sup>i</sup>
- Studying the first part of this chapter we saw the job description of a follower of Christ (both pastors and the flock) - To be “good soldiers” requires focus, endurance, hard work and a passion to please our “commander” Jesus Christ. This week we can add “diligence” to that list.
- Picking up in verse fourteen Paul instructs Timothy to remind church leaders of the importance of being diligent in handling the truth of God’s word, particularly as a defense against false teachers in the church.

Big Idea: Pastors and congregations must be on guard against meaningless debates and false teaching in the church. The way to avoid “empty words” and “godless chatter” is by diligently growing in our knowledge of God’s word. Learning to live by God’s word isn’t just for pastors and teachers; it is an expectation for every follower of Christ. Lets begin with verse fourteen.

<sup>14</sup> Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers.

<sup>15</sup> Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

- Timothy was to “keep reminding” the church at Ephesus about the truths Paul had already taught them. Repetition is an important part of teaching.
- A “bored” teacher might be tempted to teach “new ideas.” The pastor and teacher are to teach God’s word and nothing else. (Play the “hits!”)

- Focus on God's word and don't quarrel about useless arguments.
- "Do your best" or "be diligent" means "be zealous" to be approved by God. No diligent worker wants to be ashamed when the master reviews his or her work. Paul didn't say be perfect, but do your best.
- Important truth: For the follower of Christ seeking God's approval, "rightly handling" God's word is a task that demands diligence.
- What does it mean to "rightly handle" God's word? How can I do that?
- If want to become accomplished in anything (a job, a hobby, a skill) **what things would you do to become proficient? What would it look like to be zealous about that job, hobby, or skill?**
- Step one to being diligent and zealous is regular time in God's word.
- How do I glean God's truth and apply it to my life? A simple structure: What does it say? What does it mean? How does that apply to me?
- Fundamental to learning is teaching the student how to study.
- There are so many resources on how to study your Bible. Be sure you choose wisely (especially on the internet.) Here are some trusted sources I can recommend: Articles:  
<https://www.gotquestions.org/Biblical-exegesis.html>  
<https://davidjeremiah.blog/how-to-study-the-bible/>  
<https://www.gty.org/library/articles/45STUDY/how-to-study-your-bible> <https://www.biblestudytools.com/bible-study/tips/the-inductive-method-of-bible-study-the-basics-11628183.html>
- Also, two good books both entitled How to Study the Bible from John MacArthur and Kay Arthur.
- One day every follower of Christ will stand before God. What we did (or didn't do) with God's word will be on the agenda for His review.
- I'm not trying to send you on a "guilt trip" but a rewarding journey. You will be blessed by diligent study and application of God's word.
- The truth of God's word is essential in the face of false teachers.

<sup>16</sup> But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, <sup>17</sup> and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, <sup>18</sup> who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some.

- False teaching is like an infection or a cancer. It spreads and destroys.
- We don't know the minute details of this example but we know enough to know it was a form of heresy about the bodily resurrection of believers.
- **What are examples of false teaching? How do you spot it?**
- False teaching isn't just heresy, sometimes it's disguised as "inspiration," "self-help," or "education."
- Pastor and writer Tim Challies has an excellent article on "7 False Teachers in the Church Today"  
<https://www.challies.com/articles/7-false-teachers-in-the-church-today/>
- Here are some highlights:
  - *"The Heretic - The Heretic is the person who teaches what blatantly contradicts an essential teaching of the Christian faith."*
  - *"The Charlatan - ".. is only interested in the Christian faith to the extent that it can fill his wallet."*
  - *"The Prophet - claims to be gifted by God to speak fresh revelation outside of Scripture—new, authoritative words of prediction, teaching, rebuke, or encouragement. In reality, though, he is commissioned and empowered by Satan for the purpose of misleading and disrupting Christ's church. (Revelation 22:18-19)"*
  - *"The Abuser uses his position of leadership to take advantage of other people. Usually, he takes advantage of them to feed his sexual lust, though he may also desire power."*
  - *"The Divider uses false doctrine to disrupt or destroy a church. He gleefully divides brother from brother and sister from sister. This false teacher brings strife, not love."*

*He generates factions, not unity. He desires discord, not harmony.*<sup>14</sup>

- *“The Tickler - (2 Timothy 4:3-4). The Tickler craves popularity and praise from the world. To maintain his follower’s respect, he preaches only the parts of the Bible they deem acceptable. Therefore, he speaks much of happiness but little of sin, much of heaven but nothing of hell. He gives them only what they want to hear. He preaches a partial gospel which is no gospel at all.”*
- *“The Speculator tosses aside the bulk of the Bible’s content and the weight of the Bible’s emphasis in order to obsess about matters that are trivial or novel. He grows weary of the old truths and pursues respectability through originality.”*
- *Summary: “Satan’s greatest ambassadors are not pimps, politicians, or power-brokers, but pastors. His priests do not peddle a different religion, but a deadly perversion of the true one.”*
- Jesus said in Matthew 7:15–16a (ESV), <sup>15</sup>“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. <sup>16</sup>You will recognize them by their fruits.
- False teachers within the church could discourage the most zealous pastor. Paul reminded Timothy that God’s church will prevail (Matt.16:18.)

<sup>19</sup> But God’s firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: “The Lord knows those who are his,” and, “Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.”

- God in His sovereignty knows the heart and who belongs to Him.
- The second saying speaks to the believer’s duty: depart from iniquity.
- God will preserve his church; our job is to be “clean” for His service.

<sup>20</sup> Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. <sup>21</sup> Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is

dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.

- Paul's metaphor: fine china versus the garbage can (or a chamber pot.)
- You wouldn't serve dinner to the guests from the garbage can!
- The unsaved false teachers were corrupt containers needing disinfectant.
- Followers of Christ must strive to be "fine china" for honorable use.

<sup>22</sup> So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

- **What do we think of when we hear "youthful lusts/passions?" What are examples of sinful desires that have derailed ministers?**
- Wiersbe: *"By 'evil desires of youth' is not meant necessarily wrong sexual desires, although it could be that. It refers to sinful desires in general, and this could mean—for the spiritual leader—the love of money, the love of power, self-assertion and overriding ambition."*<sup>iii</sup>
- It's not enough to flee from temptation to sin; followers of Christ must also actively pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace.
- How should pastors and church leaders deal with false teaching?

<sup>23</sup> Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. <sup>24</sup> And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, <sup>25</sup> correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, <sup>26</sup> and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

- We might be surprised at that last part. Why be gentle with false teachers?
- One commentator: *"...pastors and lay leaders who bicker, creating factions within the church, are wrong. Instead, the*

*church leader must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Kindness presupposes a peaceable attitude. Such a mindset speaks and acts in goodness. This does not mean spineless acquiescence to popular opinion or to those who may oppose us. Kindness must remain firmly rooted in truth.”<sup>iv</sup>*

- We can be kind yet firm. Uncompromising in the truth but kind in attitude.

### So, What's the Takeaway?

- If you get nothing else from this lesson, please get this: Followers of Christ must zealously seek God's approval in every part of our lives.
- We can only know how to please Him by living by God's word.
- Applying God's word to our lives means learning it with diligence.
- This week will you ask God to help you be more diligent in His word?
- If we want to be “honorable vessels” (fine china) in His service we must also run from anything that tempts us to sin. Let's ask God for strength in the face of temptation.
- Instead, let's pursue righteous living, faithfulness, love, and peace.
- If we'll do these things with diligence and zeal, we will one day stand before God as a “good worker...who does not need to be ashamed.”

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<sup>i</sup> Merriam-Webster, I. (2003). [Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary](#). (Eleventh ed.). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc.

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.challies.com/articles/7-false-teachers-in-the-church-today/>

<sup>iii</sup> Williams, P. (2007). [Opening up 2 Timothy](#) (p. 61). Leominster: Day One Publications.

<sup>iv</sup> Larson, Knute. Holman New Testament Commentary - 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon: 9 . B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.