

Session 3

October 30, 2022

STUDY GOD'S WORD

2 Timothy 2:14-19, 22-26

Last week, we talked about the importance of hearing God's word and properly responding to it. But if we really want to deepen our understanding of the Bible, we need to dig a little deeper...and that means studying God's word beyond the Sunday morning sermon. With the abundant amounts of Bible study materials being produced, and the ease with which we can access them, there is really no excuse for us to remain in a state of spiritual infancy (see 1 Pet. 2:2 and 1 Cor. 3:1-3). In this week's lesson, we see some very practical reasons to study God's word for ourselves.

Study God's word to properly interpret (vv. 14-15). Named after Hermes—the Greek messenger god—the discipline of *hermeneutics* is the art and science of interpreting Scripture. Unfortunately, anything that is open to interpretation is also open to argumentation! And the church has a long history of discord. In verse 14, Paul is warning young Timothy that arguing over minor biblical issues too often leads to major disputes that not only confuse the hearers, but ruin congregations. The solution? Careful study of the Bible that leads to firm, defensible convictions, effectively communicated to the church members. This was the primary concern of the apostles (Acts 6:4) and should be our primary concern as well. The emphasis in verse 15 is earning God's approval. This is done through careful study of God's word that demonstrates *diligence* (enthusiastic zeal), *confidence* (the opposite of shame and embarrassment), and *expertise* (dissecting it and presenting it neatly). Notice as well that God's word is the *word of truth*; as such, its true meaning must be truly preserved. For reflection: *How much of the Bible do you think is "open to interpretation," and how much should be taken at face value? How can you tell? Keep in mind, any text has one primary meaning...but may have several applications.*

Study God's word to positively intervene (vv. 16-19). In contrast to rightly dividing the word of truth, Timothy is urged to "avoid irreverent and empty speech" (v. 16). The English word *avoid* is much stronger in the Greek. It means to *shun*, or to *circle around in order to avoid*. The word *irreverent* refers to *base* or *worldly*, while *empty* means *meaningless babble*. In other words, church leaders must never allow themselves to be caught up in empty, meaningless disputes about spiritual things that do more damage to the truth than justice. Once such perversions infect a congregation, they spread like a contagious disease (v. 17). Far from harmless, the speculations of Hymenaeus and Philetus had led to outright heresy. Verse 19 stands as both an encouragement and a warning. God knows those who belong to Him, and the sure sign of this election is a life turned away from sin and error. For reflection: *I have often taught that error can replicate as quickly as truth (or even quicker!). What are some steps we as teachers can take to guard against false teaching in our churches?*

Study God's word to prosper and increase (vv. 25-26). These verses are filled with things to avoid (*youthful lust, foolish and ignorant disputes, quarrels, the devices of the devil*) and things to pursue (*righteousness, faith, love, peace, gentleness, patience*). These are accomplished by

studying God's word. In the midst of these verses, however, lies a central truth: God's word should be diligently studied, not only to avoid the traps of this world and the devil, but to equip others to do the same. Notice the key words: *able to teach* (v. 24); *instructing opponents* (v. 25); and *leading to the knowledge of the truth* (v. 25). All involve passing the knowledge of God's word to others. And that knowledge can only be gained by rightly dividing the word of truth. For reflection: Look up *Ephesians 4:11-16*. How does this text relate to our discussion?