

# Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, September 20, 2023 – First Baptist Church Buda  
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



## The Gentle Art of Correction *2 Timothy 2:23-26*

*<sup>23</sup> But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. <sup>24</sup> And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, <sup>25</sup> in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, <sup>26</sup> and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.” -2 Timothy 2:23-26 (NKJV)*

### Some Key Date in Paul’s Challenging Life:

- [c. A.D. 52-57]- Paul takes his third mission trip and spends three years in Ephesus
- [c. A.D. 58]—Paul was apparently arrested in Jerusalem
- [c. A.D. 61]—This is the approximate time that Paul arrived in Rome. He had spent these three years in prison, going from one trial to another before different Roman rulers
- [c. A.D. 61–62]—Paul underwent his first Roman imprisonment. We do not have this recorded in the Book of Acts, which breaks off at the very beginning of Paul’s first Roman imprisonment
- [c. A.D. 62–63]—Paul was released from prison, and during this period he covered a great deal of territory. It was during this time that he wrote 1 Timothy and Titus from Macedonia
- [c. A.D. 63-64]—Paul was arrested again. Before his death he wrote 2 Timothy
- [c. A.D. 64-67]—Paul was beheaded in Rome.

For some 2 Timothy may nothing more than a continuation where 1 Timothy leaves off. But as you can see, it is so much more. The book is the Apostle Paul’s “Swan Song,” his warning shot, his encouragement in the face of great opposition and obstacle. It is so practical and relevant for 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians and the church... a needed word for what we face in our day.

## **Fast Facts 2 Timothy**

- (1) Author: Paul**
- (2) Recipient: Timothy**
- (3) Date: AD 64-67**
- (4) Place: Written from a prison cell in Rome**
- (5) Destination: Ephesus (*Timothy was pastor of the church at Ephesus*)**
- (6) Incident: Paul's imprisonment and pending death**
- (7) Purpose: To encourage Timothy in the face of persecution and apostasy**

## **Some Key Characteristics of 2 Timothy:**

- (1) 2 Timothy is Paul's last will and testimony** – In our study we are referring to it as Paul's "Swan Song." The deathbed statement of any individual has an importance which is not attached to other remarks. This is what lends significance to 2 Timothy. It is the final communication of Paul. It has a note of sadness which is not detected in his other epistles. Nevertheless, there is the overtone of triumph... *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith,"* written by Paul as his own epitaph (2 Tim. 4:7). Also, because this was his last letter, Paul was very personal. In these four short chapters, there are approximately twenty-five references to individuals.
- (2) 2 Timothy is Paul's warning of coming times of apostasy** - In this little book of 2 Timothy an ominous dark cloud is seen on the horizon. It is the coming apostasy. Today apostasy has broken like a storm, like a Texas tornado, on the world and in the church. What do we mean by apostasy? Webster defines apostasy as "total desertion of the principles of faith." So apostasy is not due to ignorance; it is a heresy. Apostasy is deliberate error. It is intentional departure from the faith. An apostate is one who knows the truths of the gospel and the doctrines of the faith, but has repudiated them.
- (3) 2 Timothy speaks of the ultimate outcome of gospel preaching** - The final fruition will not be the total conversion of mankind, nor will it usher in the Millennium. On the contrary, some will believe and for some there will come about a great turning away, not unlike what we are seeing today... even a watering down, compromise, and total perversion of the gospel. Don't think that what we see going on today has caught God off guard. God wrote about it and warned us about in 2 Timothy.

**WHAT DO YOU FEAR MOST?** Rank the following fears for yourself from 1 to 10 with 1 being what you fear most and 10 what you fear least of the things listed:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. **Fear of public speaking (or talking/speaking in front of other)**
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. **Fear of death/dying**
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. **Fear of confrontation**
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. **Fear of rejection**
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. **Fear of loneliness**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Fear of failure
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Fear of being judged
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Fear of getting hurt
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Fear of change
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Fear of inadequacy

- Go back through the list and place an “ x ” to the right of all the fears that you believe might be related to the fear of public speaking. Explain.
- Go back through the list and place a “ ✓ ” check mark to the right of all the fears that you believe might be related to the fear of confrontation. Explain
- Which of the 10 do you think might have been some of Timothy’s fears? Explain.

**Top 10 Fears That People Hold in Their Personal life: *(these fears pertain particularly to our personal and social life)***

- (1) **The fear of public speaking (or speaking in front of other)** – The fear of public speaking or speaking in front of others is called “glossophobia,” and is remarkable common. In fact, some experts estimate that as much as 77% of the population has some level of anxiety regarding public speaking. Of course, many people are able to manage and control the fear. If your fear is significant enough to cause problems in work, school, or in social settings, then it is possible that you suffer from a full-blown phobia of public speaking. Physical symptoms of “glossophobia” may include, sweating, increased heart rate, dry mouth, difficulty breathing, nausea, headache, muscle tension, and a need to urinate. While most people have some degree of fear of public speaking, this fear can sometimes be reduced and helped by actually practicing in public... stand in front of a mirror and read a book, the Bible or an article from a newspaper or magazine looking up at yourself as you speak, you can also practice by reading aloud in front of a trusted family member such as a spouse or friend, another practicing technique for public speaking is to write out exactly what you are going to say in front of others and then practicing reading it aloud several times first in front of a mirror watching yourself, then out loud while standing facing a wall with books or pictures (these represent your audience). This may be repeated several times to help build your poise and assurance. Building confidence in your ability to speak in front of others can help to reduce your anxiety.
- (2) **The fear of confrontation** – Sometimes called “Confrontation Avoidance,” the fear of confrontation can paralyze some, and even cause all kinds of physical effect... shortness of breath, increased heartbeat and respiration, heavy perspiration (sweating), nervous ticks (shakiness of hand and legs, eye twitches, stuttering speech, etc.), increased blood pressure, even some heart disorder and ulcers. Your colleague got mad at you and you’re about to hear about it. It’s one of those situations where you know it’s gonna end up in a conflict. It makes your legs shaky. ... Or your loved one made you upset, but you are just

afraid to talk about it – you don't want the drama. You don't like to confront anyone, because it makes your heart pound. It's just SO unpleasant. Fear of confrontation is the fear of any conflict-related situation, created either by you or someone else. People who have fear of confrontation tend to avoid expressing their feelings or rights if they feel it might end up in a conflict. They also hate anything that feels like a social drama. When being confronted, they would rather “lose” just to end the conflict situation, even if they know they are right. Fear of confrontation can arise from many sources like our childhood, negative past experiences, social anxiety, being bullied, low self-confidence, and general shyness.

- (3) **The fear of failure** - One of the top fears in the world is a fear of failure. Many people won't try something new unless they're confident they can win or succeed. Failure is a normal part of life and learning from failure can help you find eventual success.
- (4) **The fear of change** - We live in a rapidly changing world. However, many people fear change. As a result, they resist it. And when “change” happens it can create unexpected outcomes from the one who fears change... anger, resentment, sullenness, irritability, pettiness, and more. The fear of change can cause people to become stagnant and they may miss out on a lot of really good opportunities in life. This fear of change can create such harsh and extreme reactions because the one affected by can feel like they are being pushed out, replaced, phased out, or that they are no longer needed or appreciated.
- (5) **The fear of death (dying)** – The fear of death or dying is called “thanatophobia.” Another name for this condition is “death anxiety.” You might be anxious about your own death or the death of someone you care about. Research suggests that death anxiety is common, though people tend not to report their feelings. One study shows that between 3% and 10% of people feel they're more nervous than others about the thought of dying. Of course, it is natural to feel some sense of worry about death or dying. After all, it's normal to fear the unknown. You might think dying will be scary, painful or lonely. But if you have thanatophobia, your fear of death affects your daily life. It may make it difficult to function at school, work or in social situations. You may experience physical symptoms, such as a panic attack, when you think about dying. Or you might go out of your way to avoid talking about death or the dying process.
- (6) **The fear of rejection** - Many people avoid entering into new relationships or trying to meet new people due to a fear of rejection. This fear can affect your work interactions with both your employer as well as co-workers. It can affect your parenting abilities and how you raise your children. So parent as so afraid of their children will reject them or not like them that they seek to appease and befriend their children rather than parent them. It can also affect how you relate to your spouse, your family, as well as friendships and other relationships. Fear of rejection can literally paralyze some.
- (7) **The fear of something bad happening** – If you are always afraid something bad happening in your life, chances are you will never have anything happening in your life at all. Bad things happen in life. It's inevitable. However, when people constantly fear something bad happening, it often restricts their activities. They may avoid doing a lot of things or going to certain places due to an unrealistic fear that bad things may happen.

This fear is really a life controlled by “fear” itself... this one is afraid of everything and anything.

- (8) **The fear of inadequacy** - One of the top fears many people share is that they’re just not good enough. They may pass up opportunities for a promotion or may decline an opportunity to lead a group because they worry that they’re inadequate. Often, they overcompensate for their fears by trying to be a perfectionist but remain plagued by thoughts that they just don’t measure up to other people.
- (9) **The fear of being judged** – People who worry that they will be judged negatively by others often shy away from relationship or social opportunities, or sometimes even chances to advance their career. People who adopt this fear often exaggerate how others will perceive them negatively and underestimate their ability to tolerate not being well-received by others.
- (10) **The fear of getting hurt** - We should all have some fear of getting hurt. If you didn’t, you wouldn’t look both ways before you crossed the street. However, people who have a big fear of being emotionally hurt often refuse to enter into relationships. They may avoid friendships, keep family at an arm’s length, and skip romantic relationships due to a fear that they won’t be able to handle getting hurt.

I have read that when people are asked to rank their greatest fears, the fear of death ranks pretty high up there. But ahead of that is always the fear of speaking in public and the fear of confrontation. That is the one we are going to be focusing on in this study based on Paul’s words to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:23-26. Confrontation and conflict is not a pleasant subject matter, and it is not something any of us enjoy or desire. Yet it is at times appropriate, and necessary, and important. Although we maybe want to avoid it at all cost, there is a cost at times to avoiding it both for the church and for individual in need of it.

**READ: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22**

*“<sup>12</sup> And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, <sup>13</sup> and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. Be at peace among yourselves. <sup>14</sup> Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. <sup>15</sup> See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all. <sup>16</sup> Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup> pray without ceasing, <sup>18</sup> in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. <sup>19</sup> Do not quench the Spirit. <sup>20</sup> Do not despise prophecies. <sup>21</sup> Test all things; hold fast what is good. <sup>22</sup> Abstain from every form of evil.”*

The Bible assumes that we will help each other walk in faithfulness (see 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22). That process includes confronting others when necessary... and for their good (Matthew 18:15-20).

**READ: Matthew 18:15-20 (these are Jesus’ words)**

<sup>15</sup> “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. <sup>16</sup> But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ <sup>17</sup> And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. <sup>18</sup> “Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. <sup>19</sup> “Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. <sup>20</sup> For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.” \*How did Jesus treat “heathens” and “tax collectors”? He treated them with love and compassion as those who need to be reached with the gospel. He poured into to them to reach them. Confrontation in Jesus’ words is not a negative or hurtful things, but a necessary thing to save, rescue, bring hope and help.

**Why do you think we are disinclined and hesitant toward confrontation?** \_\_\_\_\_

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Many of us, though, aren’t very willing to confront a brother or sister in sin. Why? These are some of the reasons for this reticence and reluctance. Consider what you’d do to overcome them...

### **10 Reason We Are Reluctant to Confront (Correct)r:**

- (1) **We’ve never seen confrontation handled well** - Maybe, in fact, we’ve never seen it handled at all. If we have, it may have been done so poorly that we don’t want any part of the task.
- (2) **We misunderstand what “Do not judge, so that you won’t be judged” (Matt. 7:1) means** - If we assume it means we are never to help a Christian check his or her heart, we misread the text. Righteous, humble confrontation is quite different from arrogant judgmentalism.
- (3) **We have sin in our own lives** - We all do—and we don’t usually want anyone to confront us, so we choose not to confront others. We don’t deal with the log in our own eye *or* the speck in others’ eyes (Matt. 7:3). That way, everyone maintains some kind of “peace.”
- (4) **We’ve heard “grace” erroneously defined as “live as you wish, then ask God’s forgiveness”** - That kind of grace avoids confrontation, for no one is calling anyone to godliness. Grace makes sense only when we understand God’s holiness and His perfect standards.
- (5) **We’re afraid of losing church members** - Actually, we *might* lose members even if we confront biblically and humbly—so this concern is a real one. *Not confronting*, though,

is not a way to grow a strong, God-centered church. It is a way to quench and grieve the Holy Spirit and shut up the windows of blessing from heaven.

- (6) **We bear scars of continual confrontation in our personal lives** – In other words, we’ve been hurt or wounded by mishandled confrontation in our own life and have a negative perception of it. If all you’ve known is others who continually confront you about your wrong, you don’t always want to pass along the same kind of spirit toward others. You want to break the patterns, so you swing the pendulum too far in the other direction.
- (7) **Confrontation is simply uncomfortable in general** - After all, who wants to point out wrong in somebody’s life? Doing that sounds both arrogant and judgmental, we think—and Jesus would not want us to be either one.
- (8) **We’re afraid of being legalistic** - I understand this one, as I was once an often legalistic, sometimes mean pastor. I don’t want to go back there, so I have to check my heart any time I sense a need to confront someone.
- (9) **We don’t want to lose a friend** - And, that’s always a possibility when we confront someone we care about. The cost could be more than we want to pay—so we choose not to do it.
- (10) **We have little sense of the corporate, life-on-life nature of New Testament Christianity** - Instead, we sometimes live by, “I’ll do what’s best for me, and you can do what’s best for you.” Our individualism gets in the way of our Christianity. If we take the example of the New Testament Church found in the Bible then the church is a “body,” and if one of the members of your body becomes diseased and infected, if you ignore it and neglect it and don’t deal with it eventually it will lead to the poisoning of the entire body and death. If we take the example of the church as a family... if you have a member of your family who is out of control, practicing harmful behavior to himself and other in the family, bringing things into the home and family that are tearing the family apart, you must deal with that member of the family in a corrective way or the entire family will be affected by the behavior of this one and the whole family and home will be disrupted and perhaps even destroyed. We need each other in the body of Christ... the family of God and if one member suffers (even in a destructive way by his or her own behavior) then we all suffer as scripture says it.

**What other reasons would you add to this list? Why do you struggle with confrontation, if you do?** \_\_\_\_\_

Whether we like it or not (*and we probably should not like it!*), we all need to learn how to give Biblical correction to those who are in sin or in serious doctrinal error. Without correction, churches and families tend to run into the ditch. In our text, Paul shows Timothy how to carry out the gentle art of correction. It applies especially to church leaders, but it also applies to every Christian, because we all have relationships that require at times, if we

truly love others, for us to offer biblical correction. So although it is never a pleasant task, it is a part of biblical love.

**READ: 2 Timothy 2:23-26**

*“<sup>23</sup> But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. <sup>24</sup> And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, <sup>25</sup> in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, <sup>26</sup> and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.”*

Again, there are several reasons that we shy away from correcting others...

**Why We Shy Away From Correcting/Confronting Others?:** *(some of these may sound a bit repetitive of what we have already said, but they do bear repeating so we get them firmly ingrained in our hearts and minds)*

- (1) **The fear factor** - I've already mentioned *the fear factor*: we're chicken! One key to overcoming the fear of correcting those in sin or error is to recognize what verse 24 affirms, that if you know Christ, you are the Lord's bond-servant. As such, He will hold you accountable for being faithful to Him. You need to fear God more than you fear people and recognize that obedience to His command to love others requires correcting them if you see them heading for the cliff.
- (2) **Misunderstanding of judging others** - Another factor that keeps us from correcting others is *a misunderstanding of Matthew 7:1*, "Do not judge so that you will not be judged." This is one of the most misunderstood verses in the Bible. If you keep reading, in verse 6 Jesus talks about not giving what is holy to dogs and not casting your pearls before swine. Obviously, you must make some pretty harsh judgments to label someone a dog or a swine! You cannot minister to people if you do not make some judgments about their spiritual condition. Jesus meant that we should not condemn others for minor things in their lives while we ignore major sins in our own lives. First take the log out of your eye and then you can help your brother with the speck in his eye.
- (3) **Awareness of our own sin** - That leads to another reason that we do not correct others: *We are aware of sin in our own lives*. We are afraid that if we try to correct someone else, he (or she) will point the finger back at us, and we know that we're guilty as charged. So we do not bring up the other person's sin in hopes that he will not bring up our sin! But, Scripture commands us to deal with any known sin in our lives. That's why Paul's instruction here on the ministry of correction follows his exhortation on being a cleansed vessel. We do not have to be perfect to practice this ministry (or it would never get done), but we do have to judge our own sins.
- (4) **Laziness and procrastination** - Another reason we do not correct others is *laziness and procrastination*. It is *always* more of a hassle to correct than to let it go. *Always!* It takes effort to arrange a time to get together. It is stressful to talk about such matters. You risk



a backlash from the other person. But, we are commanded to pursue love (2:22), and that always requires effort and risk.

- (5) **Pressure to be more tolerant and accepting of cultural trends** - Another reason we do not correct those in sin is that we have inadvertently *bought into the tolerant, relative morality of our culture*. We mistakenly think that love means accepting the person, sin and all, with no moral judgments about his behavior. But, God's Word gives us absolute standards for right and wrong behavior. If we see someone violating biblical standards, he is heading for the cliff. The consequence of sowing to the flesh is corruption, which isn't pretty (Gal. 6:8)! Love requires attempting to correct.
- (6) **Unsure of whether to confront or not** - Another reason we shy away from offering correction is that *we do not know whether or not we should do it*. Some problems get resolved as we pray without saying anything. And, not all matters warrant correction. We're all imperfect and in process. God Himself is patient with us, not confronting us all at once for every area where we fall short. So, we wonder whether a particular matter calls for correction, or whether we should just bear with the person. That's one reason that I have called this the gentle *art* of correction. It requires waiting on the Lord and applying biblical wisdom to know when it's right to correct or when to remain silent.

But, even with all of these reasons why we draw back from this ministry, our text is clear:

*As the Lord's servants, in love we must wisely correct those in sin and serious doctrinal error.*

As I said, it's crucial that you see yourself as *the Lord's bond-servant* if you want to be obedient in this ministry. Someday you will answer to Him for whether or not you loved the people that He brought into your life. You cannot truly love someone and let him head toward a spiritual cliff without warning him. Paul shows that we should not be argumentative or quarrelsome, but he also says that we should correct those who are in opposition to the Lord. He gives us four guidelines:

**4 Guidelines for Correcting Those Who Stray from the Lord: (according to 2 Timothy 2:23-26)**

- (1) Correction must be done wisely
- (2) Correction must be done in love
- (3) Correction must be done based on God's Word
- (4) Correction must be done in the awareness of spiritual warfare

*<sup>23</sup> But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. <sup>24</sup> And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, <sup>25</sup> in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, <sup>26</sup> and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will."*

## CORRECTION MUST BE DONE WISELY

Some issues are not worth dealing with. Paul writes (2 Timothy 2:23), *“<sup>23</sup> But avoid (refuse) foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife.”* He is talking about those who were getting into fruitless doctrinal controversies in the church. Perhaps the best commentary on our text is 1 Timothy 1:3-7. Turn back a few pages and look at it with me....

### READ: 1 Timothy 1:3-7

*“<sup>3</sup> As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, <sup>4</sup> nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith. <sup>5</sup> Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, <sup>6</sup> from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, <sup>7</sup> desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.”*

- Some doctrinal controversies are clearly important and worth defending vigorously.
- Paul went to Jerusalem to argue strongly against the Judaizers, who said that circumcision is necessary for salvation (Acts 15) -
- Paul contended against Peter, whose behavior compromised the gospel on this matter (Gal. 2:11-14).
- Jude 3 appeals to us to contend earnestly for the faith.
- So Paul does not mean (in our text) that all doctrinal controversy is wrong.

**IS IT WORTH FIGHT OVER AND VIGOROUSLY DEFENDING?:** Place a [ ✓ ] in the box beside those doctrinal issues, all of which are somewhat controversial, that you believe are worth fighting over or vigorously defending.

[ ] *The inspiration, inerrancy, and infallibility of God’s Word*

[ ] *The gifts of the Holy Spirit* – Some churches emphasize the sign gifts (tongues, the interpretation of tongues, healing, miracles) and some say that the sign gifts have ceased. This is called “cessationism.” Cessationism is the view that the “sign gifts” or “miracle gifts” of tongues and healing have ceased—that the end of the apostolic age brought about a cessation of the miracles associated with that age. Most cessationists believe that, while God can and still does perform miracles today, the Holy Spirit no longer uses individuals to perform miraculous signs. The biblical record shows that miracles occurred during particular periods for the specific purpose of authenticating a new message from God. Moses was enabled to perform miracles to authenticate his ministry before Pharaoh (Exodus 4:1-8). Elijah was given miracles to authenticate his ministry before Ahab (1 Kings 17:1; 18:24). The apostles were given miracles to authenticate their ministry before Israel (Acts 4:10, 16). Jesus’ ministry was also marked by miracles,

which the Apostle John calls “signs” (John 2:11). John’s point is that the miracles were proofs of the authenticity of Jesus’ message. After Jesus’ resurrection, as the Church was being established and the New Testament was being written, the apostles demonstrated “signs” such as tongues and the power to heal. *“Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not”* (1 Corinthians 14:22, a verse that plainly says the gift was never intended to edify the church). The Apostle Paul predicted that the gift of tongues would cease (1 Corinthians 13:8). Yet many of the Pentecostal and more Charismatic churches today believe that all the spiritual gifts including “sign gifts” or “miracle gifts” are still in operation today and those gifts are practiced in those church in one way or another.

[ ] ***Predestination and the freewill of man***

[ ] ***The divinity and humanity of Jesus***

[ ] ***Liturgical verses Evangelical*** – Sometimes called “High Church” (Liturgical) and “Low Church” (Evangelical). These terms (Liturgical and Evangelical) have to do with procedures, specifically, the use of ritual, liturgy and accoutrements in worship. Leaders of a High Church congregation place a “high” emphasis on ceremony, vestments, and sacrament. Leaders of a Low Church place “low” emphasis on such things and follow a freer worship style. Liturgical or High Churches are Anglican, Episcopal, Catholic, Orthodox, most Methodist and Lutheran, and some Presbyterian churches. Evangelical or Low Churches are Baptist, Independent, Pentecostal, Quaker, Amish, some Methodies and Lutheran, and many Presbyterian churches.

[ ] ***Salvation by grace alone plus nothing else***

[ ] ***Premillennialism, Postmillennialism, Amillennialism*** – Premillennialists believe Christ returns *before* the millennium (1,000 year reign of Christ) preceded by a period of intense tribulation. Postmillennialists believe Christ returns *after* the millennium as a golden age when the majority of the world has converted to Christianity. Amillennialists do not expect a future literal 1,000 reign of Christ, but rather view it as Christ’s reign with his saints during the time between his two comings.

[ ] ***The Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit***

[ ] ***Alien immersion and closed communion*** – Alien immersion is the belief, still held by some, that any baptism, even if it by full immersion, but be reconducted (re-baptized) if it wasn’t performed in the church individual is desire to join. Closed communion is the belief, still held by some, that unless an individual is a member of that particular church they may not partake of communion even if they are a saved and immersed believer.

[ ] ***The total depravity of man (sin)*** – The belief that all men are sinners, but nature and by choice, and in need of a Savior.

The point is some doctrinal controversies are clearly important and worth defending vigorously. So Paul does not mean (in our text) that all doctrinal controversy is wrong when he writes in verse 23 of our passage *“<sup>23</sup> But avoid (refuse) foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife.”*

Rather, he is talking about pointless issues that have no bearing on salvation or godly living. The word “disputes” in verse 23 (the NASB says “speculations”) infers that these were matters on which the Bible is silent.

**Observation:** I might add that while we should not get into these kinds of foolish and ignorant debates, we may need to confront the argumentative spirit of those promoting them. Some people like to argue because it feeds their pride to prove their point and to put down others. But Paul’s point is that it is futile to argue over speculative matters where the Bible either is silent or unclear.

How do we determine if an issue is a matter of “foolish and ignorant dispute” or “foolish speculation” that we should let go. Here are some questions to ask to help make that determination... to help determine if an issue is a foolish and ignorant speculation to be avoided or a matter requiring Biblical correction...

### **3 Questions to ask to determine if an issue is a matter of foolish dispute or in need of Biblical correction:**

- (1) *Is this person involved in clear **disobedience to God’s Word?*** - Maybe he or she is doing something that I don’t like, but there is no command in the Bible against it. Also, some things fall into a gray zone: they may be inadvisable, but they are not clear sin. Use discernment.
- (2) *Is a major **doctrinal issue at stake?*** - Some doctrines are essential to the Christian faith. If you deny them, you have left the faith. Other issues may be very important for one’s view of God or man or how to live the Christian life, although they are not essential for salvation. Again, you must know Scripture and exercise discernment in light of how serious the matter is.
- (3) *What is your **goal in this issue?*** – Ask yourself, “Why does this matter to me?” or “Why is this issue so important to me? Do you just want to argue and prove that you’re right, or are you concerned about godliness and love? Quarreling or winning an argument does not lead anyone to Christ nor does it build up your brother in true godliness. If you must correct, your aim should be to help your brother grow in the Lord. Correction must be done wisely.

### **CORRECTION MUST BE DONE IN LOVE**

Notice our passage again in 2 Timothy 2:23-26, *“<sup>23</sup> But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. <sup>24</sup> And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, <sup>25</sup> in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, <sup>26</sup> and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.”*

Notice, Paul gives one negative and three positive terms. Together, these qualifications add up to Biblical love.

#### **4 Qualification for Correction out of Biblical Love: (based on 2 Timothy 2:23-26)**

- (1) **Correction must not be quarrelsome** – Paul writes in **verse 24**, “<sup>24</sup> *And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel ...*” You can’t effectively correct if you are antagonistic. The most effective correction takes place when the other person knows that you love and care for him or her. If you go to “set him straight” or “prove that he’s wrong,” but do not show genuine concern for him, he will probably not adopt the viewpoint that you’re arguing for, even if it is Biblical. Also, you must determine before you go to the other person that you will not get into an argument, because often the one in sin will counter by attacking you or your motives. If you allow yourself to be drawn into that kind of quarrel, you cannot be effective in the ministry of correction. You can be firm and unwavering without raising your voice or losing your temper. This applies also to husbands and wives. You can talk with your mate about a problem that concerns his or her behavior without yelling, arguing, name-calling, or attacking. In fact, these things are sin because they do not stem from biblical love.
- (2) **Correction must be kind to all** – Here is Paul again in **verse 24** of our passage, “<sup>24</sup> *And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all...*” The Greek word means “mild” or “gentle.” Paul uses it (1 Thess. 2:7) to refer to his own behavior, comparing himself to a nursing mother tenderly caring for her own child. We often think that to be effective, correction must be stern. But Paul says that we must be kind. Husbands, do you correct your wives with the tenderness of a nursing mother? Parents, do you correct your children with the same kindness you show to a nursing infant?
- (3) **Correction must be patient when wronged** – Here it is again in **verse 24** and the first part of **verse 25**, “<sup>24</sup> *And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient,* <sup>25</sup> *in humility correcting those who are in opposition...*” Often when you try to correct others, they will respond by attacking you. They will falsely accuse you of wrong motives or they will bring up shortcomings in your behavior to try to divert matters away from their own sins. If you are impatient when wronged, you lose the ability to correct effectively. So Paul tell us to be patient in correcting others.
- (4) **Correction must be done with gentleness** – Look at **verses 24-25** again... here is Paul, “<sup>24</sup> *And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient,* <sup>25</sup> *in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth.*” Notice the word “*humility*” there in the first part of **verse 25**, “*In humility correcting those who are in opposition...*” ***What word does your Bible have there instead the word “humility”... what do some other translation say?*** (KJV=meekness / NASB=gentleness / NIV=gently / ESV=gentleness / NLT=gently) This word translated in my Bible as “humility” is often translated “meekness” (KJV), but that conveys weakness, which is wrong. The word is used of Moses (Num. 12:3), Jesus (Matt. 11:29; 21:5), and Paul (2 Cor. 10:1), none of whom were weak, timid men! It is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23), and is also used in Galatians 6:1, which talks about the need to restore with gentleness those who are caught in sin. The word was used in secular Greek to refer to a horse that had been broken. It

was strong and powerful, but in complete submission to its master. So the Biblical word may include behavior or speech that is very strong at times. But the gentle person is sensitive and completely submissive to the Master's will. He is not acting out of self-will. He is truly "the Lord's bond-servant."

Thus, correction must be done wisely and in love.

### **CORRECTION MUST BE BASED ON GOD'S WORD**

Okay, notice our passage again... look at it with me, 2 Timothy 2:23-26, "<sup>23</sup> But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. <sup>24</sup> And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, <sup>25</sup> in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, <sup>26</sup> and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will." Paul says there in verse 24 that the Lord's bond-servant must be "able to teach." And notice the word "correcting" in verse 25... this is the Greek word for "child training." It refers to giving instruction, correction, or discipline to a child.

### **2 Standards for Correction:**

- (1) **Never attempt to correct by your opinion** – You're opinion carries not weight, can be colored/condition by things other than God's Word.
- (2) **Only God's opinion matters** – That's why the standard for correction must always only be God's Word, not your opinion or what you "think."

★ The standard for all such teaching is God's Word of truth. In other words, we should never attempt to correct by saying, "I think," or, "in my opinion, you're wrong." My opinion carries no weight. God's opinion is what matters!

You must be careful here, because it's easy to mix up your opinions or your way of doing things with God's clear commandments. They may not be one and the same. We sometimes inherit certain views from our upbringing or from cultural notions about right and wrong.

For example, I've heard people say to children who are rambunctious in a church building, "You shouldn't behave that way in God's house!" But, church buildings are *not* God's house! God's *people* are His house, but the building is just a convenient place where the church gathers. It may be that the children need to behave in a more subdued manner in a group setting, but God's house has nothing to do with it. To view this building as a sacred place is to confuse a cultural idea with a Biblical truth.

The same thing applies to what is appropriate attire at a church service. The Bible commands us to dress modestly, but it never says that we must wear a suit or dressy clothes when we gather with the church. Some argue that if you were going to meet the President, you would

dress up, so you should do the same when you come to meet with the Lord. If that is so, then you'd better put on your suit before you have your morning quiet time! I actually heard a lecture in seminary where the professor used Titus 2:10, which urges slaves to "adorn the doctrine of God" in every respect, to argue that as pastors, we should wear a suit even when we went to the local hardware store! He was misusing Scripture to try to support a cultural value! Biblical correction must stem from biblical standards of truth and morality.

**When you offer correction, emphasize that obedience to God's Word is the only path to blessing.**

I often ask, "You want God's blessing in your life, don't you? You can't ask God to bless your life when you are living in violation of His Word."

- Your correction must offer constructive help that shows the other person practically how to live in a manner that is pleasing to the Lord.
- As the one offering correction, you are subject to the same Biblical standards.
- So you should be able to point to your life as an example and show the one in sin how to apply the Bible in daily life.

Thus correction must be done wisely and in love. It must be based on and in accordance with God's Word of truth.

### **CORRECTION MUST BE DONE IN THE AWARENESS OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE**

2 Timothy 2:23-26, "<sup>23</sup> But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. <sup>24</sup> And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, <sup>25</sup> in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, <sup>26</sup> and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will."

Notice there that Paul says that those in error are "in opposition" in verse 25... that is, in opposition to God and His truth. He adds in verses 25-26, "...if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, <sup>26</sup> and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will."

We often see things only from the natural plane, but God's Word teaches that there is a constant spiritual battle raging on the spiritual plane. We are struggling against "the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" according to Paul in **Ephesians 6:12**. At bare minimum, this means that it would be utter foolishness to try to talk to men about God before we first have talked to God about men. Prayer must permeate this whole process of biblical correction.

There are several interpretive matters to consider in these verses.

#### **4 Interpretive Matters in 2 Timothy 2:23-26:**

- (1) **Who is Paul referring to in this passage, believers or unbelievers?** - First, is Paul referring to believers or to unbelievers who need this correction? The fact that they need to come “to the knowledge of the truth” or “that they may know the truth” in verse 25, would point to unbelievers, since Paul uses that phrase consistently of unbelievers in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim. 2:4; 4:3; 2 Tim. 3:7; see also, Titus 1:1). On the other hand, in 1 Timothy 3:7, Paul says that an elder may fall into the (v.26) “snare of the devil,” the same term that he uses here. Also, the verb “taken captive” (v.26) means to capture alive. It’s as if Satan captures believers as POW’s to use them for his purposes. So, it may refer both to believers and to professing believers. The test of the genuineness of their faith is whether or not they respond positively to correction. If someone professes to know Christ, but persists in heretical teaching or godless behavior, his claim may be suspect.
- (2) **Who is taking captive the erring one, the servant of the Lord or the devil?** - Notice verse 26, “<sup>26</sup> and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.” Another issue is the correct translation at the end of verse 26. The Greek pronouns are ambiguous.

*[1] Some say that it is the servant of the Lord who takes captive the erring one, so that he may do God’s will.*

*[2] Others say that the devil has captured him, but they escape so that they can again do God’s will (NASB, margin)*

*[3] But most scholars understand it to mean that the devil has captured them to do his (the devil’s) will – since “him” and “his” is not capitalized it is most likely referring to the devil and not God.*

Probably either the second or third view is correct. The person in serious doctrinal error or disobedience to God’s Word has fallen into Satan’s snare and is being held captive by him. Satan’s evil will is opposed to God’s holy will. Since we are fighting against this powerful evil enemy, we must put on the whole armor of God, which includes prayer (Eph. 6:10-20).

- (3) **Where does repentance come from, the one called to repent or from God who grants repentance?** Look at verses 24-26, “<sup>24</sup> And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, <sup>25</sup> in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, <sup>26</sup> and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.” Note also that while we should exhort those in sin to repent, at the same time, God must grant repentance. Scripture is clear that both are true (Acts 2:38; 5:31; 11:18). The phrase in verse 25, “if God perhaps will grant them repentance” is an interesting statement. The phrase “granted them repentance” strikes me as a somewhat strange expression. *Aren’t we the ones to repent when we come under*



*the conviction of the Holy Spirit, see our error, and repent?* Perhaps, some of the time; but it appears that the ones needing correction that Paul was speaking to had gone considerably beyond this point... they weren't sensitive anymore to their need to repent. The only repentance they were going to experience was if God gave it to them. The overall meaning, of course, is clear. **God is sovereign over all, even our evil hearts.** But what specifically does Paul mean? The Greek word translated here as **"granted"** (God... granted them repentance) has a wide range of meaning, but it is always related to "giving." So repentance is a gift, but how so? Paul wrote in **Romans 6:23, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."** Eternal life and salvation come to us through Jesus Christ, but God has gifted us... granted to us the ability to repent and turn from our sin if and when we sensitive to His voice and drawing, His conviction of sin in our life, and our heart is not rebellious and hardened toward Him. There is a road that leads from a gentle heart open to the convicting working of God's Spirit, to patterns of sin, to the hard heart in which God gives people over to their sin (Rom 1:24,26, 28). Earlier on in one's journey, we are sensitive to the promptings of the Spirit and repent easily. But as we continue to neglect the voice of the Spirit, as we insist on our sin, as we establish patterns of unrepentance, those patterns become more and more entrenched. Eventually, because we are so familiar with our patterns of behavior, we don't even see the patterns and feel totally justified in how we live. The best example of this I know is anger. When we first respond with anger, we feel its power, and it should frighten us. But as we continue to let the sun go down on the anger, we become more comfortable with it. And eventually we are so used to responding in anger that we don't even notice it and feel totally justified in how we treat others.

Patterns are strong. It is why the alcoholic keeps drinking, the gambler keeps gambling, the abusive husband keeps hitting, and the abused wife keeps going back. We are comfortable in our patterns, even when those patterns are patterns of pain. And so angry men continue to get angrier, falling prey to Satan's traps, and hearts are hardened to the point that they no longer feel the convicting promptings of the Spirit.

To these people — and the Ephesians elders in particular — Paul tells Timothy that he must patiently and kindly endure their evil, because their sovereign Lord may (or may not) choose to break through their patterns and hardheartedness and give them what they can never come to on their own — repentance for their obvious sins. May God grant to all of us a clear vision of our sinful patterns and his power for us to step out of the comfortable sin every one of us can find himself in.

- (4) Who gets trapped by the snare of the devil, false teachers or those in sin?** Verse 26 of our passage says, **"<sup>26</sup> and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will."** Who is the **"they"** here, that is escaping the snare of the devil? In 1 Timothy Paul uses this phrase at least 2 times of

elders that lack a good reputation with outsiders, thus falling *“into reproach and the snare of the devil”* (1 Tim. 3:7; see, also, 1 Tim. 6:9 on the snare of the love of money). A snare traps an animal. Sin and false teaching trap people and enslave them. When God grants repentance, they are freed from sin and are able to continue in obedience to His Word, which is the only true freedom (see John 8:31-36). God uses godly believers to gently and lovingly correct those who err either by sin or in false teaching and embracing false teaching to not only bring about a spirit of repentance in the individual, but may also prevent that one from being ensnared by the enemy... the devil. The devil would do nothing more than to enslave and ensnare the lives of Christians and take them out of the way.

## CONCLUSION

Probably every one of us who is walking with Christ would not be where we're at today if other brothers and sisters had not corrected us in love. We all need this ministry from time to time, because we all are prone to get off the path.

If you are a cleansed vessel, fleeing from sin and pursuing godliness (2:20-22), then you are called to practice this gentle art of correction towards those who are flirting with or already have drifted into serious doctrinal error or sin. I want to give you some gentle, but firm correction by saying, “Do it!” Gently correct those you know that are in sin or error.

**How to do it?:** *(How to correct those who have drifted into sin and error)*

- (1) Do it wisely**
- (2) Do it in love**
- (3) Do it in accordance with God's Word**
- (4) Do it prayerfully, being aware of spiritual warfare**
- (5) Do it because you love God more than anything and you love others more than yourself**