

Message Series: **'Stronger: discovering truths for a resilient life'**

Message Title: **'Truth or Lies...what will you live with?'**

Scripture Source: **2 Timothy 2:14-19**

Date: Sunday, November 13, 2016

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Show Me the Way

There are moments when we feel a deep need to gain reliable direction and wise instruction for what lies ahead of us. 'How do I handle this frustration? How do I respond to this temptation? How do I survive this heartbreak?' Sometimes we are painfully aware of how easy it would be to lose our way and end up on some dead end path. We want to know truth, God's truth, and how it intersects with our life.

We sense what is at stake, our well being spiritually, emotionally, relationally and physically. We want to be able to discern what is true and good and call out what is deceptive, untrue and destructive. What does it take to live wisely and well, growing stronger and wiser in the journey of life? How can we help others find the way forward in a deepening experience of faith, hope, and love?

The Way Forward

We need to be guided and governed by God's 'word of truth.' Jesus put it this way: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6 "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12

Jesus also clearly warned us about the reality of evil and error, and the source of such deception and destruction. John 8:44 Satan as one "not holding to the truth...he is a liar and the father of lies."

God's word speaks plainly and directly about the fact of good versus evil, truth versus lies and God versus Satan. And each of us is caught up in this cosmic battle, we are core to the conflict. It is a battle for your soul, mind, and life. Be aware of what is at stake...and who is at stake...people like you and me. Again, listen to the words of Jesus in John 10:10

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

Through Many Dangers, Toils and Snares...2 Timothy 2:14-19

How can we find our way forward? Learning and applying God's truth to our everyday lives, in specifics! That is what Paul is urging Timothy to be fully engaged in as a pastor of a local church in the city of Ephesus. I find this deeply challenging as a pastor. And instructive. Let's learn about a pastor's core responsibilities! And the responsibilities of every Christ follower.

1. **Remind people to behave verbally:** Vs. 14 Remind people of God's truth. And strongly challenge people not to get into divisive and destructive arguments that don't really build people up.

We need to be reminded that God is fully aware of our every conversation and what the intent is. Paul uses a strong word to teach about the effects of reckless and useless speech...it can ruin people. We get the word 'catastrophe' from the word he uses. Some conversations discourage people and disenchant people...conversations that traffic in personal opinions and preferences and are often rudely and harshly stated as 'truth.' Illustrate: styles of worship music, details about end times, political conversations, and the list goes on. Friends, we need to adopt a zero policy on self-righteous conversations that tear people down and are only interested in winning an argument and getting one's own way. "Reckless words pierce like a sword." Proverbs 12:18

Let me challenge you to steer clear of Christian web sites that talk about being guardians of the truth, they are often arrogant in attitude and self-righteous in their assessments. They do very little to draw attention to Jesus and growing as a follower of his. Humility and grace are noticeably absent...please stay clear.

2. Teach God's word accurately and clearly, calling for response to God: Vs. 15

Teachers of God's word have a serious responsibility to fulfill before God. "correctly handles the word of truth" Paul uses a verb that means to "cut a straight road." 'To cut a path in a straight direction...to be accurate on the one hand and plain on the other.'"(Stott)

Where does shame come from? Shoddy work, lack of preparation, copying from others without doing the hard, solitary work on a regular basis.

Learn from others, learn from the hard and painful experiences and let God shape and instruct you as you teach and lead others. "as one approved." tested and purified through various experiences)

3. Build relational and conversational boundaries: Vss.16-18

I treasure Paul's bold and blunt directives. He gives us 'permission' as Christians to stay clear of destructive and deceptive people...in fact he urges us to do so, because of what is at stake.

"Godless chatter" worthless conversations that lead people away from love...loving God and others.

Look at the character deterioration and be warned. He then stresses the fact of some teaching that is poisonous to the mind and soul. He uses a medical term from which we get our word, 'gangrene.'

"It spreads its infection in the community...their teachings are as dangerous as blood poisoning to the body and spread like sepsis from a wound." (Stott)

Friends, this is very strong language. Not all spiritual teaching is true. Ex. All roads lead to heaven/God, there is no hell, on such thing as absolute truth, salvation from sin is unnecessary and the list goes on.

God's word instructs us to be aware of the destructive nature of teaching that doesn't line up with Scripture and walk away from it. Humbly and boldly.

Why must we do this? Because some people have had their faith decimated through the 'infection' of lies and deceptions. One of the tragedies is that some of these teachers were once followers of Christ. Vs. 18...actually names 2 who have 'missed the mark'...imagery of an archer missing the target. In this case, teaching regarding the resurrection of the dead.

4. Rely on God and Follow Jesus Today: vs. 19

In the face of confusion, competing thoughts and beliefs, trust in the steadfastness of God. He knows who are truly his. He sees you...the real you, made in God's image and seeking to follow him. And he knows those who talk the talk but who really don't have an interest in following Jesus. God knows that reality too.

"Spurn evil all you who name God as God." The Message

Stronger Happens by Choice, Not by Chance

What choice do you need to make as a result of today's message?

Is it to become a Christian, or to begin asking questions and seeking answers?

Is it to become an intentional reader of God's word, with reflection and response as a chosen discipline?

Is it to think through what you do believe and set aside errors and half truths?

Is it to make some clear and noticeable changes in behaviour, especially your words and conversational themes? Is it to make amends to people you have hurt with reckless words?

What do you need to think through and choose to do? For God's honour, the good of others and your own well being. Will you? In the power of God's Spirit you and I can mature in character and conduct, let's choose in that direction!