



# Arguments & Instruction

2 Timothy 2:14-26



## What's the Problem?

- ❑ Read 2 Timothy 2:14-19. One of the big problems Timothy is facing is false teaching. Some people in the church have “wandered away from the truth” (2:18; 1 Timothy 6:20) and are opposing “the word of truth.” Though the content of their false teaching is not described in detail in this letter,<sup>1</sup> it is clearly a destructive force in the church.
  - ✂ The quarreling about it is useless and “ruins those who listen” (2:14).
  - ✂ Those who indulge in its “godless chatter” become more and more ungodly (2:16).<sup>2</sup>
  - ✂ It spreads like gangrene,<sup>3</sup> which destroys the “tissue” of the church (2:17).
  - ✂ It destroys the faith of some (2:18).
- 1. How does teaching affect behavior (and vice versa)? What is the connection between correct teaching (and believing) and correct conduct (morality)?

## What's the Response?

- ❑ In response to the false teaching, Paul tells Timothy to remind his people to avoid “quarreling about words” (2:14). Timothy (and the others) must “avoid godless chatter” (2:16). “Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness” (2:19, NIV).
  - 📖 Paul tells Timothy, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (2:15).
- ❑ Paul reminds Timothy that, while false teachers may damage the building, God’s solid foundation stands firm (2:19). The authentic Church is God’s secure possession. As members of that Church, Christians must turn away from unrighteousness and pursue righteousness.

## How to be an “Honorable Vessel”

- ❑ Read 2 Timothy 2:20-26. Paul uses household articles (vessels) to illustrate his instruction. Some vessels are for noble (honorable) purposes, and some are for ignoble (dishonorable).<sup>4</sup> Paul encourages Timothy to be an honorable vessel, made holy, useful to God and prepared to do any good work (2:21).



- 2. Based on 2:22-26,<sup>5</sup> what must Timothy *not* do (flee, avoid)? What must he do (pursue)?

*Turn page over.*

<sup>1</sup> The exact content of the false teaching is difficult to determine. But it’s clear that the false teachers “[said] that the resurrection has already taken place” (2:18). The future bodily resurrection of believers is essential to the gospel, as Paul argues in 1 Corinthians 15:12-14. The denial of bodily resurrection and other false teachings (e.g., 1 Timothy 4:3) indicated a significant departure from the gospel, and was considered an abandonment of the faith (4:1-2). For a summary of fundamental Christian beliefs, see Jay’s *The Gospel*.

<sup>2</sup> In 1 Timothy, Paul wrote, “Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith” (6:20, NIV).

<sup>3</sup> “gangrene” - The death of body tissue due to the loss of blood supply to that tissue, sometimes permitting bacteria to invade it and accelerate its decay (MedicineNet.com).

<sup>4</sup> “some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble” (2:20) – literally, “some to honor and some to dishonor.”

<sup>5</sup> The instructions given to Timothy in verses 22-26 are particularly applicable to church leaders. However, these verses also teach principles applicable to all Christians.

Not Do (Flee, Avoid)Do (Pursue)

3. From a Christian perspective, what characterizes a “foolish and stupid (ill-informed, uneducated) argument” concerning Christian teaching?<sup>6</sup> Can you think of examples?
4. Why should Christians avoid “foolish and stupid arguments?” Does this mean that Christians should never “argue” concerning Christian teaching? Explain.

📖 “Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction. (2 Timothy 4:2, NIV)

📖 “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect ...” (1 Peter 3:15)

5. What is the Christian’s role in convincing another person to accept biblical teaching as truth? (v. 25) How is the person ultimately convinced? What does this indicate about the nature of truth, as it relates to human argument and divine revelation?<sup>7</sup>
6. Typically, what are the motivations for “winning” an argument? What bothers *you* most when you lose an argument? Based on verses 25-26, what should motivate the Christian in helping convince another person that he or she is thinking or acting wrongly in relation to Christian teaching?<sup>8</sup>



### *Reflection/Application*

- If you are a Christian, do you avoid foolish and stupid arguments, and instead “gently instruct” others concerning biblical teaching? Are you able to discern foolish and stupid arguments? Are you becoming better equipped to “instruct” others through your own Bible reading and study? Read and reflect on 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and 1 Peter 3:15.
- If you are *not* a Christian, do *you* avoid foolish and stupid arguments – that is, arguments that only produce quarrels, or do you sincerely want productive dialogue concerning Christian teaching? Attempt to understand the basis for the Christian faith. Also, remember that mere human argument can never take you the whole way into the knowledge of God. We know God (the ultimate Truth) as we humbly open our hearts to His revelation.

<sup>6</sup> In the context of 2 Timothy, these arguments were obviously ill-informed and improperly motivated, and resulted in quarrels (verbal fights). The arguments were ill-informed because they were not based on the authoritative teaching of the apostles. Today, so-called “Christian” teaching that is not based on the Bible is ill-informed.

<sup>7</sup> Ultimately, God is the one who convinces the person, through the work of His Spirit. The Christian is a messenger, not a manipulator. The truth is based in God, not human opinion and argument. Knowledge of God (the ultimate Truth) is not arrived at by intellectual argumentation, but by God’s self-revelation as we open our hearts to Him.

<sup>8</sup> The Christian should not be motivated by selfishness, but by love, in hope that the person will come to a knowledge of the truth (both intellectually and experientially). It is the Christian’s desire that the person escape from the trap of the devil so they can do the will of God. These goals relate to the person’s good and the glory of God.