

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Partners in Pursuit

2 Timothy 2:22-26

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PowerPoint Presentation included: NONE

SermonAudio Blurb:

I. Introduction.

- A. Pastoral ministry is a challenge but it is a worthy one.
 - 1. The greatest struggle as a pastor is not with the people I pastor. It is with myself.
 - 2. As a fellow sinner I must constantly be on guard first and foremost for my own heart and passions.
 - 3. Self-pity, self-righteousness, and self-adulation are constant temptations.
- B. But this does not remove the challenge that a pastor is caring for the souls of others and not always is that a welcome intrusion into their lives.
 - 1. Police officers usually arrive on scenes where no one really wants them.
 - 2. Pastors often have the same situation.
- C. Pastors deal with three typical types of people:
 - 1. The mature.
 - 2. The immature.
 - 3. The unbelieving believer.
 - 4. How they interact with these people is not something left to the pastor's imagination. Our passage spells it out very clearly.
- D. Read passage.
 - 1. Passage essentially states that there are things that Timothy from which should flee and things toward which he should pursue.
 - 2. BTW, this does not fit only pastors, this passage is fitting for us all who love Jesus. But it is the pastors and elders who will find this something they must do a lot.

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3. But there is also a very important prepositional phrase I want you to note in vs 22.
 - a. “With those who call upon the Lord with a pure heart.”
 - b. This is why my title is “Partners in Pursuit.”
- E. So up front I want it made clear that in all that I am teaching today, none of it is to be done alone. We run, fight, resist, pursue and flee **together**—if we are wise.
 1. The phrase, “those who call upon the Lord” is from the Old Testament and it became an early way the church described those who were Christians.
 2. Added to that is “from a pure heart” speaking of those who are manifesting in their lives a new, converted heart.
 3. The point is simple, but it is huge and must not be missed. We need each other and we need to identify those who manifest a heart toward Jesus Christ.

II. What A Wise Person Flees.

- A. Youthful lusts, youthful passions, evil desires of youth (NIV).
 1. Very obvious but also not so obvious. What is meant here?
 - a. One view sees it as the typical physical urges that are typical in young people. Usually this is seen with a sexual connotation.
 - (1) Part of this comes with the term “lusts” or “passions.”
 - (2) The term is actually neutral. 1 Timothy 3:1 speaks of having a desire to be an elder and it is good.
 - (3) Galatians 5:17 speaks of the desires of the flesh and the desires of the Holy Spirit.
 - (4) It is a futile effort to not have desires, they are part of the human experience. The challenge is to have those desires placed under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.
 - (5) The idea of “youthful” is also potentially misleading to our eyes.
 - (a) Though Timothy is relatively young it is not actually focused on his age. Rather it is referring to those desires that are immature by nature.

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- (b) This can be focused on both young and old. Immaturity is not limited to any one group.
 - (c) Timothy is told not to allow himself to be driven by immature desires.
 - b. The second view is already essentially explained—it is immature attitudes and desires that are not fitting for Christians.
 - (1) But what is meant by this? Essentially it is anything opposite from what he is to pursue.
 - (2) But also it includes vs 23 and the first part of 24. And when you look at those you realize how they are truly part of youthful/immature desires.
- 2. We must not allow ourselves to get pulled into speculations.
 - a. The term “refuse” is only used 4 times by Paul and all of them in the pastoral epistles. There are certain things that leaders simply need to reject.
 - b. Speculations are simply theories, philosophical inquiries and arguments.
 - c. This is the very petri dish for false teachers. They throw out “ideas” and “thoughts” and let them begin to stir up the hearts and emotions of the people of God.
 - d. It can refer to debates, and at times those are necessary, such as in Acts 15 and the challenges of the Gentiles inclusion into the Church.
 - e. But Paul adds the terms “foolish and ignorant” to help bring out the sense.
 - (1) It is like John 3:25 where we find the John the Baptists’ disciples in a discussion with the Jews over purification.
 - (2) Paul uses this term in 1Timothy 6:3-4 to speaks of those who love to wander into foolish discussions that don’t lead to godliness nor are they grounded in the Word of God.
 - f. The longer you are part of a church the more common you will find this issue.
 - (1) Philemon and I had a discussion with a man in Brazil over some points of doctrine. After about 10 minutes I simply

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stopped the conversation by observing that he was more interested in discussion philosophical concerns with the nature of man rather than dealing with the actual text of the Scripture. There was no purpose in talking anymore at that point.

- (2) Keep your eyes open for these people. They crop up in Cgs, at parties, and in the lobby of any church. Seminaries and bible colleges are rife with them. Facebook and blogs abound with them.
 - (3) Don't be one of them.
- g. At the heart of this is the immature idea that you are smarter and wiser than you are.
- (1) Wisdom helps you discern when you should talk and not talk. When you are getting yourself into an argument that has no value.
 - (2) What happens in these sort of speculations is that there is always a redirecting away from Scripture.
 - (3) And once you are pulled away from the bible you end up with arguments that don't help and don't go anywhere.
 - (4) We must learn to have a healthy distrust in our own wisdom and intelligence and rest more fully upon the simple message of the bible.
 - (5) It is the Word that make the simple become wise. It is the Word that alone is the specific revelation of God to man. It is the only thing we have that Jesus specifically says is "truth." It is the only thing that Peter says that will make your grow in respect to your salvation.
3. Secondly, we need to flee from the temptation to be destructively fighting.
- a. This is not speaking of arguments over truth.
 - b. It is not the same term as that in vs 23 and it is rather rare. It speaks of armed combatants who are intent on destroying the other. When applied to arguments it carries that same destructive mentality, destroy the other person.

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- c. For the servant of the Lord there is no room for that sort of heart attitude.
- d. What happens in too many churches is that people begin to jostle and fight for recognition and they do it through words. This cannot be.
- e. I think it is wise for those in leadership to keep their eyes out for those who seem to love to make others look bad, who are trying to elevate themselves at the expense of others for whom Christ died.
- f. Again, a youthful passion that cannot be part of any church member, much less a leader.
- g. Notice also how there is an evangelistic aspect that is lost when you decide to be a fighter (25-26). You lose your right to be heard by the very people you need to have listen to you.

III. What A Wise Person Pursues.

- A. Vs 22 gives the broad application of what those who serve Jesus Christ should pursue.
 - 1. You are to pursue righteousness—think good works that are appropriate to one who has been declared righteous by God. You are more busy dealing with your own life then you are worrying about everyone else's.
 - 2. Faith—not that which leads to salvation but really a building up of that faith. A growing, settled trust in the faithfulness of God. This leads to maturity and stability.
 - 3. Love is the quintessential quality that the New Testament teaches. It is the greatest of commandments, it was modeled perfectly by Jesus, it is the very thing that creates a bond of unity, it covers over sin and it is a mark of one who operates under the power of the Spirit.
 - 4. Lastly is peace, here referring to that relational peace that allows you to live and interact with one another. Satan will always try to create unrest rather than peace and he uses people to do this. Paul told the Roman church in 12:18 that they were to make every effort to be a peace with all people.
- B. So that is a quick run down, but it also serves as a simple to remember so that you can ask yourself or others how you, or they, should be acting.

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1. Are you promoting peace with this choice?
 2. In what way is this manifesting the love of the brethren?
 3. How is what you are saying or doing helping to promote and stabilize your faith or another's?
 4. Are your words or actions consistent with your claims to be a follower and lover of Jesus Christ? Are they righteous?
- C. But these also help define the rationale behind what Paul tells Timothy in vss 24-26. Notice how they fit so nicely.
1. One who is pursuing these four qualities is not looking to destroy others (24). That is simply contradictory.
 - a. Instead these qualities push you to be kind to all.
 - (1) There is no need for a snide, hurtful mouth that shows favoritism or arrogance.
 - (2) Kindness flows from a heart of love. Not just toward those you love or who shows kindness to you, but to all.
 - (3) This only properly comes from people who love the gospel in a mature manner.
 - (a) They know the kindness of the Lord that was shown to them while they were dead in their sins.
 - (b) They remember the mercies of the Lord not merely at the point of salvation, but since that time. How God continues to show them kindnesses.
 - b. Secondly, these qualities give you a desire to teach.
 - (1) This is one point where he is emphasizing the pastoral role of teaching. And you should note that point. Timothy was to be a proper bond-servant of the Lord and that means he teaches—a lot.
 - (2) But that does not remove the rest from this responsibility. All of us teach in one way or another. Even when we say nothing we instruct with our actions, our expressions, and our manner of dress and conduct.

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- (3) And one who seeks love or peace, one who is pursuing righteousness or growing in their faith will want to help others. And that is teaching.
 - (4) Remember my introduction, this is all to be done with the company of others. We are to be exhorting and helping each other in our lives.
 - (5) When we interact with non-Christians we should be looking for opportunities to teach, showing them what true faith is and what the Christian faith actually is rather than what is so often displayed on TV and such.
- c. If you pursue those four qualities you will endure when wronged.
- (1) This is the life of anyone in leadership.
 - (2) Any pastor or elder will tell you that getting metaphorically stabbed in the back is simply routine. And don't think that pastors are immune from the temptation to give payback.
 - (3) But this cannot be.
 - (a) If you believe the gospel then you cannot repay evil with evil. It contradicts the gospel itself.
 - (b) If you seek the salvation of those who are enemies of the Cross then you will have to overlook many wrongs.
 - (c) If you love and pursue peace then you must learn to turn your brain off and choose to not dwell on things that hurt you. As my dad would tell his kids, "get over it, that is how the cookie crumbles."
 - (4) Beloved, you cannot follow Jesus and not be wronged by others. It comes with the package. But you can manifest an utterly different response to it, one that shows a faith and a hope that is not of this age.
- d. If these are your qualities, then you will even seek the well-being of your enemies.
- (1) This is not an option.

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- (a) Jesus made it clear in Matthew 5 that you were to love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.
 - (b) Paul reminds us that we were once God's enemies, yet Christ died for us.
 - (c) Later in Romans he tells us to we are to feed our enemies if they are hungry. We are to show them kindness.
- (2) You seeking to correct those who are opposing you.
- (a) This term has a couple of aspects to it that I think need to be brought out.
 - (b) First it means to educate. And that is key because often those who oppose you do so in ignorance. They don't understand the message of the gospel, their eyes are blinded to its words of hope and mercy. So you need to teach.
 - (c) But it also carries the idea of correction in the sense of discipline. This too is part of the message of Paul here. There are those who are bringing destructive teaching into the church and they need to be confronted and instructed in truth.
- (3) This is to be done in gentleness.
- (a) Not wimpiness.
 - (b) Not vagueness.
 - (c) But with power that is under control.
- (4) And the reason is that you desire that they repent (25b). Some observations are necessary:
- (a) First it is God who ultimately grants the repentance—a change of mind and heart.
 - i) This is again a reason to not get caught up in foolish arguments. You will convince no one.

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- ii) Instead, become strong in the Word so that you can unleash it and watch the Spirit work as He wills.
- (b) Second, it does not say when that repentance may come about.
 - i) You may be the lightning rod that attracts all sorts of abuse and ridicule as you seek to graciously instruct.
 - ii) But you may never see the fruit of your labor.
 - iii) Or you will work hard and then watch another person reap your labors.
 - iv) Never forget that one person plants, another waters, but it is God who causes the growth.
 - v) Some have the ministry to tear down bad theology and thinking so that God will later use another to build the gospel into a person's life.
- (c) Third, this repentance is such that it leads the person to truth.
 - i) That is really what is going on all around us.
 - ii) John MacArthur calls it "Truth Wars" and it is as old as creation.
 - iii) What we do on a Sunday is an act of rebellion against the lies of this age. And when we engage those who are opposed to the gospel it is a battle for truth.
 - iv) So stand in the truth and not stupid philosophies and arguments.
- (d) Fourth, the unbeliever, especially one who is knowledgeable of the Christian faith, is not aware of their situation (26).

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- i) They need to come to their senses. And that is quite offensive to them since they think you are the one lacking sense.
 - ii) But that is what is needed. Show them kindness and pray for them. They are blind, being led by the blind and they don't know it.
- (e) Fifth, they are captured by Satan.
- i) His primary work is in deception and false teaching.
 - ii) So wherever you see that abounding in a person you find a person ensnared by Satan.
 - iii) They would reject that but then they are blind.

IV. Conclusion.

- A. What you have here is how to pray for your leaders here at MDF and for those who lead churches elsewhere.
- B. You have some ideas on what to do and not do in your own lives as you engage those on Facebook or via email. How not to get trapped into arguments that sound so powerful but are built off of folly.

Small Group Questions

- What are some ways you have found yourself pulled into a fight that you had no business being involved in? What was your thinking at the time?
- How do you correct those who are in opposition to the gospel but do it with gentleness? When do you know you are harsh? What or who determines that?
- Does your life reflect that you desire to flee and pursue WITH others who call upon the Lord with a pure heart? How or how not? Come up with a plan to change or improve.