



+ **YOU**

**Sermon Series: How to Build Your Life on God's Word**  
**To be used with Session 1: Why We Need God's Word**  
**Sermon Title Possibilities: Timeless Truths for Troubled Times**  
**Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:1-5, 13-17**

**Connection with Unit Theme:** To complement the small group study "How to Build Your Life on God's Word," this sermon reminds believers of how God's Word gives us everything we need to stand firm in difficult times.

**Introduction:** Have you ever been deceived or fooled by another person's outward charm or glowing charisma? If you have, you know firsthand how painful that experience can be. As a young pastor serving in my first church years ago, a deceptive individual fooled me. He seemed like a servant, so he offered to stay late and clean the church. To appear like a worshiper, he served in the worship ministry. He spoke highly of his lovely wife and beautiful new baby to seem like a solid husband. Yet, time would reveal he was doing the right things on the outside but was not a changed man on the inside. For instance, he served on the worship team and cleaned the church late not out of love for the Lord and others but to steal both our music equipment and money to support his life-destroying drug habit.

Paul shared timeless truths with his son in the faith and Timothy, which I wish I would have listened to early on in my ministry years. Paul's wisdom for Timothy is just as important to us today as it was when he first shared it with him.

1. **People are not always on the inside, which they appear to be on the outside: Detach yourself from them (2 Timothy 3:1-5).**

Paul details that in the last days' society will be given to a downward moral decline. "Last days" refers to the period between the resurrection of Christ and the second coming of Christ. These are the days which we live in now, the church age. I count twenty undesirable characteristics of people living in the last days that Paul classifies (See **2 Tim. 3:1-5**).

I once heard a seasoned minister say, "The heart of the problem is the problem of the heart!" What appears to be the root of the problem is that people are more bent on living for themselves than they are living for the Lord. This heart problem is not only for people living on the outside (the world) but those living on the inside (God's people).

Paul mentions some ungodly characteristics that many consider "major sins," such as scoffing at God, cruelty, slandering others, and reckless living. Yet, Paul also points the finger at some more "socially acceptable" or "minor sins."

For example, Paul mentions the sin of being "disobedient to parents." When was the last time you heard people say the rebellious disobedience of children to their parents is a big problem in

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our society? See **Exodus 20:12**. It is common for children not to respect their parents, which often brings significant issues into their children's lives and their parents. Children today often blame their parents for their problems instead of honoring them as God's Word commands. I am nearly fifty years old, and my dad is with the Lord now, but my mother is still alive. She is worthy of my honor and appreciation in the way I treat and value her.

A second example of what some may consider a "minor sin" today is the sin of ingratitude. Ex. Before the Thanksgiving meal, a father turns to his little son, requesting that he share a few reasons for thankfulness in prayer to God before the dinner. The child quickly ran out of gratitude items and angrily stated, "Now, I want to share all the things I am not thankful for." He went on and on about everything for which he was not thankful. Finally, his dad stopped the ungrateful son's angry rant as their once hot Thanksgiving meal began to turn cold.

It's easy for believers to get caught up in the sense of entitlement and selfishness that makes up the last days in which we live. As Rick Renner states, "Rather than being thankful – the Greek word (charistos) – they are ungrateful (achristos), and Paul taught that this is a signpost of the last days."

Some may question if there are any reasons to foster a godly life and Christ-like character since it's a given that we are living in such corrupt and sinful times? The answer to that question is, "Thank God, yes, there are!" Paul highlights two vital resources that will influence our Christian walk and witness. We have (1) the faithful people of God, and we have (2) the living and active Word of God. These vital resources are must-haves for two primary reasons:

**2. The faithful people of God remind us how to witness amid troubled times effectively. The living and active Word of God reminds us of how to work during troubled times effectively: Attach yourself to them (2 Timothy 3:13-15).**

*We witness despite problems and persecutions.* Indeed, young Timothy needed all the encouragement he could have to live for and proclaim Christ amid such a corrupt culture. Paul's encouragement to Timothy included sharing the pains and persecutions he had encountered and endured over the years. (See **2 Tim. 3:10-13**).

*We witness by telling of God's faithfulness to us.* With a note of triumph in his voice, Paul could also share how faithful the Lord had been with him, delivering him through it all. Sometimes, nothing is more encouraging to us in the present than to hear of God's mighty work in the past!

*We witness by reminding others of godly influences.* Paul reminded Timothy early on in this letter of the godly legacy and effective witness of Eunice and Lois, Timothy's mother and grandmother (See **2 Tim. 1:5**). I think of my godly mom and dad, who shared the Bible and exemplified what it meant to practically serve the Lord in loving ways to friends, family, neighbors, and church. Also, as a new believer in Christ, the Shreveport, LA, church I grew up in was so faithful and patient with me. God-honoring pastors, church staff, and loving people modeled Christian living and service to my friends and me.

*We witness by being authentic with others (See 2 Tim. 3:10-11).* Christian living is not easy for people or their pastors. Discouragement hits hard on even the most faith-filled believers.

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Sometimes, we wonder if we are making a difference or if we can stay faithful to Christ's call during difficult times. Christians are not immune to bouts of discouragement. Think about Moses in the wilderness. Jonah in the belly of a whale. David alone in a cave. Elijah, after a great victory at Mt. Carmel. Paul was chained to prison guards in a Roman jailhouse. Yet, God's grace presence was sufficient in their difficulties. They lived to testify of God's grace! So will you!

Indeed, Christians have an essential role in encouraging, supporting, and praying for victory in God's Kingdom service. How about with you? Who has invested spiritually into your life for the cause of Christ? Also, is there one God leading you to come alongside with an investment of your time and Scriptures?

### **3. The living and active Word of God (Hebrews 4:12-13) also equips us to effectively work amid troubled times (2 Tim. 3:16-17)**

Often, God's Word runs counter to the ways of this world. Yet, it equips us to work effectively through these four means:

1. Doctrine – the Scriptures teach us what is right
2. Reproof – the Scriptures teach us where we are wrong
3. Correction – the Scriptures teach us how to get back on track
4. Instruction in Righteousness – the Scriptures teach us how to stay on track

God's Word equips us by speaking to us right where we are. Why is God's Word able to do such life-changing work in us? The simple answer is that God is the author of Scripture. *"All Scripture is inspired by God..."* (See **2 Tim. 3:16**). Dr. Tony Evans points out, "Our God communicates, and he has worked supernaturally through the Holy Spirit to communicate perfectly to us. When we read the Bible, we are reading the very words of the living God."

God's Word equips us by transforming our lives to reflect the Savior. Some people will only quote the Bible to make themselves look and sound spiritual, but they will reveal themselves as phonies (See **2 Tim. 3:13**). Others will hear and heed the truth of Scripture. They are the faithful. By God's grace, we realize that God gives us His Word not primarily for our information but for our spiritual transformation.

**Conclusion:** I was not born with a great sense of direction. Yet, some people instinctively know how to get from where they are to where they need to be. As one who drives in and out of Atlanta traffic daily, I am thankful for the technology and easy use of the Waze app on my iPhone. However, there have been a few rare times when that app led me to make a wrong turn on the wrong road. One who will always steer you in the right direction is our gracious Lord. Do you sense Him leading you to stay away from people of evil character? Detach yourself from them. Are there people He reminds you of who loved and lived victoriously in Christ in this crooked world? Attach yourself to them. The primary way God leads us to witness and work effectively is through His Word, given that we may know, believe, and follow Him.

#### **Author Bio**

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