

How To Ruin A Church In 4 Easy Steps – 2 Timothy 2:14-19

2 Tim 2:14-19

Paul's been talking to Timothy about some of the great truths of the gospel, and suffering, and sound doctrine (1:13) . . .
And it's as if he takes a breath here in v14 and says . . . (read it)

The title of the message is – How To Ruin A Church In 4 Easy Steps

B/c if you take the opposite of what Paul says here, that's exactly what will happen – you'll ruin a church

And I've chosen to frame it this way, in the negative, in order to emphasize the positive
In order to illustrate the dire need for constant vigilance in these areas

That's not to say that I think this is a problem in our church – I don't

But I want to keep it that way

So I'm going to preach it with a bit of tongue in cheek reverse psychology, hoping it will hit home and be long remembered

So, if you want to ruin a church, or at least go down trying, the first step is to . . .

Step 1 – Stop listening to sound doctrine (v14a)

From v14a – *remind them of these things*

These things referring to his *pattern of sound words* or sound doctrine from 1:13

I think it's safe to say, there's not a single person who remembers everything they've ever heard – nobody has total recall

And even the sharpest tacks in the bunch fail to *apply* everything they hear

We are forgetful at best, and rebellious at worst – and *need* reminders

That's one of the reasons I'll never be without a job

It's like Peter said in 2 Pet 1:12 – that even though you know the how to live, and might even be firmly established in the truth, I intend to remind you of it (2 Pet 1:12)

- But it's your responsibility to listen
Unless of course, you want to ruin our church
If that's the case, then just stop – stop listening; waste no more time

And if you *do* hear anything that's said, don't let it make its way from here to here
From your head to your heart
That might actually *contribute* to a healthy church

Better that you just shut down completely

Especially when I'm up here preaching and pleading with you to *grow* in your faith and godliness and maturity

If you want to ruin a church, it starts with you

And the first step is to stop listening to sound doctrine

- And if u do, pretty soon you'll begin to look at spiritual things, fr a secular perspective
You'll begin to look at church, like you look at a business
You'll begin to see things as you *think*, not as they are

You'll begin to expect the church to serve *you*, instead of you serving the *church*
Kind of like this – take a look (**Me Church video**)

If you stop listening to sound doctrine and biblical teaching (and just b/c you're here, doesn't mean you're listening) . . .

But if you stop listening – it's only a matter of time before church is all about you

It's only a matter of time before a bitter root grows in your heart about something trivial or inconsequential

In which case, you're well on your way to ruining the whole bunch, b/c bitter roots have a way of spreading, and fast

- Just stop listening
Spend all your time serving, or talking with others in the name of fellowship . . .
Or coming up with who knows what kind of excuse to stay away
But whatever you do, don't get in here for worship
And if you do, make sure that what you hear, doesn't get to here (your heart)

Step 2 – Start arguing about peripheral issues (v14b)

14b

When I was growing up, I was friends with some guys who went to a Christian high school

And it so happened that one of their discussions in class about predestination spilled over into the lunch room and hallways . . .

To the extent that students were getting into arguments and fights about it

And it got so bad, that the school *banned* the topic from discussion while on school grounds, or during school hours

If that wasn't so pathetic, it'd be hilarious

- That's the kind of thing Paul is talking about when he says don't quarrel about *words*
As in, don't argue or obsess about the nuances of things that can't be fully understood

Things like – the sovereignty of God and the free will of man

Or the exact ordering of end times events; Or the precise nature of creation

If you want to ruin a church, start an argument about any one of those things

Or maybe worship style is more your hobby horse . . .

Or how often we have communion; Or what a proper benediction sounds like

All 3 of which came up recently in the first 5 seconds of a conversation with a first-time visitor

I couldn't believe it – they were literally the first words out of her mouth

And by the time she got to the third issue, I said as gently, but as firmly as I possibly could – “I totally disagree with you,” and walked away

Why? B/c she was bitter and argumentative, and I wasn't about to let her ruin our church by pandering to her peripheral issues

If you want to ruin a church, if you want to ruin our church – that's how you start
Just pick an issue, and make a mountain out of a mole hill

- Do the very thing that Paul tells me, to charge you, *not* to do
14 – *Charge them* (strong language) *before God not to quarrel about words*

So here it goes; Are you ready?

With God as your witness, don't argue about peripheral issues

Don't obsess about trivial matters; Don't bicker about inconsequential things

And if you already are, stop

B/c it does no good, and *only ruins the hearers* (14b)

Including those who are aware of the argument, but not directly involved

It sours them on the gospel, and taints their view of fellowship in the body of Christ

Especially those who are new or near believers

- Do you realize the turn off it is to hear “church people” arguing about stupid things?
Nitpicking and complaining and getting all sideways about who knows what?
It's a loser; Don't do it

Unless of course you *want* to ruin our church

If that's the case go for it; You're right on track

B/c nobody wants to be around people who are bickering all the time

Nobody wants to be a part of quarrelling and infighting, about issues they've never even heard of, much less care about; Nobody

Which is why it ruins a church – b/c nobody will come anymore

- Now, that doesn't mean you shouldn't discuss peripheral issues, or hard theological truths, or the nuances of Scriptural tensions – you should
It's one of the ways we sharpen one another in our thinking
It's one of the ways we grow in our understanding
It's one of the ways we broaden our perspective

But the key, is to *discuss* them, not argue or fight about them

And to do so for the right reasons – like increased understanding . . .

As opposed to the wrong ones – like convincing people of your perspective

Unless of course, you *want* to ruin our church

In that case – just pick an issue, and start arguing

Step 3 – Stop caring about biblical truth (v15-16)

V15-16

Do your best – be diligent and zealous; passionate and fervent; eager

To present yourself to God as one approved – as one who God looks at and says, “well done, good and faithful servant”

“I gave you certain gifts and abilities, to know/apply/teach the truth of my word, and you made the most of it”

“You've been tested and found worthy of the opportunity and responsibility I've entrusted to you”

A worker who has no need to be ashamed – no need to feel sheepish about your effort to know and handle God's Word

No need to feel guilty b/c you didn't do all you could, and make the most of your life

No need to be embarrassed b/c of what you believe, and why

Dave Steinbronn is our elder chair, and they're going to be moving to Kansas City shortly

And his mom just passed away this week

But she did as a believer b/c an 85 year-old woman in her assisted living led her to the

Lord and went through a Bible study with her

85 years old – that's a worker who has no need to be ashamed

I want to be like that, should God give me the years

Do you best to that end Paul says, *rightly handling the word of truth* – knowing and teaching the truths in this book, in the way God intended

Putting it all together, and getting it right, so that you can effectively pass it on to others

- So here's the thing – if you want to do all that, knock yourself out
But if you want to *ruin* a church – u gotta get over your little love affair with this book
It's the *last* thing you want to be concerned about

Who cares whether you know it or not?

Who cares whether you can teach it, or spout off some verses? What's the big deal?

Try a little complacency for a change – you might find it refreshing; so might those around you

So what if God doesn't fully approve of you – isn't that what mercy's for?

Who could ever live up to his standard anyway?

And how could he possibly expect you to know everything that's in here, so as to be unashamed?

Let's be realistic here – he can't

So why beat yourself up over something that's unattainable?

And don't you think it's a bit arrogant to say there's a right or wrong way to handle this book?

A better or best way to teach it or preach it?

If you want to ruin a church, you've gotta take a chill pill . . .

And stop caring so much about “the Bible”

- And for sure don't be concerned with *irreverent babble* (16)
Especially when it comes from the *pulpit*
That's one of your best weapons in ruining a church

Irreverent babble like – calling God a woman

And I'm not talking about metaphorically, like in The Shack

I'm talking about *literally*

If you hear that from a pulpit, embrace it b/c the wrecking ball isn't far behind

Or if you hear someone pray to “mother god of all creating love” like I did some years back in a community service – embrace it

That's irreverent babble that leads to rubble

Or how about the pastor in FL who founded a Christian nudist colony based on the premise that . . .

Jesus washed his disciples' feet while nude, Peter rode nude in his fishing boat, and baptisms in the early church were done in the nude

I don't know what Bible he was reading, but that's IB

And then there's the pastor in TX recently who challenged those who are married in his church to have sex for 7 days in a row

"Let's all have sex for the next 7 days straight, and we'll be the happiest church in America"

Irreverent babble – taking something sacred and private, and making it public and cheap

And the list goes on and on and on with those who promise instant healing if you just believe, or send a gift . . .

Or those who speak in gibberish, or bark like dogs, or roll around on the floor

Or say that you're a god just like God

Or that Adam could fly b/c he had dominion over the birds

Sick, irreverent, babble

But it sure goes a long way toward ruining a church, and leading people into *more and more ungodliness*

- And that's the goal mind you – an ungodly church *is* a ruined church

The goal is not to *shut* the doors . . .

But to keep them open with no regard for the truth

In which case you waste *far* more kingdom time/money/opp, than you would by closing it down

The goal is a *ruined* church, a dead church, not necessarily an empty one

And don't despair if at first the IB is few and far between

B/c even the most subtle irreverence has the potential to produce multiple evils

You just have to give it time; In fact, it's better that way

Otherwise, it might be noticed and opposed by those who still care

If you want to ruin a church, stop caring about biblical truth, and embrace IB

Step 4 – Start spreading ridiculous rumors (v17-19)

Like saying that the return of Christ has already happened

That's what Hymenaeus and Philetus were saying (v17-18)

They had *swerved from the truth* (18a), and were spreading a ridiculous rumor that Christ had already come to gather his people unto himself

Including those believers who had already died

"They've been resurrected from the dead, given a new glorified body, and they're living it up in the presence of the Lord"

"Which means if you're still here – you've been left behind; forgotten"

I can see how that would upset *the faith of some* (18b)

- And I can also see how it would *lead to more and more ungodliness* (16)

If I told you that Christ had already come, and there's no more hope of eternal life – what are you going to do?

Chances are, you'll go out, throw caution to the wind, and eat, drink, and be merry . . .

B/c tomorrow you die

What's the point of living for someone who's forgotten you?

Go sin up a storm – who cares; God obviously doesn't

Which is why ridiculous rumors ruin a church

And that goes for *any* kind of rumors

But it's especially true of those that are contrary to God's Word

They lead to a care-less attitude, followed by more and more ungodliness

Which I think is why Paul reminds us to *depart from iniquity* in 19b

Jesus is still Lord and the truth still stands – so act like it

Despite what people are saying about *you*, or about *God*

- The problem is, ridiculous rumors aren't always that easy to confront
B/c they spread like *gangrene* (17) – which is silent, but deadly

Don't miss the analogy here

Gangrene is a condition that kills the soft tissue of your body, under the surface of the skin, due to a lack of blood flow to that area; a lack of life

Think about a tourniquet on your arm that cuts off the blood flow to your hand

Eventually, the tissue will deteriorate and die of gangrene

The very thing that ridiculous rumors do – where there's a lack of *truth* flow to some member of the body of *Christ* . . .

Ridiculous rumors move in for the kill, under the surface, and do their damage before it's ever noticed

It's one of the best ways to ruin a church, especially when you combine it with a disregard for biblical truth

If you can get that combination going, then Paul's reassurance in v19 – that *the Lord knows those who are his* . . . is a moot point

B/c nobody believes it; Who cares if that's what it says?

And so begins the downfall of even the greatest churches

- If you can get people to stop listening to sound doctrine . . . **(summary slide)**
And start obsessing about peripheral issues
If you can get them to stop caring about biblical truth . . .
And start spreading ridiculous rumors . . .
You're well on your way to ruining our church
But it starts with you

And the best part is – no one will know it, gangrenous as it is

And no one will care, by the time they do