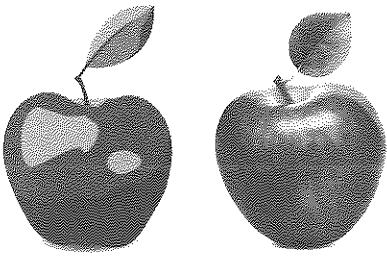


God Speaks, Part 2



Topic

The Bible

Theme

God expects us to handle His Word carefully and correctly.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will determine personal safeguards against compromising God's Word.

Materials

- Resources 1, 9, and 10
- Five cans of household products

Scripture Focus

Acts 20:17–35; 1 Cor. 3:3–15; 2 Tim. 2:1, 2; 4:1–5

Summary

God expects us to handle His Word carefully and correctly. So Paul encouraged Timothy to preach the Word as authoritative, to teach it without compromise, and to teach it to change lives. He also told him to understand his times and to watch for compromise.

Outline

I. Be Ready for Judgment

- A. For our use of God's Word (1 Cor. 3:3–15; 2 Tim. 4:1)
- B. For our handling of God's Word (Acts 20:17–35; 2 Tim. 4:1)

II. Focus on the Bible

- A. Teach the Bible as authoritative (2 Tim. 4:2)
- B. Teach the Bible without compromise (2 Tim. 4:2)
- C. Teach the Bible to change lives (2 Tim. 4:2)

III. Know the Times

- A. Students will reject doctrine (2 Tim. 4:3a)
- B. Students will select teachers (2 Tim. 4:3b)
- C. Students will embrace fables (2 Tim. 4:4)

IV. Be Watchful

- A. Watch for compromise (2 Tim. 4:5)
- B. Expect affliction (2 Tim. 4:5)
- C. Fulfill your ministry (2 Tim. 2:1, 2; 4:5)

Memory Verse

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine"
(2 Timothy 4:2).

GETTING STARTED

“Directions for Use”

Before class gather five cans of household products (e.g., cooking spray, furniture polish, can of pesticide, can of hair spray, spray paint; can of starch).

Put each of the five household products into its own bag. Close up the bags so the products cannot be seen by the learners. Organize your learners into five groups. Give each group one of the household products in the closed bag. Instruct each group to guess what is in their bag and then write the “directions for use” for their supposed product. When each group is done, have them read their “directions for use” and then reveal the product in their bag. No doubt some of them will end up with comical uses for their actual products!

ASK: How important are the actual “directions for use” on these products?

ASK: What might be included in a “directions for use” label on the Bible?

The Bible is a tool that we must be careful to use correctly. Misusing the Bible can have serious consequences. This lesson focuses on handling the Word of God carefully and correctly.

Hard-to-Handle Tools

ASK: What are some tools that are not easy to handle? (Q1) *A floor polisher, a jackhammer, a weed trimmer, a race car, a hair trimmer.*

ASK: When have you gotten into trouble trying to use a machine or tool you could not handle? (Q2)

The Bible is a tool we must be careful to use well. Misusing the Bible can have serious consequences. This lesson focuses on handling the Word of God carefully and correctly.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

As we learned in the previous lesson, we ought to value God’s Word highly and be concerted and consistent in our study of it. We also need to be faithful in using God’s Word correctly.

After the apostle Paul told Timothy the value of God’s Word in 2 Timothy 3:16 and 17, he charged him to be true to God’s Word (2 Tim. 4:1).

READ: 2 Timothy 4:1.

The word he used for “charge” is an intensified word showing the earnestness and seriousness of the charge. That charge is as important today as it has ever been. And while Paul’s words are primarily written to pastors, the principles about

handling God's Word apply to everyone who opens God's Word to study it or teach it. God expects us to handle the Bible carefully and correctly because it really is His word.

I. Be Ready for Judgment

Paul's charge to Timothy was "before" God and the Lord Jesus Christ. The word for "before" means "in the presence of," a phrase with courtroom implications in that day. So Timothy's case would be drawn up in the presence of his judge, Jesus Christ. Paul is referring to the Judgment Seat of Christ, which will take place in Heaven after the rapture of the church. All believers who are part of the church, including those who have already died, will give a personal account of their lives at the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10). Christ will distribute crowns as rewards to those who served Him well. Christ will also assign ruling positions in His millennial Kingdom as rewards (2 Tim. 4:1; Rev. 5:10).

So what will Jesus Christ evaluate when He examines Timothy's ministry of the Word? He will be examining in part whether Timothy based his ministry on the Word and whether he used the Word as God intended.

Lesson 11 includes a fuller explanation of rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

A. For our use of God's Word (1 Cor. 3:3–15; 2 Tim. 4:1)

All ministries are not necessarily based on the Word. They might look successful because the seats are full and the facilities are nice, but Jesus won't judge a ministry based on its appearance. Remember that all things are "naked and opened" (Heb. 4:13) before Christ. This applies to our ministry too. If we don't conduct ministry based on God's Word, then our efforts will be in vain. There are no "best of show" awards in Heaven.

The church at Corinth was building their ministry on personalities. Some said they were of Apollos, while other said they were of Paul (1 Cor. 3:3, 4). This caused a division in the church. Paul addressed the church and pointed out their error.

READ: 1 Corinthians 3:3, 4. **ASK:** What was the reason for the division? (Q3)

The Corinthians were envious and serving God in the flesh. They were trying to build the ministry on selfish desires.

Paul said the foundation he laid for their ministry was Christ and that they needed to be careful how they built on that foundation (3:10).

READ: 1 Corinthians 3:11–15. **ASK:** What will happen to a ministry that is built without God and His Word at the center? (Q4) *It will burn up and be unworthy of a reward.*

If we want our ministry efforts to last for eternity, then we will use God's Word as our ministry guide and depend on it for ministry success.

B. For our handling of God's Word (Acts 20:17–35; 2 Tim. 4:1)

God will also judge us for how we *handled* His Word. While Paul was returning from his third missionary journey, he stopped in Miletus to meet the leaders of Ephesus (Acts 20:17). He told them that he believed he would be arrested and chained once he arrived in Jerusalem but that he would not let that deter him from

the ministry he received from the Lord Jesus (20:22–24). Then he described his ministry to them. He said he was “pure from the blood of all men” (20:26). By this he meant he had been faithful in sharing God’s Word. He actually was alluding to the work of a watchman who had the job of alerting of danger.

READ: Acts 20:27. **ASK:** Why was Paul confident of his job as a “watchman”? (Q5) *He had declared the whole “counsel of God” to the believers in Ephesus.*

ASK: What might motivate a church not to declare the “whole counsel of God”? (Q6) *Some parts run counter to culture; some parts might offend people and decrease church attendance and giving; some parts don’t fit what the church has chosen to emphasize.*

Paul went on to give reasons why preaching the whole counsel of God was so important. First, their calling was from God (20: 28). They were overseeing *His* flock. Second, false teachers would arise from within their church (20:29–31). They needed to be faithful with God’s Word to be able to spot the false teachers and prevent them from being an influence. Third, the whole counsel of God builds up believers in the faith (20:32). Who were they to say some of it was not necessary or too controversial?

Paul then gave a personal note. He said he coveted no one’s money (20:33–35). No one could accuse Paul of using the Bible and his preaching for financial gain. He even went out of his way to give financial support to the weak (20:35).

ASK: How concerned have you been with your handling of God’s Word? (Q7)

II. Focus on the Bible

A. Teach the Bible as authoritative (2 Tim. 4:2)

“Preach the Word!” is Paul’s clarion call to Timothy (2 Tim. 4:2). The Bible is our authority, and we must teach it as our authority. God has not promised to work through a ministry that doesn’t take the highest view of the Bible. He expects us to have Paul’s approach to the Word (Acts 20:27). Teach it all as God intended. Nothing more and nothing less!

You can’t go wrong teaching the Bible as authoritative, for it is the catalyst for life change. It cannot be replaced by a strategy, a program, or a leader. The Bible should be our focus and our authority in ministry.

B. Teach the Bible without compromise (2 Tim. 4:2)

Paul then told Timothy to be ready “in season and out of season” (2 Tim. 2:4). In other words, Timothy was to teach the Bible without compromise even if some of the Bible’s teachings weren’t popular. He wasn’t supposed to base his message on the latest polling data or the wishes of the well-endowed members of his church.

ASK: What are some Bible truths that are becoming less popular? (Q8) *The Bible is inerrant. Homosexuality is an abomination to God. God designed marriage roles. Truth is absolute. God created the universe in six literal days.*

When we compromise the Bible in even the slightest ways, we undermine its authority. This includes choosing Bible curriculum that ignores certain doctrines or uses generalizations to allow for different views. When choosing curriculum and other resources, we should evaluate whether it undermines the Bible's authority.

RESOURCE: Display resource 9 to review important questions to ask when evaluating curriculum and other teaching resources for your church.

In an age of increasing pressure to teach the Bible in more politically correct and palatable ways, we must not compromise the Bible's message. That includes making sure your church's teaching materials treat the Bible as God intended.

C. Teach the Bible to change lives (2 Tim. 4:2)

Instead of compromising, we must "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2). Reproving corrects doctrinal error, rebuking exposes sin and brings a person to repentance, and exhorting encourages godliness. The Bible changes lives, so it ought to be the focus of our ministry rather than a particular author or personality. The fact that Paul gave the benefits of God's Word in both 2 Timothy 3:16 and 17 and 4:2 shows the importance of God's Word when it comes to life change.

ASK: Why should we be cautious in looking to a particular author or personality for all of our spiritual insight? (Q9) *We might put our faith in the person instead of God. We might look to the author for direction and exhortation instead of God's Word. We might trust what the person says as much or more than what the Bible says.*

III. Know the Times

A. Students will reject doctrine (2 Tim. 4:3a)

Preaching and teaching the Word was so important because of the times Timothy lived in. Some of his students would eventually reject sound doctrine and desire to hear what they wanted to hear instead (2 Tim. 4:3, 4).

READ: 2 Timothy 4:3. **ASK:** Why will people reject sound doctrine? What will be their motivation? (Q10) *They will lust for control over the Bible. They will want to escape the Bible's authority because of their pride.*

Rejecting sound doctrines, such as a literal, six-day creation and inspiration of Scripture, is a heart problem rather than a head problem. The heart lusts for control. If it is left unchecked, it will revolt against sound doctrine so it might be its own master.

Rejecting doctrine is the same as creating your own reality. Back in lesson one we considered the following reasons why people create their own realities: (1) To be in control of life, (2) to escape responsibility to God, (3) to gain spiritual recognition without a spiritual commitment, (4) to relieve guilt over sin, and (5) to excuse spiritual indifference and inactivity. All of those reasons for creating a reality require that

Resource Evaluation Questions	
<input type="checkbox"/>	What is the doctrinal basis of the curriculum?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Who is its target audience? Is it broad based?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Does it interpret all parts of the Bible consistently?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Does it recognize the primacy of the New Testament?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Does it emphasize the importance of the church?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the publisher answer to local churches?
<input type="checkbox"/>	What does it say about cultural issues?
<input type="checkbox"/>	What does it fail to say about cultural issues?

the person reject Bible doctrine. Our flesh hates doctrine. Those who let their flesh control their lives instead of rendering it dead (Rom. 6:11) will eventually not endure sound doctrine.

So Timothy's day is no different than our own. People still have their flesh, their old nature, that lusts for control. Since that is the case, there will be those believers who leave their flesh unchecked and who eventually won't endure sound doctrine.

B. Students will select teachers (2 Tim. 4:3b)

READ: 2 Timothy 4:3b. **ASK:** What will those who won't endure sound doctrine do to appease their flesh? (Q11) *They will seek teachers who will tell them what they want to hear.*

ASK: What do you suppose the teachers in 2 Timothy 4:3 think they will gain from "scratching the ears" of those who won't endure sound doctrine? (Q12) *Praise from their students; their own escape from the Bible's authority; recognition as someone who is a modern freethinker.*

Teachers who compromise doctrine and students who won't endure sound doctrine have a codependent relationship. They both use each other to justify their actions and create what they are convinced is reality.

This pattern is prevalent today. It explains why churches and colleges turn from God and begin to deny doctrines they once held so strongly. The solution is to keep preaching the Word without compromise and for the purpose of changing lives.

C. Students will embrace fables (2 Tim. 4:4)

Students who won't endure false doctrine will turn from the truth to embrace "fables," or myths (2 Tim. 4:4). In other words, they will reject reality for a lie that suits their lusts. And they will do so proudly as if they are somehow progressive in their thinking and not under such a rigid approach to truth.

READ: 2 Timothy 4:4. **ASK:** What religious "fables" might be embraced by those who turn from the truth? (Q13) *All religions lead to Heaven; there is one light from God but many different, equal windows for viewing that light; man is basically good.*

The verb "turned unto" (4:4) is a medical term used to describe the wrenching of a joint out of place. So turning to a myth—a false reality—is not what is expected. Those who turn from the truth to myths are "out of joint" spiritually.

All believers have the potential to be wrenched "out of joint" spiritually. We need to be aware of that potential and be watchful.

IV. Be Watchful

A. Watch for compromise (2 Tim. 4:5)

READ: 2 Timothy 4:5.

As we are aware of the times, we must “watch” for heresy and compromise in our ministries. The verb “watch” is in the present tense, so the idea is to have a constant state of watchfulness. And the word “watch” in the original language has the connotation of “being sober.” We are not to let anything cloud our judgment when it comes to decisions regarding heresy and compromise in our ministries.

ASK: Why might a church put their guard down when it comes to watching for heresy and compromise in their ministry? (Q14) *They are a well-established church; they have had the same pastor for many years; they want to provide as many opportunities to grow in numbers as possible; they want to be seen as acceptable and progressive.*

We should consistently evaluate our decisions by asking ourselves questions such as the following: (1) Are we changing the Bible’s message to reach attendance or budget goals? (2) Are we purposefully ignoring some doctrines so we don’t cause a division in the church? (3) Are we choosing curriculum and other resources without considering its content? (4) Are we allowing people to join the church and minister in leadership positions without interviewing them about their doctrinal beliefs?

As time wears on, teaching and preaching without compromise will become harder. In fact, we should expect persecution in our lifetimes for standing for the truth.

B. Expect affliction (2 Tim. 4:5)

There are already some who consider preaching God’s Word authoritatively and uncompromisingly as a hate crime. Homosexuality is the flash point. We should expect to be pressured to change our message. And eventually we should expect to be persecuted if we refuse to accept and approve “alternative” lifestyles. Those ministries that have refused to compromise on the Word will be better equipped to “endure afflictions” (4:5; cf. 2 Tim. 2:3–13).

ASK: What other issues could become flash points for affliction? (Q15) *Teaching there is only one way to Heaven; excluding women from pastoral positions; teaching the reality of Hell; teaching the sanctity of life.*

C. Fulfill your ministry (2 Tim. 2:1, 2; 4:5)

Paul encouraged Timothy to “make full proof” of his service for the Lord, including his work of evangelism (4:5). Timothy was to stick with it all the way to the end. He was not to give up or cower when affliction came.

Paul knew the end of his life was near. He wanted to be certain that his ministry would continue after he was gone. Timothy was an important part of the continuation of Paul’s ministry (cf. 1 Tim. 4:12–16). Of course Paul didn’t wait until he was about to die before he laid a foundation for the continuation of his ministry. He had worked with Timothy for years to prepare him to minister as a good soldier (2 Tim. 2:1, 2).

READ: 2 Timothy 2:1, 2. **ASK:** What responsibility does each generation of

believers have? (Q16) *Passing on the doctrine and practice they have learned from the generation before them.*

We need to be concerned about the next generation. Are they getting the message of living an uncompromising faith? Will they see the importance of preaching the Word as God intended? Are we settling for “good” kids instead of “godly” kids? If so, we are dooming the next generation.

Our compromises send the message to the next generation that the Bible is not authoritative. As a result, the next generation won’t look to the Word of God for their authority.

We need to hold God’s Word up high. Preach the WORD as authoritative, present it without compromise, and teach it to change lives!

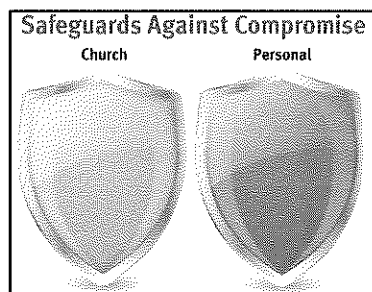
MAKING IT PERSONAL

Message to the Next Generation

ASK: What message are you sending to the next generation by your handling of God’s Word? (Q17)

ASK: How watchful has your church been of compromise of the truth? (Q18)

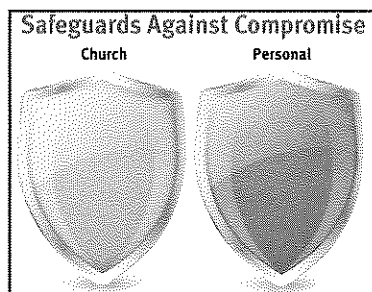
Church Safeguards



RESOURCE: Resource 10. **ASK:** What safeguards against compromise might your church need to put in place? (Record or reveal answers.) (Q19) *Make sure the doctrinal statement stays up-to-date; use the doctrinal statement to screen potential members; teach regularly on the doctrines; teach sound Bible interpretation skills; screen and evaluate teachers; have a system in place for evaluating curriculum or other program materials.*

Pray for your pastor and church leadership that they would have the wisdom to focus on God’s Word and use it exactly as God intended. The temptation to compromise the message of God’s Word will continue to grow stronger as people’s ears becomes “itchier” and they demand their pastor’s message change to fit their desires.

Personal Safeguards

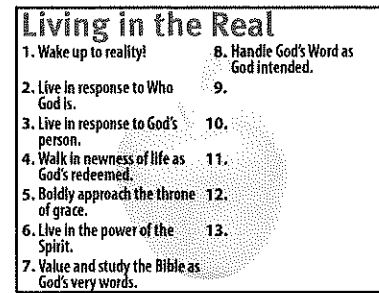


RESOURCE: Resource 10. **ASK:** What personal safeguards could keep you from compromising God’s Word? (Record or reveal answers) (Q20) *Use Bible study helps that are Bible based and that take a strong stand on the authority of Scripture. Avoid self-help books that emphasize finding solutions to problems through self-love and self-actualization. Search the Scriptures to verify that what you hear is true.*

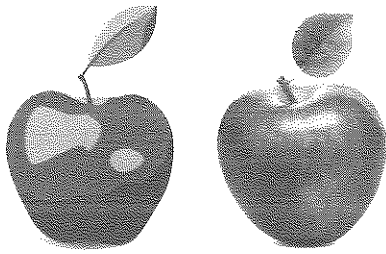
Summary and Memory Verse

RESOURCE: Display resource 1. Add a summary statement for lesson 8 or use the following: Handle God's Word as God intended.

Encourage learners to memorize 2 Timothy 4:2. Give them an opportunity to say the verse in class next week.



God Works



Topic

The church

Theme

God works through the church, His program for this age.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will determine to encourage his pastor and to be a part of his church's mission.

Materials

- Resources 1 and 11
- Rubber bands
- Glass tumbler
- Jar with a lid
- Paint can and paintbrush

Scripture Focus

Various passages

Summary

The church is God's program for this age. Christ is both the head and builder of the church. God expects us to be active in a local church and to function together as the body of Christ.

Outline

I. The Church Is God's Idea

- A. It is not a human institution (1 Cor. 1:10–31; 11:18–34; 12:4–7)
- B. It is a product of God's wisdom (Rom. 11:25–36)

II. Christ Is Active in the Church

- A. He is its foundation and founder (Matt. 16:16–18; 1 Cor. 3:11)
- B. He is its builder and head (1 Cor. 12:11–13; Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 1:18)
- C. He is its instructor (Matt. 28:18–20; John 16:12–15)

III. The Pastor Is God's Man

- A. The pastor equips the church to serve (Eph. 4:11, 12)
- B. The church honors its pastor (1 Cor. 9:9–11, 14; Heb. 13:17)

Memory Verse

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you"
(Hebrews 13:17).