

Aiming for God's Approval

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[0 : 00] So open up if you can at 2 Timothy and chapter 2 and have it open as we work through these words together. What do you look for in a preacher?

I'm sure we all have our favorites, our go-to people that we like to listen to. It's actually been easier than ever before in the history of the church to join in with other church services over these last 4, 5, 6 months.

Even alongside our own. Now I don't fully know the ins and outs of the setup that you've had here. But I know even my parents back home in Lewis were sometimes watching 7 services in one day. And our own home church was not putting on 7. They were able to tap in far and wide around the world. So strangely one of the perks of the last few months is being able to listen to some of our go-to people.

Some of our favorites. Some of the people that maybe in years past, in cities past that we lived in. Or sermons past that we heard. We revisit them.

[1 : 13] We have rejoined with churches we used to go to perhaps. Perhaps it feels like everyone is online. So what do you look for? What is it that you're looking for in a church service?

Why do you listen to them? Why do you listen to Bon Accord? Why do you tune in every week? To Timothy is written to Timothy.

Who was a Christian leader and minister. And it's a letter telling us what a preacher and a leader should look like. And yes, it therefore refers to people like me.

And other elders in churches. But it's also broader than that. It is broader than that. Many people in a church like Bon Accord are given leadership responsibility in some shape or fashion.

Whether it's Bible studies and small groups or youth groups and Sunday clubs and Sunday school. Whether it's the call and the responsibility to lead our families and our children.

[2 : 21] Whether it's the call and the responsibility to lead our friends to Jesus. We are all called in some shape or form. We all have a ministry. We all have a mission field.

We all have a calling in life. Or you can be involved in leadership roles in mission organizations. Locally or around the world.

Some of you will have leadership roles in the future. In churches or in other contexts. So as you're tuning in. Or as you're sat here.

Whoever you are. Because I don't know you that well. Whether or not you know a lot about Jesus. Or not much at all. Why does it matter what we're saying up here?

Why does it matter what you're listening to? So the first thing I want to talk about this morning. Is that this passage is telling us that we are aiming for God's approval with the truth.

[3 : 29] The root of what Paul is teaching Timothy is about what is said. Verse 15. Look at there with me. 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.

Timothy is a gospel worker. And the tool of his trade is the word of God.

The word of truth. And like in any trade. There's no place for shoddy workmanship. And this takes time.

And training. And hard digging. We don't spend time in our studies. Or in coffee shops. I'm talking about ministers here. We don't spend time in our studies just throwing things together.

It's hours of digging. And the job must be done properly. And the work required is to rightly handle the word of truth. To correctly handle actually means to cut straight with the word.

[4 : 36] No spin. No empty fluff. Timothy, he's saying here. Your job is to open up the Bible and say what it says. And the problem that Paul is facing is that God's word is often handled incorrectly.

That's why it's so important who we're listening to. Who we're reading. Who you're using as your introduction as to who Jesus is. They can have the right theological qualifications. They could be up on a stage. They could be up in a pulpit. They could be in a church just like this one. And they're showcased on the Christian TV channels. And they come up on your Facebook feed.

And you see clips of a whole bunch of ministers. And a whole bunch of little gospel messages coming up on your Instagram feed. And we have to ask ourselves.

Why am I listening to who I'm listening to? Why are you listening to me? The issue isn't whether the person claims to be biblical.

[5 : 48] Or whether they are talking about the Bible and what's in it. The issue is are they teaching the truth of the Bible? So what does that look like in practice? Paul breaks this down just that bit further.

He gives us an insight into the false teaching coming into the situation in Ephesus. So always remember when you're reading the letters 1 and 2 Timothy. It's a counterpoint to the letter to the Ephesians.

Timothy was the minister in Ephesus. So Ephesians is generally a letter written to the congregation. And 1 and 2 Timothy is a letter written to the minister.

But both are roughly interchangeable in terms of a lot of the application. So what does this look like in Ephesus where Timothy worked?

We see it in verse 17. Again, look down. See it with me. Halfway through. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus who have wandered away from the truth.

[6 : 50] They say that the resurrection has already taken place and they destroy the faith of some. There's the summary of what happened in Ephesus where Timothy is.

Now clearly he's not talking about Jesus' resurrection. Or they say that the resurrection has already taken place. Actually, we know that Jesus' resurrection at this point in history had already taken place.

Paul passionately believed that was true. That it was a real event in history. He goes as far as to say that if the resurrection was not a literal, historic, real event.

Not just some make-believe. Not just some wishful thinking. Not just, oh, it's nice that you're a Christian. That you've got some, you've got a faith. A lot of rubbish. If the resurrection didn't literally happen in history.

If it's not a tangible event that can be studied and investigated. And that is reliable and trustworthy. Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 says, Christianity then is a lot of nonsense.

[8 : 02] Get rid of it. Who cares? We should be pitied above all men. He says in 1 Corinthians 15. He passionately believed the resurrection was a real thing. And that that is the game changer.

That changes everything. Without which Christianity is useless. It's pointless. It's nothing. In verse 8. In verse 8.

If you go back up in 2 Timothy chapter 2. In verse 8. He even says, Remember Jesus Christ raised from the dead. Descended from David.

This is my gospel. He's passionate. Jesus did rise from the dead. And he preaches. If we died with him.

We will also live with him. That's what he says in verse 11. If you look up. If. Here is a trustworthy saying. If we died with him.

[9 : 01] We will also live with him. It's a beautiful little description. Of what Jesus has done for us. He died. So that we could die with him.

Which means all of our sin. All of our guilt. All of our judgment. Paid for. I'm justified in God's eyes. It's just as if I had died.

Justified. But because he's raised from the dead. I too. Will also live with him. New start.

New identity. New life. New king. So what's the problem? What's the problem with these guys. Hymenaeus and Philetus. Saying that the resurrection had already happened. Well right in the opening verse of the letter. To Timothy. Chapter 1.

[10 : 03] He speaks in that opening verse. Paul an apostle of Christ Jesus. Jesus. By the will of God. According to the promise of life. That is in Christ Jesus.

He's talking about the promise. Of life. There's a new life. To be had. In Jesus Christ. But it's not yet.

Fully. Experienced. It's promised. It's not yet. Fully. Fully. Experienced. Paul emphasized earlier in this chapter.

If you know the chapter. Or if you want to read it when you go home. He talks about. How the. The. Servant of God. Is meant to be a good soldier. Is meant to be an athlete.

Is meant to be a hard working farmer. That's the first chapter of 2. Timothy 2. He emphasizes that the Christian life. Is full. Of hard work.

[11 : 03] It's hard. If any of you are walking the Christian life. If any of you are following Jesus. It is not easy. The Bible is quite up front about that.

It's hard work. It's tough. And they're suffering. In anticipation. Of the future.

Glory to come. The promise. Of life. But when. These people. Hymenaeus and Philetus. When they were saying.

That the resurrection. Had already happened. They were taking. The amazing blessings. That Christ. Gives. And promises. To his people. And they claimed.

That we can experience them. All. Now. In full. And so they started to claim. That we're now. Above suffering.

[11 : 59] As soon as you become a Christian. You should begin to expect. That you're actually now. Above. Suffering. And if you just have. More faith. You'll suffer.

Less. As if the real Christian. Won't suffer. It's why many of the false teachers. In the time. Of. The New Testament.

Looked down. And mocked Paul. And taught. And preached. Against Paul. Because Paul. Was constantly. In prison. Constantly. In dungeons. And they said.

That's proof. That God's blessing. Is not on him. Because if you trust in God. All of the fullness. Of God's blessing. Will be on you now. You'll be above suffering.

You'll have great success in life. You'll have great prosperity. You'll be healthy. And so they were feeding the people. False expectations.

[12 : 53] Of what it meant to be a Christian. If the resurrection. Has already taken place. Then the fullness. Of God's blessings. Are yours now. That's what they were teaching.

That the blessings. And the glory. That we look forward to. Are fully available. Now. Now pause there. Because it is so easy.

To see how that teaching. Is so attractive. Which one of us. Wouldn't want that. It's very popular today. There are. Countless churches.

That promise. Health. And wealth. And prosperity. Now. It's so easy. You go online. You watch the God channel. On TV. Which a lot of us.

Will accidentally. Or just. Unthinkingly. Watch. And there will be. Preachers. There will be. Programs. That will tell us. About. Health. And the expectations.

[13 : 50] Of prosperity. Success. Of. Having a joy. Now. That actually. Doesn't reflect. Real life. But it can also.

Come in subtle forms. It's also. Any kind of teaching. That generally. Leaves you alone. To live the way.

You want to. Right now. It's the teaching. That allows us. To be comfortable. As we just go about. Pursuing.

Worldly gain. It's a teaching. That won't. Really challenge us. Not to be ashamed. Of the gospel. It's a teaching.

That will never demand. Any sacrifice. From us. Is that any version. Of Christianity. That you are. Looking for. Or listening to.

[14 : 50] That's the false teaching. There. In Ephesus. That the resurrection. Has already happened. Then. I'm going to be okay. In this life. I'm going to be happy.

And great. And I can do what I want. The blessings. Are already mine. I can do what I want. That's the false teaching.

Then. And it's still. The false teaching. Today. Why does it matter. So much. Why is Paul. Talking about this. Verse 14. He says. It is of no value.

Towards the end of the verse. And only ruins. Those who listen. A couple of months ago. There was a devastating explosion. In Beirut.

A whole port. Destroyed. And lying in ruins. Now I've never seen anything like it. The videos. That I saw online. Powerful videos. Of the power.

[15:48] Of this explosion. And Paul. Uses. That same idea. In the Greek. To describe. The impact. Of this teaching. It only.

Ruins. It devastates. Those. Who listen. To these. False ideas. And he then goes on to say. It's like. Verse 17.

It's like. Gangrene. That spreads. It devours. What is healthy. It's so serious. He even names names. Hymenus. And Philetus. Any teaching.

Should send us. Back to our Bibles. Keep them open. When someone preaches. Don't listen to me. Because.

I have a reverend. In front of my name. Don't listen to me. Because I've been through. Some training. Lots of people have. Open your Bibles. Keep them open. Use your own minds.

[16:47] Every time you hear. Someone. Claiming to be teaching. The word of God. Is this teaching. Helping me. To see. What is there. Or is it actually.

Leading me away. From what it says. And so the challenge. Here. In this chapter. Is that. We all need to be people. Who speak. The word.

Of truth. Now that's true. Of ministers. And church leaders. Your elders here. But it's true. Of all of us. We all talk. To other people.

You all have. Ideas. In your head. You all have. A version of Jesus. In your head. You all have. An idea. Of who God is. And what the Bible means. So therefore. Automatically. You are all.

People. Who have to. Correctly. Handle. The word of truth. If you're. A brand new. Christian. The joy is. You get to.

[17:43] Investigate. Who Jesus is. You get to. Dig in. Learn more about him. And you get to. Tell others. If you've been. Long in the tooth. Following Jesus. You don't.

Get to hide away. Thinking. Ah. It's. It's. The minister. It's the elders. It's. It's those guys. They're the ones. That have to. Correctly. Handle the word of truth. We all need to have. A right idea. Of who Jesus is.

A right idea. Of who the gospel is. Because we all need. To be ready. To give a defense. Of the hope. That we have. A reason. For the hope. That we have. In Christ Jesus. As Peter tells us. In his letters. We all need to be ready. To go and make disciples. We all talk to other people. Whether inside. Or outside the church.

About what we believe. It's not enough. To share. Oh. I like to think this. Our aim must be. To pass on. God's message.

[18:39] Remember. Paul's charge. In verse 15. Do. Your best. To present yourself. To God. As one. Approved. A worker. A workman. Who does not need.

To be ashamed. And who correctly. And who correctly. Handles the word. Of truth. Notice how Paul. Addresses our. Motives. Whose approval.

Are we looking for? Our purpose. When handling God's word. Is to aim. For God's. Approval. Aiming.

For God's approval. In handling. The word. Of truth. It reminds me of. The Christian sprinter. Eric Little. Who said.

God. Made me. For a purpose. And he also. Made me fast. And when I run. I feel God's pleasure. It's a great quote. And actually.

[19:34] Whether he won. Or not. Is besides the point. We love to focus. On the fact. That he was. A faithful Christian. And he won.

He won the medal. The gold medal. In the Olympics. That's besides the point. The Christians. Who are faithful. Aren't guaranteed. To win medals. The fact. That he did.

Is ultimately. Neither here. Nor there. His life. His victory. In life. Wasn't that gold medal. His victory. Was a life.

Aiming for God's approval. And that was the case. Whether. He was running. In his athletics career. Or. His life. As a missionary. In China. The consistency.

Of his character. Was that he aimed. For God's approval. Both in his athletics. And in his time. As a missionary. Both are a testament.

[20:29] To the victory. Of his life. In aiming. For God's approval. Whatever he did. Whether you're playing football. Whether you're studying. Whether you're working.

Whether you are leading. A bible study. Whether you do become. An elder. A minister. Whatever it might be. Whether you're sharing your faith. With your friend. Whether you are. Cooking a meal.

For your family. Aim for God's approval.

Live for his glory. Are we living our lives. Aiming for God's approval. If so.

Then we need to. Correctly handle. And listen. To his word. That's the first thing. That this passage.

Is dealing with. It is talking about. The substance.

Of what is talked about. What is said. What we talk about. Do your best. To present yourself. To God. As one approved. A workman. Who does.

[21 : 27] Who does not need. To be ashamed. And who correctly. Handles the word. Of truth. But that's not all. What do you look for. In a preacher.

That's not all. Don't just look for someone. Who preaches well. You go anywhere. In the New Testament.

On the qualifications. Of Christian leadership. Two things. Are always emphasized. The ability to teach. And to handle the word. Yes. But also.

A godly. Life. Aiming for God's approval. With the truth. Is one thing. That Paul talks about. In this passage. Largely. From verse 14.

To. 19. Then from verse 20. Onwards. It's all about. Aiming for God's approval. With a godly. Life. What makes a Christian?

[22 : 27] What makes a Sunday school teacher? What makes a youth leader? What makes a missionary? What makes a minister? What makes a mother and a father?

What makes any of you. Effective. At your own personal ministry? Speaking the truth. And a godly life.

There's so much of this here. Now. First of all. He does. Talk about the Lord's servant. We see that in verse 24. I'll deal with that first. The Lord's servant. He says.

Must not be quarrelsome. But must be kind to everyone. Able to teach. Not resentful. Opponents. Must be gently instructed. Now.

Of course. All Christians. Are servants. And we gladly. Serve. Jesus. As our Lord and King. But the title.

[23 : 28] Lord's servant. Is also. Used for those. With particular. Responsibility. In the church. Ministers. Like Timothy. And these qualities.

Are a real challenge. To us. That dig deep. Into our characters. Avoid quarrels. Be kind.

To everyone. Be gentle. And so on. It's not just the minister. It's also the elder. That's really been spoken about here. The leaders.

Of the local church. And here. Alongside that. Is the particular task. For the Lord's servant. Being able.

To teach. Verse 24. Again. A reminder. That at the heart. Of the work. Of the church minister. Teaching. But always.

[24 : 23] Always. Alongside. Of Godly life. You can't have a great teacher. Who is. Fooling around. Messing around. An idiot. In their private lives.

An idiot. Who is a bully. An abusive. Miserable. Fool. In his character.

Why? Well. In verse 20. Paul spoke about. A large house. He says. In a large house. There are articles. Not only.

Made of. Gold. And silver. But also. Of wood. And clay. Some for. Noble. Special. Purposes. And some for. Common. Ignoble. I very rarely use the word out loud.

Ignoble. I don't even know if I'm saying it right. Regardless. Common. Use. So what is really special. And common. Use. God wants us all. To be vessels.

[25 : 20] For honorable use. Cleansing ourselves. He says. If a man. Cleanses himself. From the latter. Cleanses himself. From being. Ignoble.

Common. If we do that. Look at what Paul says. Will follow. Will be set apart.

As. Holy. Verse 21. Made holy. Will be useful. To the master. Of the house.

The danger is. That rather than giving. His gospel. Rather than giving. God's gospel. Authenticity. Through. The way we live our lives. That the Lord's servant. Will actually end up. Causing people.

To trip up. Because of how we live. I'm always amazed.

[26 : 13] But sadly. I'm never surprised. At how. Unloving. How. Difficult. How. Argumentative.

How. Unkind. Unkind. We can be. Why is godliness. As he's talking about here.

Making yourself. Cleaning yourself up. In that sense. Of making yourself. An instrument. For God's. Holy purposes. To make yourself.

Useful. To the master. Why is. That. So. Important. Why is it. So useful. To the Lord Jesus. Why does god. Look for that. In any. Leader. Any.

Christian. Because a leader. Who lives. For god's approval. Is concerned. For your. Spiritual. Well-being. Which means. They'll tell you.

[27 : 05] The truth. About yourself. They'll ask you. They'll ask you. They'll ask you. They'll ask you. They'll ask you. They'll ask you questions. Hard and searching questions. Because they care. They'll pray for you.

They'll listen to you. They'll listen to how hard things can be. And they'll love Jesus. They live. For god's approval.

Is that you. As a leader. Of your youth groups. Is that you. As a leader. Of your sunday school. Is that you. As a leader. Of your family. Do we listen.

Do we love. Do we pray. Do we live. For god's approval. Is that you. Is that me.

Christian. Those of you. Who are Christians here. Are Christians listening in. Whatever is dishonorable. In you.

[28 : 07] Ignorable. Can be cleansed. When we repent. Washing it away. Through the blood. And the forgiveness. Of Jesus.

The blood that paid. The cost. For our sins. For our full. For our foolishness. For our unhealthy. Habits.

Spiritually. And mentally. And physically. And we can. Become useful. To Jesus. A lot of Christians. Are stuck. In a rut. Because we're stuck.

Feeling that we are. Useless. Stuck. In sins. Stuck. In a mindset. And this passage.

While challenging. Is telling us. Be cleansed. Through Jesus Christ. Change. Through the life. And through the blood.

[29 : 03] Of Jesus. And we can. Become. Useful. To him. Whoever you are. Whatever your gifts. You may have tons.

You may have loads. Of gifts. You may have very few. Whoever you are. You can be useful. To Jesus. Whether you're a leader. Or whether you just have a few friends.

You just have a couple of neighbors. Whoever you are. You can be useful. To Jesus. Repent. Be cleansed. Be cleansed. Be cleansed.

Through. The grace. Of Christ. And he'll. Make you holy. Useful. To the master. Ready.

And prepared. As it says. There at the end of verse 21. Ready. And prepared. To do. Any. Good. Work. Paul tells us more then. Of how. The Christian.

[30 : 02] Is to do that. Verse 22. Flee. The evil desires of youth. And pursue. Righteousness. Now. Flee. The evil desires of youth. That doesn't mean.

The passions of the flesh. Like lust. And so on. Verse 23. Expands on it. Flee. The evil desires of youth.

Don't have anything to do. With foolish. And stupid. Arguments. Because you know. They produce. Quarrels. I take that to mean. That here. It says.

The evil desires of youth. Are hot headedness. Being argumentative. Being opinionated. Being arrogant. That's a mark. Of the immature Christian.

Quick. To pile in. Quick. To shout louder. Quick. To get sucked into. Controversies. And the internet age. Has not helped with this at all.

[30 : 56] Because in the heat of the moment. Things get said. That you would never say in person. But the barrier of the screen. The ease of the moment. The lack of personal touch.

You're not actually looking in the person's eyes. When you're saying what you're saying. And we can say. Lots of foolish things. Even if our intentions are good.

More often than not. On social media. We generate more heat. Than light. As we try and. Go out there. To correct error. And we type away. To correct people online.

More often than not. It generates heat. Than light. Stay away. Stay away. Paul says. From stupid controversies. That just go round.

And round. And round. But if you flee. From. Something. What do you run towards? What do you flee towards? Verse 21.

[31 : 56] Verse 22. In between. Just that little section there. Of flee the evil desires. Don't have anything to do with stupid controversies. In between. He says. Instead. Pursue.

Righteousness. Faith. Love. And peace. Along with those who call on the Lord. Out of a pure heart. When. We hear.

False. Ideas. And false. Teaching. And stupid things. Being said. By other people. It should lead us. To redouble. Our efforts. To pursue.

Righteousness. And faith. And love. And peace. And a pure heart. Those qualities. Are what we strive for. It's not for Timothy.

As the Lord's servant. It's for all of us. It's what Jesus was like. It's what we should be like. There will be times.

[32 : 51] When you will face opposition. In your family. With your friends. At your place of work. A minister. A leader.

Will face opposition. In the church. And while there are times. Of righteous anger. And justice. And protection. Of those.

Vulnerable people. Who are suffering. Or being abused. In some way. And there is a time. To come down hard. On people. Because of the person. Being abused.

To protect them. To care for them. At the same time. We are not to use. The weapons. Of the enemy. To fight fire.

With fire. If we're aiming. For God's approval. Do your best. To present yourself. To God. As one approved.

[33 : 44] If you're aiming. For God's approval. We combine truth. With love. And gentleness. You try to persuade. Your children.

Your family. Your friends. Your co-workers. You try and persuade them. From the Bible. You try and answer their questions. You try and be gracious.

And truthful. And go to bed. And sleep. You cannot change the heart. It's not on you. Only God can. Aim for his approval. With truth. And love. And sleep. Far too many of us. Burden ourselves with the guilt.

Of what we cannot do. Give it to God. Even here. It's quite amazing. Paul goes on to say. That God will judge.

[34 : 47] Those who speak. What's not true. But he also says. In verse 25. That he may grant them repentance. Those people who are false teachers.

Spreading false stuff. False information. About what it means. To live in this life. For Jesus. Saying that. The resurrection. Has already happened. The fullness. Of what God promises.

Has been resurrected. It's all here. The life you now live. Here and now. Can be full of all the blessings of God. Totally ignoring the fact. That he has promised.

Life to come. On the other side of eternity. That we are. Right now. In the here and now. We will suffer. We will work hard. We will struggle. It will be difficult.

Waiting for the full blessings to come. In glory. In heaven. But these false teachers. Who are spreading false news. God may grant them repentance.

[35 : 42] Verse 25 says. Those who oppose him. He must gently instruct. In the hope. That God. Will grant them repentance.

Leading to a knowledge. Of truth. That they would come to their senses. And escape from the trap. Of the devil. God is so gracious and kind.

That even to those. Who cause harm. Like. Like Paul himself. Once did. Never forget that. The guy who's writing this.

Was someone who persecuted. Christians. The offer of repentance is there. You've messed up. You think you've messed up.

In what you've taught. And what you've said. To your own. People in church. To your own family. Repentance is there. Paul was worse than you.

[36 : 36] He's now the one. Writing most of the New Testament. Because God's solid foundation. Stands firm. We saw that promise.

Back in verse 19. Nevertheless. With all of this false teaching. Going on. God's solid foundation. Stands firm. The devil. Can't take it down.

God's going to win. He's going to win. It matters who we listen to. It matters what you're looking for. In a preacher. It matters who you are. As Christians. As the body of Christ. In a church. Are we aiming. For God's approval.

With the truth. And with our lives. It matters. What people like me. And all the preachers. That you'll be getting. Over the coming months. It matters what we're saying. Listen.

[37 : 34] With an open Bible. Watch our lives. A bit more difficult. But when you are looking for a minister. Don't just think. Oh. He preached well.

Find out about their lives. Find out what we're like. In private. Find out. If we're grumpy. Find out. If we hold grudges. Find out.

If we sow seeds of division. Find out. If we're lazy. Find that out. It matters. It matters. Who we are. It matters what we say. It matters how we preach.

But our lives. Our characters. Actually. Are the more important element. Of who you're looking for. But most of all.

Please hear the truth. Of God's word. Don't get dragged away. From the truth of Jesus. And the eternal glory. That is to come. Verse 11.

[38 : 28] If we died. With him. We will also live. With him. If we endure. We will also reign. With him. Amen.

And may God bless to us. These thoughts. Amen.