

HOW TO WIN AN ARGUMENT

2 Timothy 2:14-26

When's the last time you WON an argument with your husband/wife?

You know, one of those times when you were really going at it—then came to the end of the argument, and both agreed that YOU won!

For that matter, when's the last time you WON an argument with ANYBODY?!!

2 Tim. 2 Paul tells Timothy **how to win an argument in church.**

Paul's last letter—Final instructions to his son in the faith.

How to build God's house according to code.

Series of exhortations

EXHORTATIONS REGARDING SOUND DOCTRINE

2:14-26

Struggle they're facing is related to false doctrine.

How to correct those being led astray by false teachers.

Message of false teachers relates

to their use of the Word and to their practice.

CONCERNING OUR USE OF THE WORD 2:14-19

We must learn to use the Word properly. 15

"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."

God's Word shouldn't be used as a tool to win arguments.

14 *"Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen."*

Paul warns us not to get involved in word fights.

Word fights build your ego; but they don't build the body of Christ.

Our purpose isn't to "win the great debate"—to win an argument.

That's what the false teachers do.

They split hairs over words and argue with all who disagree.

Imitating their style won't transform lives.

All that does is tear people down.

It won't convince those in error and it won't teach others the truth.

God's Word SHOULD make us acceptable to God, as a workman ready to do His will. 15

Instead of sitting around arguing,

we ought to devote our energy to studying what God says.

We must study His plan to understand His will.

Ironside: If you were building a house and hired a man to do the work for you, you would hand him the blueprints and instruct him to go by them. Suppose he were to work according to his own desires and his own ideas. You would soon discharge him. He might insist that his ways were better than yours. But you would say, "This is not what I wanted." ... I engaged you to build this house according to the plans I gave you."

To build by God's plan, we must study His Word and do what He says.

God's Word SHOULD be used to correct people who wander away from the truth. 16-19 *"Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more*

and more ungodly.¹⁷ Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus,¹⁸ who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some.¹⁹ Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: 'The Lord knows those who are his,' and, 'Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.'"

When people wander away from the truth, and get involved in this meaningless conversation, their message goes from bad to worse—It keeps getting worse.

Teaching spreads like gangrene—contaminates everything it touches.

Ironside: [Observation about names. I'm not sure about interpretive basis:] *Hymenaeus* => "singing man"; *Philetus* => "loving man." Names give idea that "These men are of agreeable and pleasant character; yet they're using their charm to mislead God's people. ...You can never be sure about a man just because he has a nice, attractive personality. Satan's ministers, like Satan himself, can appear in very persuasive roles."

Their deception is destructive. They shake the very foundations.

Nevertheless, the foundation stands firm—it won't be shaken.

We may not be able to tell who has the real thing,

But GOD knows who belongs to Him.

They won't be duped into following the deception.

CONCERNING OUR PRACTICE 2:20-26

We must learn to walk so as to please and be useful to God.

20-21 *“In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. ²¹ If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.”*

Our doctrine and our practice go together.

They complement each other.

Practical emphasis flows out of the doctrinal problem.

Paul develops this thought around a **parable**:

In fancy mansion you find **two kinds of vessels**.

Fancy vessels made of gold, silver, fine china and fine crystal.

These are kept in a fancy china cabinet on display for all to see.

Plain vessels made of earthenware or plain metal and wood.

Fancy vessels are kept clean and shiny—pulled out for special occasions.

Plain vessels for daily use—we don’t get them out when company comes!

In church at Ephesus there are **two kinds of people**:

People who **bring glory to God**.

People who’ve **wandered away from the truth**.

—the same church contains both—that shouldn’t surprise us.

A large mansion has **plenty of BOTH kinds**. *So does the church!*

The church has always had both.

How else will “earthen vessels” become “vessels of honor”?

God wants His people on display like fancy china—to display His glory.

Both personally and corporately we must examine ourselves and cleanse ourselves of anything that distracts from God's glory.

False doctrine leads to faulty practice.

Sound doctrine leads to sound practice.

We must be concerned about both—doctrine AND practice!
—cleansing anything that distracts us from displaying God's glory.

In light of discussion about false doctrine, Paul counsels us about ...

HOW TO WIN AN ARGUMENT

More arguments are won by a godly lifestyle than quarreling.

More arguments are won by what you are than what you say.

THE ISSUE: The issue is doctrine.

They claim the resurrection has already occurred.

=> Therefore, we're left behind. 18 *"...They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some."*

They've raised doubts people can't answer.

Their faith is shaken by what they're hearing.

Nevertheless, God's foundation isn't shaken.

It stands firm. God has spoken. We can trust Him.

There's no question who's right. 19

"Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: 'The Lord knows those who are his,' and, 'Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.'"

A firm foundation: God knows His own.

God won't leave us behind!

BUT those who oppose God's Word and lead people astray are judged.

Num. 16:5 (LXX) – Judgment of Korah who opposes Moses and leads the people away from God's leader.

LXX "*God knows those who are His.*" He knows who's on His side!

So here, those who acknowledge the Lord turn away from the wickedness of the false teachers.

THE OPPOSITION

Their teaching is godless "chatter" (Profane, meaningless words).

It leads to ungodliness. **16** "*Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly.*"

Their teaching spreads like gangrene. **17a**

"Their teaching will spread like gangrene."

It keeps growing; they can't stop it!

They've wandered away from the truth. **17b-18**
"...Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, ¹⁸ who have wandered away from the truth."

THE INSTRUCTION—How to deal with ERROR

(When you KNOW it's wrong!) **What can we DO about it?**

Issue is doctrine; **you KNOW you're right** –no doubt about it!

What not to do– Three things:

1) **DON'T argue about it.** **14**

"Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God

against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen.”

That only hurts the listener

2) ***DON'T argue about it. 23*** *“Don’t have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels.”*

That only produces more quarreling.

3) ***DON'T argue about it. 24*** *“And the Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.”*

That’s not appropriate for a man of God.

How many times does Paul have to say it, before we get it?!!

Quarreling doesn’t lead to godliness, or to sound doctrine!

What to do: Five things –there are more!

Two things related to our use of God’s Word:

1) **Be sure YOU’re approved by God. 15a**

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed...”

If your own life is a mess, no one will listen to you.

Your lifestyle must not be the source of embarrassment or your opinion will be rejected before you start talking.

2) **Be sure you use the Word of God correctly. 15b**

*“Do your best to present yourself to God as one ... **who correctly handles the word of truth.**”*

We ought to learn something from Paul’s example.

Their situation is troubling.

False teachers are presenting some wild ideas.

Persecution is increasing; Paul is about to die for his faith.

Yet, Paul doesn't want us to get hung up, haggling over words.

"You just be sure that *you're* handling God's Word correctly."

Lit., "orthos"=> "*cutting straight*," "*giving it straight*"

—without going astray, deviating, sidestepping truth.

Lay out straight in front of God's people what God says.

Our foundation's solid; stick to God's Word.

Don't worry about everybody else.

You preach the Word. Tell people what GOD says!

Three things related to our practice:

3) Pursue a godly lifestyle—whatever anyone else does. 22

"Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

Like fancy vessels in a mansion, Timothy (we) ought to glorify God by separating from lifestyle that marks other young people.

—we ought not "do what comes naturally."

"Flee youthful lusts" —applied to sensual lusts—impure, sexual sins.

Word merely describes the desires of youth

Next verses show us kinds of issues Paul's concerned about:

Avoid youthful attitudes:

Egotism Self-Ambition Impatience

Not just a call to negative—*AVOIDING* what isn't appealing.
Includes positive pursuit of what reflects God's character:

Go for the fruit of the Spirit.

Pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace.

- 4) **Demonstrate a godly attitude** toward the opposition **24** *"And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful."*

Be kind to everyone. (even those who disagree with you!)

Be teachable ("*able to teach*") => Willing to listen!

Be willing to learn from other people.

Don't be a "know-it-all"!

Don't be resentful. No bitterness —No grudges!

- 5) **Instruct gently with goal of restoration. 25-26**
"Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth,²⁶ and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will."

The goal is not to win an argument.

The goal is not to be right.

The only worthy goal is restoration of a brother.

If a leader's heart is humble before the Lord,
he can gently instruct those who have wandered away,
hoping God will turn them back to the truth.

If you're fighting for any other cause, you may win an argument, ... but lose a brother!

WHAT DOES GOD WANT US TO DO?

5 lessons for us about winning the argument:

1. **Avoid quarreling over the truth.** We won't get anywhere that way!
2. **Study God's Word so that you can handle it correctly.**
"Do your best to present yourself to God as approved, a worker who doesn't need to be ashamed, accurately handling the Word of truth."
Read it! Study it! Meditate on it! Memorize it!
3. **Commit yourself to displaying God's glory.**
4. **When opposed, maintain your own integrity and model godly attitudes and lifestyle.**
5. **Seek restoration of those who wander away from the truth.**