

# GROUP LEADER GUIDE

## Stand Alone: Useful Servants

### 2 Timothy 2:14-26

ANNOUNCEMENTS:



#### Announcements:

- January 5- ReEngage Spring Kick off
- January 8-ESL Spring Kick off
- January 10- 2nd Saturday (Men)

Check out the TJC Weekend Recap podcast for a more in-depth look at our sermons each week!

The podcast is available on all streaming platforms!

#### SERMON NOTES

##### Intro:

Today is going to be a stand-alone message and we're going to be looking at what it looks like to be a **useful servant to the Lord** and how that plays out in our conversations both inside and outside of the church. We're going to do this by looking at Paul's instruction to Timothy in **2 Timothy 2:14-26**.

##### **READ 2 Timothy 2:14-26**

##### **Story/Illustration:**

Over the past few years I've had many conversations with people both inside and outside of the faith about Christianity. I've met with Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses. I've had many discussions with fellow believers about theological issues. I've talked with atheists and agnostics. Those who are open to the faith and those who are hostile towards Christianity.

And as I've done this, I can't think of a more helpful tool that I've used than **Theological Triage**. This is something that some of you are probably familiar with, but many of you may not be as well. **Theological Triage** is a term that was coined by Pastor Erik's good friend, as he likes to call him Papa Al... or as He's better known as, **Dr. Al Mohler**, the president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Now, what **Theological Triage** does is it helps Christians discern the importance of individual theological issues within a given context.

**Triage** is a medical term that most of us are familiar with. The word means **"to sort."** So when two patients come into the Emergency Room and one has a gunshot wound to the chest and the other has a broken arm... the doctors and nurses will quickly use triage to determine who needs the most urgent attention... which in this case would obviously be the gunshot victim.

So we can take that same concept and apply it to defend truth in our churches and culture today. Not all doctrines have the same level of importance. This is where we differentiate between **first**, **second**, and **third** tier issues. Around here at TJC, we like to call this the **doctrinal tier system**.

\*\*\*show image of the Tier System with QR code link\*\*\*

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So let me break these down for you:

**First Tier** would be those doctrines that are essential to the **Christian faith**. Things like the Trinity, the deity of Jesus, Justification by faith alone. These doctrines define the faith and are of utmost importance to defend. A denial of these doctrines runs the risk of not being a Christian at all. We are to fight and defend these truths at all costs.

**Second Tier** issues would be those that define our **fellowship**. Things like the meaning and mode of baptism, the form of church government, how spiritual gifts are used today. Now, within the second tier there are some that are a little more important than others like gender and sexuality, the historical Adam and Eve. Second tier issues are the reason we have different denominations and it typically determines where we worship on Sundays.

If we disagree with someone on a second tier issue, we're not saying they're not a Christian, but it may mean we worship in different churches and practice our faith in different ways.

**Third Tier** issues are our **friendly disagreements**. This would be things like our view of end times, or the age of the earth, our view on alcohol, or Calvinism vs. Arminianism. These things are fun to discuss among brothers and sisters but they should never divide our fellowship or ability to worship with one another.

Now, hopefully as I've gone over this... you can see how important it is to have these doctrinal tiers in mind as you have theological conversations. These will greatly help you discern how firm to be on certain issues and when to remain open-handed.

**Now here's what happens when we don't differentiate between doctrinal tiers:**

**One error** is to not see the tiers at all. To say that first-tier issues do not exist and everything is treated like third level importance. This would be what **liberalism** within church or **progressive Christians** do. Sin is sin, doctrine isn't important. Everyone can believe essentially what they want. There's nothing worth diving over. This is a massive error that must be avoided.

**On the other hand**, the opposite error is to treat all disagreements as the first level of importance. Don't believe in the rapture? You're a heretic. Don't use KJV? You're reading a

corrupt Bible. This is what **fundamentalist** do and every little disagreement is worth dividing over.

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It's very important that we do not fall into either one of these ditches. Not all doctrinal matters are created equal.

Here's what we want at the Journey Church. We want a big tent where anyone and everyone feels loved and welcomed to be here. But what we're not going to do is let people feel comfortable in their sin. We're going to teach our convictions from the Bible, we're going to correct misunderstandings, we're going to call people to repentance, and we're going to be unashamed about the hard truths found in Scripture.

**Because here's the reality...** people don't need to be coddled. They don't need to be approved. They don't need to be accepted for who they are. They need to be transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ. They need to see the weight of their sin and they need to be regenerated through faith and repentance. That is their only hope, and that is what we care about the most.

**MAIN IDEA:** God's useful servants are those who rightly handle His Word, use wisdom in disagreements, and desire the salvation of the lost.

As we walk through the passage today I'm going to give you **5 main points** throughout the text:

### **1. God cares greatly about how we handle and teach His Word.**

**14** Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers. **15** Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

So Paul instructs Timothy to teach his congregation not to quarrel over words, literally he's telling them not to have **"word fights."** He's saying to them, there are going to be people who love controversy in the church, they're going to fight over the dumbest things, they're going to make issues out of nothing. DO NOT put up with this. It's divisive and it's unhealthy.

Instead, you are to rightly handle the word of God. This means getting the Word right and giving it to the people straight. Teaching God's Word comes with great responsibility.

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That's why when one of us steps into this pulpit, we do not take it lightly. We need God's grace

and favor. We need Him to fill us with the Holy Spirit. We need Him to give us the words to say and correct any misunderstandings we may have.

When we give testimony to others about who God is and what He requires of us, it comes with great responsibility and we should never take that lightly. Whether you're preaching to a congregation, leading a Bible study, sharing your faith with a co-worker, it's vital we do this with great care.

**Paul is instructing him:** Teach them the truth without wavering. Don't water down the gospel, don't stray from the truth of God's Word, don't shy away from difficult topics that people don't want to hear... This is what it looks like to present yourself to God as one approved.

Now, I want you to compare that for a moment with how many churches preach today. A text may be read, a point may be made, only for the pastor to never return back to the passage. (Some of you know exactly what I'm talking about). Stories are told, topics are brought up, none of which allow God's Word to speak for itself.

Or you have others, who preach the same gospel message every single week wrapped in a new package. There's a call to come to faith, but they never take their people from the milk to the meat. They never get past the **elementary doctrines of Christ** as **Hebrews 6:1** says. Paul's charge is that we would rightly handle God's Word, and this means we must teach the whole counsel of God.

## **2. Needless controversies cause people to stray from the truth.**

**16** But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, **17** and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, **18** who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some.

Church, it's very important that we do not get caught up in **trivial** matters. The **irreverent babble** that he's talking about here literally means **"talk that has no value."** When we speak about the things of God, it should be edifying and encouraging, it should be convicting and with purpose. We don't argue just to argue. We don't waste all of our time on third tier issues.

When people constantly fight within the church, it spreads like gangrene. One of the illustrations we're given in the New Testament for the church is the **body of Christ**. We are all individual members of the body with unique functions and gifts.

But here's what irreverent babble does within the body: it causes the tissue of the body to die. It literally eats itself. And here's what happens if it's not stopped, it spreads very quickly. It affects all the members of the body, and at best the body is unhealthy and at worst, the body

will die.

This is why there is a necessity for church discipline. Hymenaeus that he mentions here, has already been mentioned by Paul in **1 Timothy 1:20**. There he says, He handed him over to Satan because of blasphemy. In other words, he removed him from the church because he was leading people astray. He was causing division and teaching falsehood.

There are times within the church where gossip must be stopped, divisiveness must be dealt with. Paul, when speaking on unity within the body in **Ephesians 4:29** says, *“Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.”*

Gossip, slander, controversies. Are all infectious to the body.

### **3. The wheat will grow among the weeds, but holiness will be the evidence of God's children.**

**19** But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: “The Lord knows those who are his,” and, “Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.”

This is very comforting for us as believers. The foundation of our faith, the gospel message, will not fade away. Jesus will build His church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

We can see God's **sovereignty**, because He knows who are His. And we can also see **man's responsibility** to depart from iniquity. The gospel will continue because God will keep His people.

**Continuing in verse 20:**

**20** Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. **21** Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.

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So Paul uses another illustration to make his point. He uses that of a **“great house”** filled with different vessels, some that are useful and others that are not. Within the Christian community we know there will be both true believers and there will be false professors. Jesus hits on this in the parable of the weeds in **Matthew 13**. He says, *“Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, “Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.”*

- So the question we must ask ourselves is, are we vessels that are useful for God's House?
- Are we the wheat or the weeds?

The expectation that Paul gives for the honorable vessels is that they cleanse themselves. They set themselves apart as holy.

**So here's the point.** If we want to be used by God to build up His church, we must first recognize our need to be cleansed. We have to understand the weight of our sin and our need for repentance. The honorable vessel, the approved worker, sees his filthiness and runs to Jesus to be made clean.

Is there any sin in your life that you're holding onto that you're allowing to keep you from being useful to the Lord?

Again, we can see here **man's responsibility**. Yes, our being holy and being cleansed is ultimately a work of God. But this does not take away our responsibility to actively be sanctified. We must repent and turn from our wicked ways, we must pursue righteousness and obedience to the commands of God.

We don't sit around and do nothing expecting God to use us, but rather we submit ourselves to His authority, depend on His Spirit for help, and then we go and do the things necessary to live like Christ.

#### **4. Useful servants leave what's behind and pursue maturity.**

**22** So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. **23** Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels.

I want you to notice here that there is something we are to **flee** from and there is something we are to **run** towards. If we want to be useful to the Lord... We are to

leave our youthful passions behind. Things like, being contentious or harsh. Being quick to anger or speaking when it's unnecessary.

The mature believer leaves these passions and sees the benefits of being slow to speak, to being kind and understanding. To use wisdom and discernment, knowing how to respond in different situations. The useful servant avoids ignorant controversies but picks his battles wisely.

Now, don't get me wrong. There are things worth standing up for. Think about Paul's rebuke of Peter in **Galatians 2**. Peter was separating himself from the Gentiles out of fear of the Jews. He was leading people astray and Paul publicly rebukes him for it.

**Now why did Paul respond this way?** Because the gospel was at stake. Peter was acting

hypocritically and causing others to stumble as well. This error from a fellow believer required a strong public rebuke. For his sake and the sake of others.

But not all situations require this. We have to know the difference between the deceived and the deceiver. We have to know if we're talking to a Christian or a non-Christian. We have to be able to discern what issues require addressing and when it's better to not answer a fool according to His folly.

We do this by leaving youthful passions behind and seeking spiritual maturity from the Lord.

### **5. Quarrelsomeness desires division, gentle correction desires transformation.**

**24** And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, **25** correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, **26** and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

If you want to be **USEFUL** to the Lord, you will not be quarrelsome for the sake of winning an argument. There's a great difference between being right and being effective. No one cares what you have to say if you're hateful in the process.

But rather, what God's worker does is he sees the error of someone and he corrects them with gentleness. He does this out of love and a care for the other person. You see, many Christians love **1 Peter 3:15** but for some reason many forget the last part.

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*"...always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; **yet do it with gentleness and respect**"*

If you do the **first part** without the posture of the **second**, you only care about winning an argument and Paul says you're the opposite of useful to God.

Again, what we do with the truths of God's Word is very important. And it's not only that we would know the Word, but that we would effectively use Word for the Kingdom. Because here's the goal Paul gives in our correction of others:

*God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil...*

Friends, our goal in theological conversations, disagreements, defending the faith, or whatever it may be is always the other person's repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth. **Why are**

some things worth standing up for and having conversations about? Because we want people to know the Lord and have true saving faith.

If this isn't our goal, we need to ask God to change our heart. Anytime we are about to have a conversation, or hop on a Facebook post, or share the gospel... we must ask the Lord to give us the right motive in doing so. That our words would be gracious, seasoned with salt, always knowing how to answer each person. The goal is transformation, not division.

So as we close today... I want to read a part of **Jesus' High Priestly prayer in John 17**. Here Jesus shows us the importance of unity within the body and not having unnecessary division and quarrels.

### **READ JOHN 17:20-21**

*"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, (in other words this applies to us today - He's interceding for us) that they may all be **one**, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me."*

Jesus here in His prayer to the Father teaches us about the importance of **unity**. He and the Father and one, we are united to God as one, and not only that but when we're adopted into the family we become one with each other as well.

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This is His prayer for us... and the amazing thing about it is He says, this Oneness, this unity, among the body, is how the world will know that He truly is the Son of God who came to save sinners. In other words, our oneness and the love we have for fellow believers gives testimony about who Jesus is.

So when we fight and divide over trivial matters, we are actually hurting our witness. Outsiders will see that division and be turned away from Jesus because of it. When people see us fighting within the Church, we are actually giving the world a false representation of what the family of God is to be like.

**So here's my encouragement.** Handle God's Word rightly with reverence. Be slow to speak and quick to listen. Seek wisdom and discernment on what issues are worth fighting for and which ones are not. Be careful who you associate with that may lead you astray. Stand firm in the truth, but always do it with humility and respect with the goal of the other person better knowing Christ.

The gospel is at stake. The world is watching. And the way we love one another will either make us useful or unuseful to God's Kingdom.



- How was your week? What is one thing you're grateful for and one thing that challenged you?
- How did you grow in obedience to Christ over the last week?
- Where did you go to share the gospel or have a spiritual conversation with someone?
- What is a sin you have been struggling with that you need to repent of?



- **REVIEW**
  - Read 2 Timothy 2:14-26.
    - Additional Reading:
      - 1 Peter 3:15
      - John 17:20-21

- **DISCUSS**

**ENJOY THE HOLIDAYS!**



- **BUILD UP | SEND OUT**

- **How are you making yourself known at church this week?**
- **How are you growing to know Christ better this week?**
- **How are you making Christ known this week?**

- **PRAYER**

- **Pray over any request from your group members.**
- **Pray for our team:** Greg Mcray- Elder
- **Pray for our replanters:** Christ's Fellowship
- **Pray for our short-term teams:**
  - Rome Team departing on November 14, 2025
- **Pray for our long-term units on the mission field:**
  - The Wilsons
  - The Grays
  - The Browns
- **Pray for the unreached.** Want to keep up with Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>