



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V23 N45 November 7, 2021

FINISH STRONG "Where We're Headed" 2 Timothy 3:1-9

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Self-Control

I have the power,
through Christ, to
control myself.

"For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope – the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ."

Titus 2:11-13



What's coming
in the last
days?

Viewed negatively, self-control translates into "Just say no." Viewed positively, it translates into "Just say yes." Viewed negatively, we speak of self-control; viewed positively, we speak of self-discipline. In either case, we're talking about different nuances of the same word, i.e., two sides of the same word coin.

Peter talks about both sides of the coin in 1 Peter 1:13-21. He doesn't talk about the negative side and then the positive; instead, he talks back and forth about both, mingling the positive with the negative. But before looking at examples from the text, consider this. The Greek word translated "self-controlled" in the NIV is more literally translated "sober-minded" in the ESV. On the meaning of the term, one commentator writes: "Be sober forbids not only physical drunkenness but also (since the phrases before and after have to do with attitudes of mind) letting the mind wander into any other kind of mental intoxication or addiction which inhibits spiritual alertness, or any laziness of mind which lulls Christians into sin through carelessness (or 'by default')" (Wayne Grudem, *The First Epistle of Peter*, TNTC, 76). If you're wondering how this term can be translated "self-control," consider the following comments: "In the NT the word [*nēphō*] generally denotes self-control and the clarity of mind which goes with it" (Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, trans. Cleon Rogers, Jr., 747); "'Sober in spirit' describes a Christian who is in full control of his speech and conduct, in contrast to one who allows his flesh (i.e., his sinful human nature) to govern him" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on 1 Peter," 2021 ed., 27, plano-biblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/1peter.pdf).

On the negative side of the coin, Peter says: "do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance" (v. 14), and warns against returning to "the empty way of life" they inherited from their "forefathers" (v. 18). They are to be self-controlled and "Just say no"

to these things. On the positive side of the coin, Peter says: "be holy in all you do" (v. 15) and "live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear" (v. 17). They are to be self-disciplined and "Just say yes" to these things.

Interestingly, the term "holy" entails both the "Just say no" side and the "Just say yes" side of the discussion regarding self-control. It suggests being "set apart" *from* and "set apart" *to*. Generally speaking, God is *set apart* from his creation, and in the same way he is set apart from doing evil and set apart to doing good, so should we be. One theologian captures the two-sidedness of holiness in the following comments: On the one hand, "God not only is personally free from any moral wickedness or evil, He is unable to tolerate the presence of evil. He is, as it were, allergic to sin and evil. Those who are his must therefore seek the same holiness that is so basic to his own nature," and on the other, "The second dimension of God's moral purity is his righteousness. This is, as it were, the holiness of God applied to his relationships to other beings. God in his actions is described as doing right. The Lord himself says, 'I am the LORD who practices kindness, justice, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight' (Jer. 9:24)" (Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1:286-87). So the idea of holiness as it pertains to us entails separation not in some vague general sense but in the specific moral sense of separation from evil and dedication to a life of righteousness.

Obedience to the apostle's commands doesn't just happen. It begins with the decision to "roll up one's spiritual sleeves" and exercise self-control and self-discipline. Clearly, as one commentator observes, "Discipline in the Christian life is just as essential as in any other walk of life where success depends upon a determined single-minded commitment" (Norman Hillyer, *1 and 2 Peter*, NIBC, 44).

2 Timothy 3:1-9

1 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. 2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, 4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God – 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.

6 They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over gullible women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, 7 always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. 8 Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these teachers oppose the truth. They are men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected. 9 But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone.

READ in another translation

1 But understand this, that in the last days difficult times will come. 2 For people will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 unloving, irreconcilable, slanderers, without self-control, savage, opposed to what is good, 4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, loving pleasure rather than loving God. 5 They will maintain the outward appearance of religion but will have repudiated its power. So avoid people like these. 6 For some of these insinuate themselves into households and captivate weak women who are overwhelmed with sins and led along by various passions. 7 Such women are always seeking instruction, yet never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. 8 And just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these people – who have warped minds and are disqualified in the faith – also oppose the truth. 9 But they will not go much further, for their foolishness will be obvious to everyone, just like it was with Jannes and Jambres. (NET)

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Underline “mark this” in v. 1.
- Circle “last days” in v. 1.
- Underline “lovers of” in vv. 2, 4.
- Box “but” indicating *contrast* in vv. 5, 7, 9.
- Bracket “form of godliness” in v. 5.
- Circle “worm” in v. 6.
- Circle “gullible women” in v. 6.
- Box “just as” and “so also” indicating *comparison* in v. 8.
- Underline “Jannes” and “Jambres” in v. 8.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, “This text is about _____.”



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. What do you infer from “But mark this,” Paul’s opening words?
2. Explain the relationship of verses 2-5 to “terrible times” in verse 1.
3. Paul comments on “the last days” in verse 1. When is that?
4. What people *love* appears key to understanding the vices Paul lists. How so?
5. Identify a vice or two from Paul’s list (vv. 2-6) that you consider particularly prevalent today.
6. Explain the *contrast* in verse 6.
7. Speaking practically, describe what “have nothing to do with such people” means.
8. What makes “gullible women” easy marks for false teachers?
9. Explain the *comparison* in verse 8.
10. **Discussion:** Talk about the false teachers Paul describes. What do you make of them?

Commentary On The Text

Chapter 2 of Paul's second letter to Timothy ends on a hopeful note. Perhaps God will grant repentance to those false teachers whose teaching left unchecked will spread like gangrene, infect others, and threaten their faith. But Paul's tone changes in 3:1. According to one commentator: "Chapter 2 ended optimistically: The Lord's servant is to instruct opponents patiently, with the hope that God will graciously rescue them from Satan's grasp. But chapter 3 presents another, less optimistic reality, introduced with the mild adversative de ('but') and the command 'mark this'" (Walter L. Liefeld, *The NIV Application Commentary: 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 268).

Timothy is to take note that terrible times lie ahead for the world and for the church—in "the last days." What makes these "terrible times" terrible is the moral decline of society described in verses 2-5a, which spills over into the church. Paul's warning is relevant to Timothy because "the last days" refers not only to the time immediately prior to the Lord's second coming, but also to the time beginning with his first coming leading up to his second coming. The future verb "will be" would normally describe a coming state of affairs, but verse 5 strongly implies that the future is now—for both Timothy and us. Put differently, "The use of the future tense does not exclude the *present inception* of the increasing evil days to come" (William D. Mounce, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 46, *Pastoral Epistles*, 543, italics added).

The paragraph containing Paul's description of conditions in the last days (vv. 1-5) begins and ends with a command. In verse 1, Paul commands Timothy to "mark this," and in verse 5, he commands him to "have nothing to do with such people," namely, the kind of people just described. Readers should note that Paul's description of various kinds of decadent people (cf., Ro 1:29-31) begins and ends with descriptions of them in terms of what they love. The two Greek words translated "lovers of themselves" and "lovers of money" (v. 2) begin with the prefix *phil* (cf., *phileo* "to love"), as do the two Greek words translated "lovers of pleasure" and "lovers of God" (v. 4). On the significance of this, one commentator writes: "Moral corruption follows from love falsely directed. Self-centeredness, and material advantages, when they become the chief objects of affection, destroy all moral values, and the subsequent list of vices is their natural fruit. It is significant that the list ends with a similar pair of words compounded with *phileo*—lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God (verse 4). 'Rather than lovers of God' [NIV] is more expressive of the Greek and implies that pleasure was

regarded as a substitute for God. Basically, materialism is opposed to piety and is bound to end in irreligion" (Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, TNTC, 157).

Commentators are inclined to parse each of the nearly twenty terms Paul uses to describe people in "the last days" (see Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, Jr., *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, NAC, 224-26; A. Duane Litfin, "2 Timothy," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 756; Homer A. Kent, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 281-84). However, since the meaning of these individual words is more or less obvious, rather than looking closer, readers might step back from Paul's portrait of corrupt society to take in the whole by reading verses 1-5 in another translation: "You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good. They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that!" (NLT). Collaborative relationships with such people are out of the question.

According to the second paragraph (vv. 6-9), people like those Paul just described pose an immediate risk to the Ephesian church. In the words of one commentator, "It was from the increasingly large group in society who displayed the preceding characteristics that the false teachers had emerged to plague the church" (A. Duane Litfin, "2 Timothy," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 756)—and continue to emerge to plague the church. They deceitfully worm their way into the lives of especially vulnerable people. In Ephesus their victims are "gullible women," not all women, but those women "who certainly lacked spiritual insight and perhaps also moral substance" (Lea and Griffin, 227). Put differently, their carnality and immaturity rendered them easy targets for the false teachers. They were open-minded to a fault—"always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth" (v. 7)—having an insatiable appetite for the heresy du jour. The false teachers, who peddle these heresies, have one thing in common with Jannes and Jambres of Jewish tradition. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses in Egypt, so also do these false teachers oppose the truth in Ephesus. They have "depraved minds" and are thus disqualified as teachers of the faith. Sooner or later they will be recognized for what they truly are.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 1 *mark this* “The verb ‘mark’ is the simple word ‘know,’ but in this context it serves as a jolting reminder to Timothy of a reality with which he must come to grips: ‘Terrible times’ are coming” (Walter L. Liefeld, *The NIV Application Commentary: 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 268).

v. 1 *terrible* Cf., “times of difficulty” (ESV); “difficult times” (GNT, HCSB); “distressing times” (NRSV); “stressful times” (Mounce). “In vv 2-5 Paul will describe in detail what [*chalepoi*], ‘stressful,’ involves, and in vv 6-9 he will apply this description of ‘moral decadence’ (Guthrie, 156) to Timothy’s opponents” (William D. Mounce, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 46, *Pastoral Epistles*, 543, italics added). “The adjective translated ‘terrible’ can, in various contexts, mean violent (Matt. 8:28), fierce, or hard to deal with” (Liefeld, 268).

v. 1 *last days* “The term ‘last days’ sounds as if it applies ‘especially to the last days of this age, before the Second Coming.’ However, in the New Testament the phrase refers to that entire time from the completion of Christ’s redemptive work until his return. Christ’s life, death, resurrection, and ascension have inaugurated the last days” (Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, Jr., 1, *2 Timothy, Titus*, NAC, 223; see also Liefeld, 269). The present imperative, “Avoid” (v. 5, NET), refers to avoiding these people in the present. “The use of the present-tense verb in v 6 assures that this is the case (Mounce, 544).

vv. 2, 4 *lovers of* “The first two vices are compound words formed with [*philos*], ‘loving.’ It may not be accidental that they stand at the head of the list and in direct contrast with the final vice, [*philēdonoi mallon hē philotheoi*], ‘loving pleasure rather than loving God’ (v 4), which likewise is expressed in compounds formed with [*philos*]. When one’s love for God is replaced by love for oneself and the material world, then all the other vices naturally flow” (Mounce, 544-45).

v. 5 *form of godliness* “They affected its outward appearance but lacked its essence. They enjoyed arguing about religious trivia (1 Tim 1:6-7) and practiced asceticism (1 Tim 4:3), assuming that being religious proved that they were also righteous” (Lea and Griffin, 226). “Their appearance of godliness (teaching the law, asceticism, etc.) is shown to be false because at the same time they love themselves, money, and pleasure rather than God” (Mounce, 547).

v. 6 *worm* Cf., “slither into households” (CEB); “creep into households” (ESV); “work their way into peoples’ homes” (NLT). “Before Paul described the victims of the false teachers, he used two verbs in v. 6 to portray their victimizers as *deceitful* and *ruthless* in their desire for control. The verb translated ‘worm their way’ (‘some of that ilk sneak into,’ Berkeley) is a pejorative term that pictures the actions of the deceivers as sinister and *treacherous*. They had entered homes under false pretenses. Once admitted, they proceeded to ‘gain control’ (‘get . . . into their clutches,’ NEB). In this context the terms suggest that the false teachers had gained a complete psychological dominance over their victims” (Lea and Griffin, 227, italics added).

v. 6 *gullible women* “The victims of these false teachers were weak-willed women who certainly lacked spiritual insight and perhaps also moral substance. Paul’s words were not a general statement about the female sex but referred specifically to the credulous women in Ephesus . . . Not all the women in Ephesus were as unstable and spiritually immature as these women were (see 2 Tim 4:19), but those women who had responded to the heresy were a source of much confusion and instability in the church” (Lea and Griffin, 227). “It is important exegetically to understand this word as a particular class of women and not as a description of women in general, any more than the words in verses 2-4 describe men in general” (Liefeld, 271).

v. 8 *Jannes and Jambres* “These are the names Jewish tradition gave to the Egyptian magicians who tried to imitate the signs performed before Pharaoh by Moses and Aaron (Ex. 7:11; 9:11). What they had in common with the false teachers at Ephesus was that they also stood against the truth, had ‘depraved minds,’ and were rejected ‘as far as the faith is concerned’ (cf. also Titus 1:16, where ‘unfit’ is the same words translated ‘rejected’ in the NIV here)” (Liefeld, 272).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Collaboration with ungodly teachers is out of the question, because they deceive vulnerable people and oppose the truth just like Jannes and Jambres.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

As a baby, my oldest was to spend the night at his grandparents. The day before the sleepover, we had a family meeting to make sure the stairway was blocked from both ends. Giant chairs were dragged across the living room, and a huge bumper fort was created. I was determined to protect my firstborn from falling down the evil stairs. Fast-forward to the fourth child. We left the heavy furniture where it was and spent an hour teaching him how to climb the stairs safely. A huge portion of our job as parents can be boiled down to two things – protection and preparation. The gift of the Holy Spirit and years of parenting have allowed me to gain discernment, helping me choose the best tactic for nearly every situation. Our text today is a warning call for all parents. We need to protect our kids from charlatans who spread falsehood. The best way to protect them is to prepare them, teaching sound Biblical doctrine and guiding them toward truth. The easiest method to guard against counterfeit is to know truth unequivocally. False teachers wrap their words in “Christianese” language, speaking “love” and “tolerance” and “truth.” Unless our kids confidently understand how to define and measure these words according to scripture, they are left unguarded and susceptible to a “right” sounding doctrine that will fall short when held against truth. What are you doing to protect your child against falsehood? How are you preparing them to understand truth? How can we help you?

What Does The Bible Say?

Read 2 Timothy 3:1-9.

1. How does Paul describe people in the last days?
2. What do these people love?
3. How are we to interact with such people?

What Do You Think?

What does this text warn you against? How does it encourage you?

What Do You Do?

Turn off all the lights in your room then turn on a flashlight. What can you see? How can you be a light to others living in darkness?

CORE COMPETENCY: Self-Control

I take charge of myself with Jesus' help.

MEMORY VERSE: John 16:33

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week's verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)
I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)
I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)
I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)
I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Tom Bulick (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than forty years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) for 12 years before accepting the position of Spiritual Formation Pastor at Central Bible Church in 1998. He and his wife Ruth have one son, Zach.

Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have four children: Elijah, Levi, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

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**CENTRAL
BIBLE CHURCH**

8001 Anderson Boulevard
Fort Worth, Texas 76120
817-274-1315
wearecentral.org