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REKINDLING THE SPIRITUAL FIRE WITHIN (2 Timothy 1:1-18)

Some people love camping—I have not worked out why people would love camping, especially when you read some horrendous stories about camping. And I have read some horrendous story about camping. When I read these stories, I wonder why would people go camping?

For some reason, it will be fine—beautiful weather. Then you decide to go camping, and all of a sudden wet weather sets in. How many times have you gone camping and wet-weather set in?

If you go camping on the beach, it doesn't matter where you go, you cannot escape the sand, sand in your tent, in your sleeping bag, on your plate, in your cup, in the shower, and in the toilet—that's if you have one.

Don't get me wrong. I do like the beach except for the sand and water.

As you can see, I am not much of a beach camper.

Nevertheless, there is one aspect of camping I really do like. After the tents and campsite have been set up and as darkness begins to engulf the campsite, usually someone builds a fire, which usually turns into a bonfire.

You know, there is something magical about a bonfire at a campsite. As that initial spark turns into a roaring fire, it's able to draw people around it with laughter, stories and great times of fellowship. The heat and light from the fire radiates throughout the campsite. There's something magical about that.

However, as time passes, the flames tend to die down so someone needs to re-stack the fire again with more wood and once again the fire is blazing, radiating its heat and light throughout the campsite.

You know, our Christian lives are a bit like a bonfire. We can be on fire for God (radiating Christ to those around us), but over time if we don't rekindle the fire or keep it blazing, the fire within us can dim. Our desire to serve God can wane. Our desire to follow God can waver. Other things will take priority; and before we know it, we have lost our way.

It seems that Timothy's spiritual fire had cooled—this young man who came to Jesus Christ through the preaching of the great apostle Paul, this young man who served alongside of Paul in several missionary journeys, this young man who led the historical Church at Ephesus, it seems that this young man's spiritual fire was wavering. It hadn't gone out, but it was seriously wavering.

You know, lots of things can dampen the spiritual fire that dwells within.

For example:

- Timothy struggled with ill health (1 Timothy 5:23). Who knows, this could have affected Timothy's desire to serve God...even question God.
- Timothy was young, shy, and emotional (2 Timothy 1:4).

Sometimes Christianity can be an emotional roller coaster—highs and low.

If we are not able to deal with these highs and lows, it will affect our passion for God.

- Timothy encountered difficulties and opposition while pastoring in the Ephesian church.

False teachers gave young Timothy a hard time in Ephesus. In fact, it seemed they were determined to wear him down, wear him out.

These struggles really affected Timothy. In fact, they affected him to a point where his spiritual fire was wavering.

But the apostle Paul was not willing to give up on his young protégé. This young man whom Paul led to the Lord, this young man who worked alongside of him, Paul was not willing to give up on him.

Paul would have loved to have seen him personally (1:4a) but it seems Paul was under house arrest.

So, Paul wrote to him and encouraged him to rekindle the spiritual fire within.

You know, at times we all need to rekindle the spiritual fire within.

When I first became a Christian, I was blazing for God—I wanted to serve God in any way I could. I wanted to follow God at any cost (Most new Christians think like this).

But as time passed, the fire began to wane and the spiritual fire began to waver. However, I'm glad people along the way have encouraged me to rekindle the spiritual fire within.

In many ways, this is an ongoing process. If we don't attend to a bonfire, it will go out. If we don't rekindle the spiritual fire within, it will wane and it will waver. However, I don't believe it will go out.

Timothy was struggling but his faith was genuine as we read in verse 4, "When I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also."

His faith was genuine and his struggles were genuine. But the problem was that he allowed his struggles to affect his fervor for God.

So Paul encouraged Timothy to rekindle the spiritual fire within?

Therefore, Paul gave Timothy several pointers in which he could rekindle the spiritual fire within.

The first way involves...

1. Stirring up the gift of God within (1:6)

Look at verse 6, “Therefore I remind you [referring to Timothy] to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.”

The Bible reminds us that we all have a spiritual gift (1 Peter 4:10). Timothy’s gift was preaching. He was a preacher (a proclaimer of Jesus Christ) and his gift of preaching was confirmed at his ordination when Paul placed his hands upon him and prayed for him.

So Paul encouraged Timothy to rekindle afresh his gift of preaching.

The Greek word for *stir or kindle* literally means “to keep the fire alive,” to fan the embers into flame and not let them die out.

If Timothy was going to maintain his fervor and passion for God, then he needed to keep the fire alive, he needed to fan into flame his gift of proclamation so that he would not neglect God’s gift to him.

We all need encouragement in this area of our spiritual lives. There are so many things that can put out the spiritual fire in our lives.

But let's fan into flame God's gift whatever it is (mercy; helps; encouragement; etc).

Let's keep the fire alive so that we can serve God with passion and fervor.

- Don't let discouragement put the fire out.
- Don't let the busyness of life put the fire out.
- Don't let unforgiveness put the fire out.
- Don't let bitterness put the fire out.
- Don't let worldly desires put the fire out.

Let's fan into flame God's gift so that you can serve God with passion and fervor.

A while ago, I read a book by Wayne Bennett's called *Don't Die With The Music In You*. It wasn't a Christian book. But it was a very encouraging book. I really enjoyed reading his book.

Why was it such a good book to read? Wayne Bennett said what the apostle Paul said to Timothy don't waste your spiritual gift. You will regret it.

The second way to rekindle the spiritual fire within involves...

2. Considering God's resources (1:7)

Look at verse 7, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."

CEV says, "God's Spirit does not make cowards of us. The Spirit gives power, love, and self-control."

It seems that Timothy lacked confidence, and this lack of confidence brought fear into his life and ministry.

And this fear dampened the fire within.

Really, we all know about fear. You're in a room full of non-Christians and you have an opportunity to speak for Christ. All of a sudden you're gripped with fear.

Should I draw attention to myself and say something or should I simply shut up?

When we are apprehensive and fearful, often our focus is on ourselves and our own human resources rather than on the Lord and His resources.

Remember, God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

After all, it is God's power that enables us to minister effectively. It is God's love that enables us to minister sensitively, and it is God-given wisdom that enables us to minister wisely.

When we take hold of God's resources, the spiritual fire within will roar into flames—it will be like throwing petrol on a fire.

The third way to rekindle the spiritual fire within involves...

3. Accepting the negative aspects of the gospel (1:8)

Look at verse 8, "Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God."

When we share the gospel of Jesus Christ, people will not always accept it. In fact, some people will give you a hard time because you are a Christian. Some people will be just down-right hostile to you.

I can remember when I was in seminary in the early nineties. We were door knocking an area asking people some questions about the local church. I went up to this one house, and an elderly woman with a walking stick came to the front door. It was an old house with a veranda. I told her who I was and I proceeded to ask her some questions. When I mentioned that I was a Christian, she flew for me. And she told me off. In fact, she told me to go and get a decent job.

She was down-right hostile. You know, Timothy would have met people like that and most probably worse than that.

However, Paul said to Timothy that you must accept this as part of the gospel. People will misunderstand you. People will be hostile toward you. But don't be ashamed of the gospel because of this.

You know, when people ridicule you for being a Christian, it hurts and sometimes we react to ridicule by being ashamed of the gospel.

We have a wonderful message to tell people—a message of hope, a message of purpose and meaning for life. Christ is not someone we need to be ashamed of. He is our answer to life—present and future.

Yes, we will suffer for Christ but let's not be ashamed of Him. Let's not be ashamed of who we are in Christ.

The fourth way to rekindle the spiritual fire within involves...

4. Remembering God's call upon our lives (1:9-10)

Look at verses 9 & 10, "Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing

of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”

God has saved us through the Lord Jesus Christ but also God has called us to a holy calling according to God’s purpose and grace.

We have a goal and that is to live for Christ.

As the writer to the Hebrews said, “Let us run the race, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith” (Heb 12:1-2).

If we keep our eyes on Jesus, then we will keep rekindling the spiritual fire within.

The fifth way to rekindle the spiritual fire within involves...

5. Realizing our Christian duty (1:11-12a)

Look at verse 11 and the beginning of verse 12, “To which I was appointed a preacher, and apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For this reason I also suffer these things.” The apostle Paul never forgot that God appointed him a preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

No matter what happened Paul would continue to proclaim Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life.

In fact, Paul faithfully fulfilled his Christian duty even though he suffered persecution, imprisonment, hostility, brutality, and loneliness.

You know, Timothy could learn a lot from Paul’s life and ministry. In fact, Paul’s life and ministry is an example to us all.

If your passion is waning, read the story of Paul. Actually, we have many inspirational examples of Christians fulfilling their Christian duty.

I am always reminded of Richard Wurmbrand. What an inspirational story of a man who served God with distinction!

He was held for 14 years in Communist prisons. His jailers tried everything to break his spirit. They beat him, tortured him, and drugged him. But nothing stopped him sharing God's love to his fellow inmates.

The sixth way to rekindle the spiritual fire within involves...

6. Trusting God completely (1:12b)

Look at the end of verse 12, "Nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that day."

Paul knew for certain that whatever happened there was nothing to worry about. His life and ministry was in God's hands.

As the apostle Paul said himself, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil 1:21).

Paul's security in life was God. He completely trusted in God. This inspired Paul to passionate and service for God.

The seventh way to rekindle the spiritual fire within involves...

7. Holding onto God's word (1:13-14)

Look at verses 13 & 14, “Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.”

One of the greatest inspirations to our passion and fervor for God is His word. If your spiritual fire is wavering, read and obey God’s word.

As someone said, “If we belong to Christ, we will be secure, but if we neglect His truth, our confidence in that security will wane”!

I know when I am struggling it is God’s word that keeps me going. It is God’s word that inspires me to hang in there.

That’s why I champion God’s word. God’s word is more than ink on a piece of paper.

“It is living and powerful” (Heb 4:12). The more you hold to it the greater your passion for God will be.

The eighth way to rekindle the spiritual fire within involves...

8. Choosing Godly friends (1:15-18)

Look at verses 15 to 18, “This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chains; but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very diligently and found me. The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day—and you know very well how many ways he ministered to me at Ephesus.”

There are some people who will dampen your desire to serve God and there are other people who will inspire you to serve God.

In other words, choosing Godly friends may make you or break you as a Christian. Times have not changed. It's still the same today.

Your associates will either inspire you to serve God or dampen your desire to serve God.

So choose well your friends.

Conclusion:

Being passionate for God involves rekindling the spiritual fire within.

There will be times when...

- we will need to stir up the gift of God within
- we will need to consider God's resources
- we will need to accept the negative aspects of the gospel
- we will need to remember God's call upon our lives
- we will need to realize our Christian duty
- we will need to trust God completely
- we will need to hold fast to God's word
- and we will need to choose Godly friends

Don't let your passion for God die. Keep rekindling the spiritual fire within.

ENCOURAGING OTHERS TO FAITHFUL SERVICE

(2 Timothy 2:8-13)

Mary had grown up knowing that she was different from the other kids and she hated it. And she hated it with passion.

She was born with a cleft palate and had to bear the jokes and stares of cruel children who teased her non-stop about her misshaped lip, crooked nose and garbled speech.

With all the teasing, Mary grew up hating the fact that she was 'different'. She was convinced that no one, outside her family, could ever love her until she entered Mrs. Leonard's class.

Mrs. Leonard had a warm smile, a round face, and shiny brown hair. While everyone in her class liked her, Mary came to love Mrs. Leonard.

In the 1950's, it was common for teachers to give their children an annual hearing test. However, in Mary's case, in addition to her cleft palate, she was barely able to hear out of one ear.

Determined not to let the other children have another 'difference' to point out, she would cheat on the test each year.

The 'whisper test' was given by having a child walk to the classroom door, turn sideways, close one ear with a finger, and then repeat something, which the teacher whispered. Mary turned her bad ear towards her teacher and pretended to cover her good ear.

She knew that teachers would often say things like, 'The sky is blue,' or 'What color are your shoes?'

But not on that day surely, God put seven words in Mrs. Leonard's mouth that changed Mary's life forever.

When the 'whisper test' came, Mary heard the words: 'I wish you were my little girl.'

When the world teased Mary about her looks, Mrs. Leonard did something different.

Seven words made a difference to this little girl. Seven words of encouragement helped Mary through a difficult time in her life.

From the day Mildred was born, she felt she was a misfit. "I was supposed to be a boy," she writes. And because of this, her father did not like her from the very beginning, so he mentally and physically abused her.

When she was twelve (12) or so, she wanted to go to Sunday School but her father wouldn't have a bar of it. "You will not bring any crazy religion into this house," he yelled at Mildred with a clenched fist in her face.

The mental abuse got so bad at times that she needed to be hospitalized for treatment.

At times, her father would work away for long periods, and this gave Mildred the opportunity to go to Sunday School at Central Baptist Church.

Immediately, the people there accepted her for who she was. For years, Mildred longed for her father's love and encouragement.

But she never found love and encouragement until she attended Central Baptist church. She writes, "It took two years to heal the wounds, but my heart began to break as I understood the love of Jesus Christ and my hope of a future in heaven. One Sunday, as tears fell like rain I slowly walked from the balcony seat of my church

home and bowed my knees to Jesus. I knew at that moment there would be no turning back. With this one decision, I knew a brighter future lay ahead. What I had not counted on was my father's anger."

Mildred's father got so angry about her decision to follow Jesus Christ that he walked out of her life.

But the amazing thing was that the people at Central Baptist Church lovingly stood by her and encouraged her through the most difficult time in her life. Mildred writes, "They gave me the support I needed to stand strong for Jesus and not waver or lose hope."

Ironically, the love and encouragement she sought from her father, she found in her heavenly Father and the people at Central Baptist Church.

You know, seventy years later, when Mildred was visiting the church of her youth she wept tears of joy as she remembered the love and encouragement that helped her through a very difficult time in her life.

It was that love and encouragement that helped her see her need for Jesus Christ. It was that love and encouragement that helped her serve God faithfully for seventy years.

Timothy grew up in a God-fearing home. His mother and grandmother taught him God's word.

When the apostle Paul visited the city of Lystra on his first missionary journey, we see that Timothy became a Christian. Paul was so impressed by Timothy that he took Timothy with him as a promising protégé.

It didn't take long [though] before Paul recognized Timothy's giftedness for ministry. In fact, Timothy became one of Paul's most trustworthy fellow workers.

And it was because of this giftedness that Paul left Timothy in Ephesus to pastor the church and provide leadership for the people of God.

However, in time, Timothy became discouraged. His health began to fail. Opposition to the gospel mounted and this discouraged young Timothy.

But Paul did not give up on Timothy. In fact, Paul wrote two letters to Timothy to encourage him in the faith...to encourage him to faithful service.

You know, sometimes, when people are struggling, it is easy to be critical. It is easy to put them down. But Paul would not have a bar of that. He wanted to encourage Timothy to faithful service for Jesus Christ.

What a challenge for us as Christians to be encouragers! You may see someone struggling or discouraged, what do you do? Do you take steps to encourage them?

William Arthur Ward said....

Flatter me, and I may not believe you
Criticize me, and I may not like you
Ignore me, and I may not forgive you
Encourage me, and I will not forget you

We all need love and encouragement. Even as Christians we need love and encouragement. Timothy needed love and encouragement so that he could faithfully serve God in the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So, how did Paul encourage young Timothy to faithful service? What words of wisdom did Paul impart to Timothy that encouraged him to faithful service?

Well first, Paul encouraged Timothy to faithful service by asking him...

1. To remember Jesus Christ (2:8a)

Look at verse 8, “Remember Jesus Christ [Paul said], raised from the dead, descended from David...”

What is Paul saying to Timothy here?

I believe he is saying this...

- A. Remember who Jesus is

He is God’s Son, the One who created the heavens and the earth and the One who holds all things together.

As God’s word says, “All things were created by God’s Son, and everything was made for Him. God’s Son was before all else, and by Him everything is held together” (Col 1:16b-17).

This is the One you serve Timothy—Jesus Christ, God’s Son. Remember who He is and you will be encouraged and maybe you will encourage others.

Also I believe Paul was saying this...

- B. Remember what Jesus has done

He is not only God's Son but also He is our Savior...the One who came to this earth to die upon a cross for our sins...the One who rose from the grave to give us new life...

The One who said, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matt 11:28-30).

The One who said, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me" (John 14:1).

Remember Jesus, He is God's Son and He is our Savior, He is the One who forgives sins, He is the One who give purpose and meaning to life and He is the One who has give us a future destiny in heaven.

Remember Jesus and you will be encouraged and maybe you will encourage someone else, take some time today to remember Jesus, remember who He is and remember what He has done for you!

Also, Paul encouraged Timothy to faithful service by asking him...

2. To remember the gospel (2:8b-10)

Why? Why did Paul ask Timothy to remember the gospel? Two reasons:

A. Preaching the gospel brings opposition (2:8b-9a)

Look at the end of verse 8, "This is my gospel," Paul said. Or "this is the gospel I preach...for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains..."

Preaching the gospel brings opposition. So Paul said to Timothy, “don’t be discouraged by that.”

Some people will be offended with the gospel. Some people will be offended when you tell them that they need Jesus Christ to get to heaven. Some people will be offended when you tell them that they are sinners destined for hell if they do not turn to Jesus Christ in repentance and faith.

But that’s the gospel message. “God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life. He who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:11-12).

B. Preaching the gospel brings salvation (2:10b)

Look at the end of verse 9 and all of verse 10, “But the word of God [referring to the gospel] is not in chains, and so I endure everything for the sake of God’s chosen people, in order that they too may obtain salvation that comes through Christ Jesus and bring eternal glory.”

As Christians, we should be encouraged because we have a wonderful message of salvation—a message of hope in a hopeless world—a message of eternal life that is found in Jesus Christ.

You know, many people search for meaning and purpose in life by gathering wealth and by being successful. However, these things will not bring lasting fulfillment. We will only find fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

When we realize this truth, the gospel of Jesus Christ will encourage us to faithful service.

Finally, Paul encouraged Timothy to faithful service by asking him...

3. To remember God's promises (2:11-13)

There are two promises in verses 11 to 13.

The first promise is that...

A. Faithfulness is rewarded (2:11-12a)

Look at verse 11 and the beginning of verse 12, "This is a faithful saying, 'For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall reign with Him'"

In other words, if we give our lives to Jesus in repentance and faith and live for Jesus, then God gives us life—eternal life.

To put it another way, if we belong to Jesus, if we live for Jesus, our eternal home in heaven is secure.

I know without a doubt that one day I am going to be in heaven with God.

Not because I have done anything special. No! I will be in heaven because I have simply accepted the fact that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Jesus Christ.

This wonderful promise encourages me in difficult times.

This wonderful promise encourages me when I get sidetracked in life thinking other things are important when in reality they are not.

When I think on this promise, it puts life back in perspective.

Faithfulness is rewarded.

The second promise is that...

B. Faithlessness is to one's peril (2:12b-13)

Look at the end of verse 12 and all of verse 13, "If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself."

You know, it's good that God warns us. If we deny Jesus, He will deny us.

It's that simply.

We cannot expect on eternity's morning to be welcomed into heaven if we deny Jesus on earth.

This truth should encourage us from faithlessness to faithfulness.

This truth should encourage us to live for Jesus rather than live for self.

Faithlessness is to our peril but faithfulness is rewarded.

Seven words of encouragement helped Mary through a difficult time in her life.

Love and encouragement help Mildred see her need for Jesus Christ.

Encouragement helped Timothy to faithful service.

You know, when people are struggling, discouraged, or sidetracked, it is easy to be critical. It is easy to put them down.

But we can do something different.

We can point them to Jesus Christ—our God and Savior

We can point them to the gospel—a message of hope in a hopeless world

We can point them to God's promises—faithfulness is reward.

It begins and ends with Jesus Christ.

FACING FAULTY THINKING

(2 Timothy 2:14-19)

A young paratrooper was learning to jump, and he was given the following instructions: First, jump when you are told; second, count to 10 and pull the ripcord; third, in the unlikely event that it doesn't open, pull the second chute open; and fourth, when you get down, a truck will take you back to base.

The plane ascended up to the proper height, the men started peeling out, and the young paratrooper jumped when told. He counted to 10 and pulled the ripcord, but the chute failed to open. He proceeded to the backup plan. The second chute also failed to open. "Oh boy," he said to himself, "I suppose when I get down, the truck won't be there either."

It's pretty obvious that this guy's thinking was faulty.

And yet, there's a lot of this type of thinking in the world today.

There's a lot of faulty thinking in the world today. There's a lot of thinking out there that just doesn't add up.

Our television sets are full of it, and our bookstores are full of it. We are continually bombarded with faulty thinking and thinking that just doesn't add up.

There's a novel out there called *The DaVinci Code* written by Dan Brown [It's a best seller]. *The DaVinci Code* is a fictional work about a secret organization called the Priory of Sion, which at one time really did exist, and which celebrates what they call the "sacred feminine," which essentially is goddess worship.

In the book, the Priory of Sion is the keeper of an ancient secret, which is substantiated by treasured documents they've kept in hiding for centuries. It's a

secret that calls into question the truth of the Bible and the identity of Jesus as God's true Son.

These ancient documents prove that Jesus in fact bore a child with Mary Magdalene and their royal bloodline continues today. The Priory of Sion keeps these documents hidden from the church, with the intention of one day revealing to the world the truth about Mary and Jesus and the myth of Christianity.

It's pretty obvious to me that Dan Brown's thinking is faulty. And yet, the alarming thing about this book is that there is just enough reality to give the whole thing an aura of truth. I believe Dan Brown deliberately mixes fact with fiction to give the whole thing an aura of truth.

So, when people pick this book up and read it, it puts them in two minds. Is it true or isn't it?

Some people read this book and believe this stuff wholeheartedly.

Even those who consider themselves Christians have wondered if this might call into question everything they believe.

How do you deal with that? (when you read a book that contradicts what you believe)
How do you deal with faulty thinking dressed up as truth?

There is a show on TV called the Star-gate. The Star-gate is an ancient time-dimensional doorway to the cosmos—the key to opening the Star-gate is the knowledge of ancient writings and star constellations. The fictional Star-gate offers a physical doorway for humans to step through and travel the galaxy.

The premise behind Star-gate is that we are not alone in the universe. At the beginning of antiquity, we were visited by aliens. And these aliens were the gods of our history.

If you watch Star-gate, you will be strongly influenced into thinking that we are not alone in the universe. Moreover, it will call into question your understanding of history.

The producers of Star-gate have subtly woven fact with fiction to give the show an aura of reality.

One viewer said it this way. “The storyline is believable enough to keep you wondering if it could ‘really’ happen.”

You might say, “It’s obvious the show is fictional. Anyone in their right mind would see that the story line just doesn’t add up.”

In a sense, that’s truth. However, the storyline is believable enough to make you wonder if this could ‘really’ happen. I believe the storyline could easily put doubt in your mind concerning history as we know it.

How do you deal with that? (when you constantly watch something that contradicts what you believe) How do you deal with faulty thinking dressed up to give an aura of reality?

When you think about it, we are continually bombarded with faulty thinking.

I was reading an article on creation. The title of the article was ***Creationist Views of the Origin of the Universe, Earth, and Life.***

As I read the article, I got the impression that the article supported the biblical view of creation. After all, it was supposed to be a creationist's view of the origin of the universe, earth and life. However, as I got further into the article, I realized that was not the case. In fact, the writer of the article was very convincing that evolution was the means by which all things came into being.

The article sounded so good. It sounded so accepting, so reasonable, so enlightened. I came away from reading that article thinking that people who hold to creationism must be unscientific, unreasonable and unenlightened.

How do you deal with that? (when you read something that contradicts what you believe) How do you deal with faulty thinking dressed up to give an aura of truth?

We might think this is a modern phenomenon. However, we see that young Timothy faced similar issues in the church at Ephesus.

In fact, Timothy had people in his church who had faulty thinking.

Paul named two of them. Hymenaeus and Philetus taught that the resurrection of the dead had already taken place. The Bible teaches that when Christ returns the dead in Christ will be raised up and joined him in the air. The Bible calls that our blessed hope. But these folks taught a spiritual resurrection. Of course, there is some truth in this. When a nonbeliever becomes a Christian, he is baptized into the death and resurrection of our Lord.

Spiritually speaking, we died with him and we're raised with him to new life. But these folks taught that this spiritual resurrection that you experienced when you were born again is all the resurrection there is going to be.

How did Timothy deal with that sort of faulty thinking?

Someone may say to you, it's ok to drink alcohol. But you know in the back of your mind that may not be the best thing to do.

How do you deal with that?

Your boyfriend may encourage you to get physical in your relationship. But again you know in the back of your mind that is not a good idea.

How do you deal with that? How do you deal with faulty thinking?

Someone might say to you that it's ok to watch OC on TV. However, you know that that show promotes lesbianism. And you know that is not healthy.

How do you deal with that?

Well, the apostle Paul gave young Timothy some good advice in this area, which I believe will help us when we face faulty thinking.

What was that advice?

Well, the apostle Paul encouraged Timothy to face faulty thinking by...

1. Continually reminding people of the word of God (2:14a)

Look at the beginning of verse 14, "Remind them of these things."

One of the reason we gather together as a church is to affirm the truth of God's word over and over again.

It is important that we be grounded in the truth of God's word. And one way to be grounded in truth of God's word is to be reminded continually of the truths in God's word.

With all the alien shows on TV these days, we need to hear over and over again that God created the heavens and the earth (ex nihilo), that God created us from the dust of the God and that God's word is faithful and trustworthy and we can believe it.

With all the pop-psychology around today saying that we should avoid words like sin or sinners, we need to be reminded that we are sinners. And because we are sinners, we are separated from God—that means we need to be redeemed if we want a right relationship with God and a right perspective of the world in which we live.

It is important that we be grounded in the truth of God's word. And that will happen if we remind ourselves continually of the truths in God's word.

Why is it important to be grounded in the truths of God's word? Two reasons:

A. It will help us to avoid faulty thinking (2:16-18)

Look at verse 16a, "But shun profane and vain babblings..."

Paul is not talking about idle chitchat or gossip here although that is bad in the church. No, he is talking about stuff that perverts the truths in God's word.

In other words, avoid faulty thinking...avoid that stuff that perverts the truths in God's word.

Why? Why avoid faulty thinking? Why avoid that stuff that perverts the truths in God's word? Three quick reasons:

- i. It leads to ungodly living (2:16b)

Look at the end of verse 16, “for they will increase to more ungodliness.”

- ii. It eats away at our faith (2:17a)

Look at the beginning of verse 17, “And their message will spread like cancer.”

- iii. It undermines our confidence in God (2:17b-18)

Look at end of verse 17, “Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.”

There is a strong warning here for us. If we continually fill our minds with faulty thinking, then we will reap the consequences.

I started watching *Star-gate SG1*. I enjoyed the show. After all, the storyline was intriguing. But I found the more I filled my mind with the show, I found myself continually thinking about it. I would be reading God’s word and thinking about *Star-gate*. I really believe watching that show was beginning to affect my walk with God. It was in a way undermining my confidence in God. In the end, I thought this was not healthy—to fill my mind with faulty thinking. So I decided to not to watch the show anymore. In fact, I decided to spend some of that time memorizing Scripture.

Also it is important to be grounded in the truths of God’s word because...

- B. It will help us to avoid faulty arguments (2:14b).

Look at end of verse 14, “And with God as your witness, you must warn them not to argue about words. These arguments don’t help anyone. In fact, they ruin everyone who listens to them.”

Paul is not talking about a disagreement per se. No, he's talking about people who want to influence your thinking through word battles...who want to influence your thinking away from biblical truth.

In Timothy's day, people did this by engaging in word battles. People influenced your thinking through debate.

But today it is slightly different. Usually people try to influence your thinking through books.

There are some books I will not read because it would be a waste of time. There are some books I have on my bookshelf that I will not give to people to read because of what they teach.

Honestly, why read a book that argues against the Bible? To me it seems a waste of time.

The word *ruin* here comes from the Greek word *katastrophe*.

In other words, get caught up in faulty arguments and it may lead to a catastrophe.

Summary: Ground yourself in God's word and you will avoid faulty thinking and arguments.

Furthermore, Paul encouraged Timothy to face faulty thinking by...

2. Rightly dividing the word of God (2:15)

Look at verse 15, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

If you want to negate faulty thinking, then rightly divide the word of truth. In other words, diligently study God's word and it will put you straight. To put it another way, spend time in God's word and it will make your path straight.

A young man once said to Dr. Donald Barnhouse, who was a great American preacher. "I would give the world if I knew the Bible like you." Barnhouse said, "that's good because that is exactly what it will cost you."

You know, spending time in God's word will cost you if you want to rightly divide the word of God.

Finally, Paul encouraged Timothy to face faulty thinking by...

3. Building confidence in the word of God (2:19)

Look at the beginning of verse 19, "Nevertheless, the solid foundation of God stands..."

The solid foundation of the truths in God's word stands firm.

People can ridicule God's word until the cows come home. But it makes no difference to the surety of God's word.

As we build confidence in God's word, faulty thinking will not shake us from God's path because we belong to him.

Look at the end of verse 19, "The Lord knows who are His, and, let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

We belong to God and if we put our confidence in His word, then we will not be shaken from His path for us.

In fact, we will live lives honoring to Him.

Conclusion:

What are you filling your mind with?

Is it faulty thinking or is it the Word of God?