

More Than Study: Lessons From 2 Timothy 2:15

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

σπούδασον σεαυτὸν δόκιμον παραστήσαι τῷ θεῷ, ἐργάτην ἀνεπαίσχυντον, ὀρθοτομοῦντα τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας.

THE RECIPIENT: Timothy

THE CHALLENGE:

Be diligent (x!) (σπούδασον – spoudason) – Timothy is commanded to make every effort. To be diligent is to keep at it. It contrasts the possibility of laziness and inadequate effort (and comparable results); not half-hearted or half-way; “make every effort”; “spare no effort”

2 Tim 4:9 - **Be diligent** to come to me quickly; ^{NAU} **Make every effort** to come to me soon;

2 Tim 4:21a - **Do your utmost** to come before winter. ^{NAU} **Make every effort** to come before winter.

Titus 3:12b - ...**be diligent** to come to me at Nicopolis..., ^{NAU} ...**make every effort** to come to me at Nicopolis...,

2 Tim 1:17 - but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out **very zealously** and found me. (*Adverb form*)

“Timothy spoke the same language as Paul; we only pretend to. Timothy was Paul’s traveling companion; they shared the same Jewish background, had invaded the same Gentile culture, and witnessed the same miracles.

“We have none of this in common with Paul. We are removed by twenty centuries, we speak a different language, do not live in the same culture or continent; we do not come from the same background. For us to grasp the *full* intent of Paul’s message, that sacred deposit, *requires—absolutely requires—diligent study.*” [*Conservative Theological Journal Volume 1 (1:109-115)*. Tyndale Theological Seminary.]

"They say that genius is an infinite capacity for taking pains," he remarked with a smile. "It's a very bad definition, but it does apply to detective work." *Sherlock Holmes, Study in Scarlet, Chapter 3*

The only people who achieve much are those who want knowledge so much that they'll seek it even when conditions are unfavorable. Favorable conditions never come. - C.S. Lewis

Grasp the subject, the words will follow. – *Cato the Elder (234-149 BCE)*

to present (παραστήσαι – parastesai) – inevitable accountability for teaching; God will hold teachers accountable; we are doing to present our results before God!

Rom 6:13 - And do not **present** your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

Rom 6:16, 19 - Do you not know that to whom you **present** yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? ¹⁹ I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you **presented** your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now **present** your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.

Rom 12:1 - I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you **present** your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

Rom 14:10 - But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all **stand** before the judgment seat of Christ.

yourself (σεαυτὸν – seauton) – actual second word in Greek – emphasized point; personal responsibility; in ministry, you are first responsible for yourself

Acts 20:28 - Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

Tim 4:16 - Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

approved (δόκιμον – dokimon) – if there is approval, there is disapproval; there is a right way, and wrong ways to study the Bible **to God**, (τῷ θεῷ) – our only true Approver (2 Tim 4:1-2)

2 Tim 4:1 - I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:

a worker (ἐργάτην – ergaten) – this is hard work, labor; not the easy road or glorious road if seen properly; it is more tedious labor than skill

Matt 9:37-38 - Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly *is* plentiful, but the **laborers** are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out **laborers** into His harvest."

Matt 10:10 - nor bag for *your* journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a **worker** is worthy of his food.

Matt 20:1-2 - For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire **laborers** for his vineyard. Now when he had agreed with the **laborers** for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

Matt 20:8 - So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the **laborers** and give them *their* wages, beginning with the last to the first.'

1 Tim 5:17 - Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor [κοπιᾶω - kopiao] in the word and doctrine.

(κοπιῶντες participle present active nom masc plural from κοπιᾶω (GING 1. *become weary, tire*; 2. *work hard, toil, strive, struggle. Labor for*)

1 Tim 5:18 - For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it reads out the grain," and, "The **laborer** is worthy of his wages."

James 5:4 - Indeed the wages of the **laborers** who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

The apostle continues on with a description of the person approved by God. He is a workman who has no need to be ashamed. He is unashamed because he knows that God approves of his work, regardless of what anyone else thinks of it. The imagery of a workman is not particularly flattering. Paul is not speaking here of a craftsman, an eloquent speaker, or high-paid professional. Indeed, the word "workman" (ἐργατης) is most often used of an agricultural laborer, a grape-picker. The imagery here is not that of great skill, but of deep integrity. The workman does not need to be ashamed because he's put in an honest day's work. This is what God requires of us: our greatest ability is our availability. [*Conservative Theological Journal Volume 1 (1:109-115). Tyndale Theological Seminary.*]

who does not need to be ashamed, (ἀνεπαίσχυντον – anepaisxunton) – shame is possible from unacceptable work;

1 John 2:28 – And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not **be ashamed** before Him at His coming.

rightly dividing (ὀρθοτομοῦντα – orthotomounta - orthotomeo) – present tense → ongoing responsibility; suggests that there are wrong ways to divide; suggests that inaccuracy is certain without diligent effort

The mark of a faithful teacher or preacher is his **handling accurately the word of truth**. **Handling accurately** translates a participle of *orthotomeo*, which means literally to cut straight. It was used of a craftsman cutting a straight line, of a farmer plowing a straight furrow, of a mason setting a straight line of bricks, or of workmen building a straight road. Metaphorically, it was used of carefully performing any task. Because Paul was a tentmaker by trade (Acts 18:3), he may have had in mind the careful, straight cutting and sewing of the many pieces of leather or cloth necessary to make a tent. (*MacArthur Commentary – 2 Timothy*)

2 Pet 3:16 - as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable [people] twist to their own destruction, as [they do] also the rest of the Scriptures.

the word (τὸν λόγον – ton logon) – the only focus; the message, the word, a unit, goes together, and is interpreted as a unit

Heb 4:12 - For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

2 Tim 4:2 Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

of truth. (τῆς ἀληθείας – tes aletheias) – the only source of truth, when rightly divided; It is only the truth that sanctifies, not what we erroneously think is the truth.

John 8:32 - And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

John 17:17 - Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

Everyone may be entitled to his own opinion but everyone is not entitled to his own truth. Truth is but one. – *Dong Grootius*

Overlapping Observations and Statements

1. As a book written to a pastor, this provides motivation for future leaders to reach the high standard.
2. This illustrates the skill, effort, and time necessary to study the Word. It is very difficult, not very easy.
3. This suggests the high regard we should give to the Word of God. Not just anyone should handle it.
4. This suggests the ever-present temptation to cut corners, to take it easy, to not do full study. Timothy was told this when he was around 40 years old and after being with Paul for around 20 years! It is an ongoing task.
5. This implies the grave responsibility of pastors/teachers to get it right. Approval comes not from dividing the Word, but through dividing the Word rightly. Approval does not come from intent, but from effort which yields proper results. Right action, done rightly, with the right attitude.
6. This coordinates with the high regard we are to have for pastors who do it right & well (1 Tim 5:17). It makes sense.
7. This coordinates with the appreciation for the nature of verbal, plenary inspiration of Scripture. It only matters if the Word is accurately understood down to the "jot and tittle" of revelation. Teaching something that is not accurate is to teach something erroneous and harmful, or to remove the intended benefit.
8. This provides the underlying argument for the restriction found in James 3:1 and the danger of teachers who do not know of which they speak (1 Tim 1).
9. This illustrates the sensitization of the leader's responsibility to protect the flock. You must know the Word to be able to protect the flock.
10. This defines our responsibility to do our own accurate study (as opposed to repeating other's work).
11. This holds us to our responsibility to be approved of God and not worry about others. (1 Thes. 2:4; Matt. 25:21)
12. This suggests the danger of using curriculum, books, or Bible studies, and the caution that is required to use them.