

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

JULY 1 - 5, 2019

A close-up photograph of a succulent plant with thick, green, pointed leaves. The image is overlaid with a geometric pattern of semi-transparent triangles in various shades of green and yellow. A series of dotted lines in white and orange connect several points across the succulent, forming a star-like or web-like pattern.

IN COMMON

SERMON SERIES

June 2 - July 28

MONDAY

2 Timothy 2:14-17 | Common Authority

It is difficult to get through any day without being subject to some form of authority. Imagine if we were to ignore the authority of the law when driving, and stop signs, traffic lights, speed limits, and other forms of road authority were ignored! We recognize, almost without thinking, that as a society and as individuals we are bound in life by authority.

The dilemma is that authority is not common in every society, every culture, or every organization. In fact, it is not even common in the church with multiple interpretations of Scripture and living expectations. Paul was very aware that this was true in the church at Ephesus, where the Gospel was being diluted as they quarreled about words. The church in Ephesus, like churches and Christian groups today, was divided through disputes over words and not the core essentials to a relationship.

Church history has many examples, but one illustrating this issue of “word squabbles” occurred during the days of the Reformation. Toward the end of his life, Martin Luther became engaged in a controversy with the Swiss Christians over the meaning of the Lord’s words, “This is my body,” when Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper. Those words became the subject of a great controversy that split the force of the Reformation. Under Martin Luther’s teaching, the Lutherans maintained that those words were to be taken literally (that the bread really becomes, or is, the body of Christ), while the Swiss Christians maintained that the words were a figurative expression (that the words meant, “this represents my body”). Both sides argued at great length, and the Reformation was almost brought to a halt by this controversy.

So, what do we learn from this today? We as Christians and as a body of Christians (a church) have only one common authority, the Word of God, given to us through the Scripture. This one common authority is good for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training (2 Timothy 3:16). Let's not waste words on what is different, but what we as the Church of God believe and know, the authority of the Word of God.

QUESTIONS

Is the Word of God, your Bible, the first place you go to when in a place of disagreement or decision-making?

PRAYERS FOR HARAMBEE HOUSE

Pray for Harambee House, which serves a 12-block target area in Northwest Pasadena, a location once called "blood corner." With decades of love, dedication and service, conditions have improved for kids, students, families, and the community.

TUESDAY

2 Timothy 2:14 | To be Reminded and Charged!

As the Battle of Trafalgar was about to begin, Admiral Nelson came across two officers of his own flagship who were arguing hotly and about to draw their swords to fight each other. Nelson stepped between them and said, “Stop!” Then, pointing to the French fleet, he said, “There is the enemy.”

Sometimes as Christians we, like the Christians in Ephesus, need to be reminded that we have more in common than we are different. We really should spend less energy being engaged in debates that get so intense and so hot that we sometimes forget what the Lord has purposed us to do. The Kingdom of God has never grown through debate. As Paul states, it “does no good” (v. 14). No witness before the world is increased because of church squabbles, but quite the opposite: “it ruins hearers.”

The word *ruins* here (“only ruins the hearers”) is literally the word “catastrophe.” Church quarrels can lead to catastrophic events. Some years ago, a story circulated about a church that got into a major quarrel over whether to have a Christmas tree in the sanctuary. One group contended that Christmas trees were of pagan origin, so to have one in the church would be bowing to a pagan practice. The other group thought that having one was a pleasant custom which they had grown up with since childhood, and there was nothing wrong with the practice. That side got a tree, decorated it, and set it up in the church basement. When the other faction arrived, they grabbed the tree, lights and all, and dragged it out into the parking lot. The other faction then took the tree

and dragged it back into the church. A fight resulted, right outside the church doors, and somebody had to call the police! The police came and locked the doors, and all this was frontline news the next day.

That is the kind of foolish, silly “catastrophe” that can result when Christians engage in word battles that carry them much farther than they ever intended to go. Paul says to Timothy, “*Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers.*” As believers in one God, one Savior, and one salvation, let this verse be a reminder to us today that we have one authority, and that is the Word of God.

QUESTIONS

As you consider your day and you can make a choice, could you commit to conversations and discussions that only show God’s work in your life?

PRAYERS FOR HARAMBEE HOUSE

Pray for Harambee House to experience the fullness of what God has for the families of Northwest Pasadena.

WEDNESDAY

2 Timothy 2:15 | One Approved by God

Many a parent, grandparent, or adult caregiver has had to intervene in a children's squabble, generally over something menial, in order to restore "peace" in the home. Experience teaches us that stopping the squabble is a temporary solution; there really has to be some "AA" or "attitude adjustment" to stop the fight from starting again.

Paul provides an important insight to how we as believers may adjust our own church, denomination, or doctrinal squabbles in this letter to Timothy. Paul suggests that the standard we are seeking is the approval of God, and not men (v. 15). Imagine that standard to measure our day? What would God think of what I said today, or would God approve of the position I took in the discussion, argument, or decision today? If God was physically in the house, car, classroom, or meeting, would He have approved of what I said, or the way I acted? And how do I know to what standard is God holding me to be a "worker who has no need to be ashamed"? Well, the answer is obvious: the standard is the "word of truth," Scripture.

We cannot present ourselves as approved by God unless we understand clearly, and obey without question, the Word of God. Timothy is challenged by Paul to work hard (do your best) to understand the words of Scripture; to be sure that when he then and we now speak and take a position, that it is true by one common authority, the Word of God. Paul urges Timothy to be "a workman who has no

need to be ashamed,” because he implores Timothy to put in the time and work at discovering what Scripture really means—and not just what it means, but how it is interpreted correctly. In theological terms this is what we call exegesis and homiletics today, **hermeneutics** being the field of study which is concerned with how we interpret the Bible, and **exegesis** being the actual interpretation of the Bible by drawing the meaning out of the Biblical text.

Ultimately, the charge to Timothy is the same charge that each of us needs to respond to today and every day. To glorify our Lord and to be a true witness of His lordship over our lives, we need to be approved and not ashamed. To do this, we must diligently read, study, understand, and live our lives according to the Holy Scriptures—the one and only standard of God’s approval.

QUESTIONS

Whose truth are you listening to in living a life that would meet God’s approval?

PRAYERS FOR HARAMBEE HOUSE

Pray for the Harambee staff and volunteers and for encouragement and energy to pour into the families they serve.

THURSDAY

2 Timothy 2:16 | Examining Scripture - the Antidote to Babble

“There is no God” is the conclusion of the celebrated physicist, Stephen Hawking, which is quoted in his final book published in 2018. The book, which was completed by his family after his death, presents answers to the questions that Hawking said he received most during his time on Earth. Scripture appears to confirm this conclusion of Hawking when we read these words in Psalm 14:1: “*There is no God.*” NOT TRUE! But this is the challenge of many believers today, in that we often accept “irreverent” babble such as this without investigating and knowing the Word of God. Psalm 14:1, in fact, says: “*The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good.*” A phrase from Scripture out of context, which is easy to do if we are not disciplined in our study of God’s Word, can lead to endless and meaningless discussions.

There is nothing more important in our personal relationship with Christ than to read and study His Word. Beginning in Genesis 3, Satan has construed the Word of God into a form that appears on the surface to be good, but it is not what is God’s Word. This technique was repeated in the testing of Jesus in the wilderness—it is a subtle technique still used with us believers today. How easily it might happen to us if we are not constantly in the Word of God.

Knowing the Word of God and being sure of its authenticity is not the pastor’s role—it is our responsibility. It would do us well

to read again the narrative of Paul and Silas in Berea, where Paul specifically mentions the Bereans and their intense study of the Word of God. In Acts 17:11 Scripture records, *“Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.”*

What a strong example to us as believers today. The Berean Jews examined the Scriptures—not just read them or studied them, but examined them. How our knowledge of Christ would grow if this was our discipline. And then we read that this was done on a regular basis, “every day.” This is the remedy to “godless chatter”—the daily examination of God’s Word!

QUESTIONS

If God’s Word is His voice to our life, do we spend enough time each day “examining” the Scriptures?

PRAYERS FOR HARAMBEE HOUSE

Pray for the families that Harambee serves, that they may be filled with God’s love and grace.

FRIDAY

2 Timothy 2:17 | The Word of Truth

Surgeon Julian John Chisolm, a surgeon in the Civil War, was quoted as saying, “The limbs of soldiers are in as much danger from the ardor of young surgeons as from the missiles of the enemy.” (1864). Over 700,000 combined Union and Confederate soldiers perished in the four years of that war. More than two thirds of those died through disease and surgical infection, not to death on the battlefield. Surgeons faced the insurmountable problem of treating infection from wounds sustained during battle and gangrene was the worst. The solution to gangrene was amputation, and it was done quickly. Gangrene was—and still can be—a deadly disease caused by the death of body tissue due to a lack of blood flow or a serious bacterial infection. Before the use of antibiotics, the method of stopping the fast spreading of this disease was amputation.

Paul uses this vivid picture of spreading gangrene to show how destructive irreverent babble (arguments and disagreements that were not from God’s Word) is to the Body of Christ. We need to have only one source of healthy “blood flow” and this is the authority of one word, the Word of God. This is what gives life to us as believers and to the Church as a whole.

Hymenaeus was one of those mentioned who had chosen not to follow God’s Word. We read in 1 Timothy 1:19-20 that two of those who had “*rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith*” were Hymenaeus and Alexander. Paul obviously had little time for men

like these as we read further, “*whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.*” This is a serious issue to step out of the authority of God and His Word!

In the modern world, where a position like this might be seen as judgmental and harsh, we can only commit to what we have learned from Paul’s wisdom in this note to Timothy. Know the Word of God; it is the only authority we need for daily living. Examine the Word of God; it is the standard for all our conversations and decisions. The promise we have is that this is the standard for which God encourages us to do our best, as this is the standard that meets His approval. And His approval, an audience of one, is all that we live for.

QUESTIONS

What do I need to change in my relationships and conversations to be sure that I am only advocating for God? What needs to be “amputated” from my conversations to bring Him glory wherever and whenever possible?

PRAYERS FOR HARAMBEE HOUSE

Pray for Harambee House in the coming months as its summer programming kicks off.



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