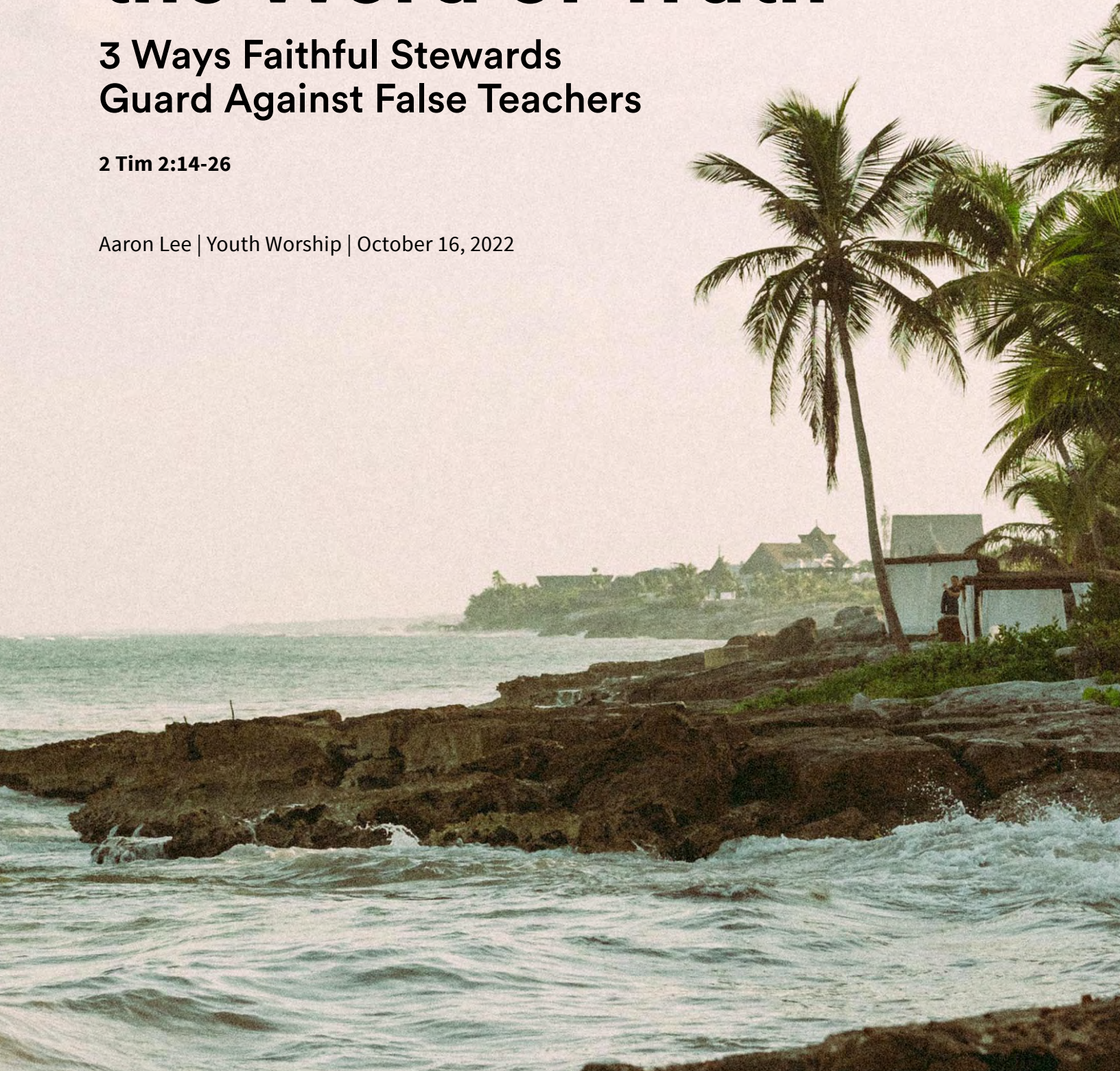


# Rightly Handling the Word of Truth

## 3 Ways Faithful Stewards Guard Against False Teachers

2 Tim 2:14-26

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# Introduction

We've all heard scary stories about pastors and leaders who abuse their power. They tear churches apart and cause Christians to stumble. How can we protect ourselves from false teachers? And how can we guard our hearts against the toxic thoughts and ideas of the world?

Do you remember what Satan the Serpent said in the Garden? He was causing Eve to question God's word. Satan said, "Did God actually say you shall not eat of this fruit? Is that what he really said? Is that what he meant?" Adam and Eve were caught. They were trapped. They couldn't escape this snare. The Devil was the first false teacher, and he is the father of lies. He means to murder by way of words.

We'll find some help in our passage today as we seek to be free from all false teachers.

## Context

Our passage today is 2 Tim 2:14-26. 2 Timothy is the Apostle Paul's final letter. Writing from prison, Paul is giving his last words to Timothy, a young pastor. What we'll read today applies to more than just pastors. It's an example and calling for every Christian to follow.

## Compare and Contrast

Our text today is a classic compare and contrast passage. We're going to start with false teachers, and then we're going to compare and contrast them with faithful stewards. Paul will present to us the problem of the false teachers, and then he will tell Timothy to guard against them by being a faithful steward.

In fact, we're going to see 3 descriptions or characteristics or qualities of faithful stewards – being sanctified vessels, pure-hearted servants, and skilled workers. These are the 3 ways faithful stewards guard against false teachers.

1. False teachers
2. Faithful stewards
  - A. Sanctified vessels
  - B. Pure-hearted servants
  - C. Skilled workers



# 1. False Teachers

## Quarrel About Words

*Remind them of these things, and **charge them before God not to quarrel about words**, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers. 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. (2 Timothy 2:16–19)*

We begin with the false teachers. Paul tells Timothy to remind and to charge the church, the congregation, before God – not to quarrel about words. There was a problem in the church. People were contending, bickering, and disputing trivial things. This is referring to specifically getting worked up over words. These quarrels were actually insignificant controversies. They were simply meaningless arguments. Have you ever had an argument about something so silly like who's the greatest of all time? Sometimes these arguments get heated, and they start becoming personal. Anger starts becoming irrational. Do you see how these quarrels lead to contention? They do no good. They ruin the hearers. These controversies become catastrophes. This is what the false teachers want, and when this happens in the church, they destroy, overthrow, and pervert the faith of God's people. Here is the heart of a false teacher:

*he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for **controversy** and for **quarrels about words**, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions (1 Timothy 6:4)*

*But avoid foolish **controversies**, genealogies, dissensions, and **quarrels about the law**, for they are unprofitable and worthless. (Titus 3:9)*

These false teachers are puffed up with conceit. They are proud and arrogant. They deviate and wander away from God's word, steering towards the shallow and superficial. They say things like "I follow Apollos" or "I follow Paul," instead of focusing on Jesus. They understand nothing, and they have an unhealthy craving for controversy. They want to cause trouble. They want to make the sheep unsure about God's word. You can see why Paul says "Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies (2 Timothy 2:23). They are unprofitable and worthless. Don't deal with these dangerous thoughts, questions, and ideas. Stay away from them. Don't even associate with them. Let's see what else he says.

## Irreverent Babble

*But **avoid irreverent babble**, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some. 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." (2 Timothy 2:16–19)*

Timothy is also to avoid irreverent babble. This is talk that is godless, irreligious, profane, worldly. It is irreverent, or disrespects, what God clearly says is the truth. Have you ever heard someone go on and on about their opinions without being able to back it up? That's what babble is. It's just spitting out thoughts. It's word vomit. And these false teachers keep talking but never prove their points with the Bible. It's using catch phrases or slogans that might sound smart – but discernment would find them deceiving. “Speak your truth.” “My body, my choice.” False teachers are ravenous wolves. They peddle God's word for their own profit. This has no place in the church. Avoiding irreverent babble means to actively place yourself around it – to get away from it. To shun it. And the reason is clear: it leads to ungodliness, and this type of talk spreads like gangrene. “Gangrene is death of body tissue due to a lack of blood flow or a serious bacterial infection. Gangrene commonly affects the arms and legs, including the toes and fingers. It can also occur in the muscles and in organs inside the body.” This bacterial infection will spread, affecting the entire body of Christ, and it will swerve you from the faith. Look at what happened to Hymeneus:

*This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made **shipwreck** of their faith, among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme. (1 Timothy 1:18–20)*

*But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are **unprofitable** and **worthless**. As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is **warped and sinful**; he is **self-condemned**. (Titus 3:9–11)*

Those who stir up division with their irreverent babble are warped, sinful, and self-condemned. What exactly were Hymeneus and Philetus quarreling about? They believed that the resurrection had already happened. Paul had encountered this same problem and preached against it in 1 Corinthians 15:12-19. And Paul tells Timothy to combat this with truth. Timothy is to present himself as one approved – that is, after being tested – who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. We'll come back to this later. For now, know that Paul is confident in the face of false teachers. He says that the church is a firm foundation that will stand and is sealed because "The Lord knows those who are His," for "everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." That's a reference to Numbers 16, where God's judgment came on the corrupt. Paul says that God knows who are his, and he will keep them safe. In this dangerous, deadly situation where false teachers are polluting God's people – there is still hope.

## Application

What type of talk, conversations, quarrels, and controversies do you find yourself in? What type of worldviews do you expose yourself to? We live in Southern California. Los Angeles and Hollywood are our local landmarks. Our culture does not believe in personal sin or the authority of God's Word. Take a close look at your heart. Have you given in to cultural narratives? Do you believe that a good life is all about making the most money, finding fame and popularity, and experiencing what only the rich and famous can afford? Have you become so superficial that you judge people on their fashion or followers? Man looks at outside appearances, but God looks at the heart. Will you keep wrestling, or will you surrender to scripture? There comes a point where you have to say enough is enough. You will stop entertaining these thoughts. You will put an end to arguing, and you will submit to the authority of God's word.

Do you see how Paul told Timothy to avoid irreverent babble – talk that is godless, irreligious, profane, worldly? I want you to think very critically about the voices and people who you allow to speak into your life. Do your friends speak crudely or profanely? Are there influencers who make their platform about berating and bullying people? In some of these cases, you need to do more than just avoid. You need to cut these people out of your life. False teachings will swerve you from the truth. They'll flip your faith.

False teachers, along with their thoughts and ideas, will corrupt the church and lay waste to your faith.





## 2. Faithful Stewards

Faced with the problem of false teachers, Paul gives us a solution. Timothy is to stand against them by being a faithful steward. We're going to see 3 different descriptions or characteristics or qualities of faithful stewards. And the reason why I say faithful steward is because of an earlier verse in 2 Timothy:

*By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you. (2 Timothy 1:14)*

Timothy is charged to guard the good deposit that was entrusted to him. The good deposit is the Gospel, and he is to guard it like a steward. He is to keep it safe. He is to use it wisely. Until Jesus comes back or until he takes us home to Heaven, we all must be faithful stewards of the Gospel of grace.

### A. Sanctified Vessels

We'll start by examining an illustration, and it's a picture of the church and how Christians are to be sanctified vessels:

*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. 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. (2 Timothy 2:20-21)*

There are gold and silver vessels, and there are wood and clay vessels. The gold and silver are for honorable use, the wood and clay are for dishonorable use. This analogy is easy to understand. We have honorable vessels that are made of gold and silver. We use them to serve food and drinks. And then you have the dishonorable vessels made out of wood and clay. We use these for trash and waste. Do you have clothes or shoes that you set apart as special? This is how our life is to be set apart for Christ.

Doctrinal error and moral impurity are what Paul deems dishonorable. It's disgraceful and shameful. But if you are cleansed and set apart and "depart from iniquity," you prepare yourself to be useful to the master by bringing honor, value, and respect to him and to every good work he would have you do. A worthy life is lived for Christ.

*For to me **to live is Christ**, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. (Philippians 1:21-22)*

For Paul, everything was about Jesus. From the moment he was saved, he dedicated his entire life to the Lord, ready and willing to deal with intense suffering and persecution. This was not pretense. He really did die for the cause of Christ. And even in death, he still gave God glory – happy to come home to his King.

## Application

Are you prepared to be useful to God? Have you truly dedicated your entire life to Christ? Are you ready to work, or do you make excuses? Are you wholly available to him, or do you let things like academics and extracurriculars get in the way of giving God your all? You cannot serve both God and money. You cannot serve both God and school. You cannot serve both God and your grades. You must have one Master. Our church is blessed to have multiple ministries throughout the week where God's people can meet. Consider coming to prayer meetings or Friday night fellowship. Prioritize God. Prioritize his people.

Once you have dedicated your entire life to God, are you ready to risk it all? Are you ready to put your reputation on the line when you choose not to conform to this world? Will you confront those who continue to go against the truth of God's word? Are you willing to forsake your family and friends when they say that they can't stand Christians? Or are you too comfortable? Maybe you've been too relaxed in regards to your own sin. You've allowed sin to crouch at your door, and it is eager to control you. Will you cut out certain movies, games, books, or apps if they've caused you to sin? Will you admit your sin to others and ask for accountability? Satan wants to sift you like wheat. Resist the Devil and he will flee from you.

Faithful stewards are sanctified vessels – dedicated to God and ready to risk it all.

## B. Pure-Hearted Servants

*So flee **youthful passions** and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant **controversies**; you know that they breed **quarrels**. (2 Timothy 2:22-24)*

Next, Paul tells Timothy to flee youthful passions. What are these youthful passions? With the context of controversies and quarrels in mind, we can point the finger at watching our words. Maybe it's related to having a temper, or complaining, or gossip. Have you ever found yourself talking back to parents and teachers, being snarky or rude, grumbling and complaining, or even putting down others? Instead, pursue righteousness, faith, love, and



peace. We can go over all of those words, but they go along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. So we're talking about being pure in heart – undefiled and unstained by the world. Set your heart on God. Paul talked about this before in 1 Timothy 4:12:

*Let no one despise you for your **youth**, but set the believers an example in **speech**, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. (1 Timothy 4:12).*

We now see a pure-hearted way to serve others as opposed to the false teachers who only serve themselves. You are to watch your words and use them wisely.

*So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a **pure heart**. Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but **kind** to everyone, able to teach, **patiently enduring evil**, correcting his opponents with **gentleness**. 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, after being captured by him to do his will. (2 Timothy 2:22-26)*

Notice how this is about having the character of Christ: Be kind, be patient, be gentle. Do you have genuine care, especially when it comes to correcting? You can imagine how heated it must get. False teachers are evil, they are opponents – but they are ultimately snared by the Devil. We don't correct people because we want to win an argument – we correct people because we want to win them for Christ.

People are captured by Satan's lies, and the only way of escape is by the truth of God's word. That is why, out of all of these qualities, Paul still places the criteria of being able to teach. Nevertheless, look at the importance of character when it comes to correcting others:

*but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, 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** (1 Peter 3:15)*

## Application

We talked about fleeing youthful passions, and I want to highlight how it says to "pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace along with those who call on the Lord." Along with those who call on the Lord. With others. Among others. In community. A tendency for young people is to think that they're right. And it's good to pursue what is right. But it must be pursued alongside

others. It must be done in the context of community. You belong with other believers. I want to give a word of encouragement to all of you who are here, and especially to those in my Sunday School class. Sunday mornings are premium real estate in your week. You could be catching up on sleep. You could be studying. I want to encourage you to keep coming to church. Don't forsake meeting together. Spur each other on. We are privileged to be a part of a multigenerational church. There are older, wiser saints you can learn from. And you can serve and set an example to those who are younger than you. The family of God stays together.

And after that encouragement, I want to give you a challenge. Do you serve God and others with a pure heart? Let's start at home. Are you willing to serve your family? Will you help around the house? Or do you complain when you are asked to do chores? How about at church? You can come to church without actually worshiping. There is a way to serve where you are actually serving yourself. Will you welcome the newcomer? Will you reach out to someone who had a rough week? What about in your community, at school? Is your disposition to be kind and loving to others? Will you help those who are struggling, or are you cutthroat in competition? A heart broken before the Lord is a heart that breaks for others.

Faithful stewards are pure-hearted servants, genuinely caring for others while displaying the character of Christ.

## C. Skilled Workers

I'm going to take us back to the top of our passage, where Paul exhorted Timothy:

*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.** (2 Timothy 2:16-19)*

Paul tells Timothy: Give everything you got so that when you stand before God, he approves of your work. You want to hear God say "well done." You want to present it proudly. Have you ever had to present a project or turn in a paper where you know you did a good job? This is what it means to be unashamed of your work. And what exactly does this worker do? The worker rightly handles the word of truth. This is a craftsman, someone who cuts straight, who sets forth without distortion. The skilled worker rightly handles scripture with accuracy, boldness, and clarity. It is particularly important for you to see that some of Paul's last words echo the words of Christ, as teaching is commanded in our great commission:

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching** them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)*

Earlier in our study, we saw that God’s pure-hearted servant must be able to teach. Skilled at instructing. While all Christians should be skilled at sharing, teaching is the distinctive power of a pastor. Pastors are primarily teachers. They shepherd with scripture. They guide you with God’s word. They are competent, careful, and caring. And they don’t miss the point of the Bible – that you would believe in Jesus.

## Application

Let’s start with an easy application. Do you even care about God’s word? This is the one weapon that you have to fight against false teachers and the lies of the world. The Sword of the Spirit. The Word of Truth. You need to read your Bible. Maybe the concept of reading the entire Bible is intimidating. If you don’t know where to begin, go through the Gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Read through Paul’s letters to the churches of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians. Start there, and then sink your teeth into the Old Testament. If you are a worship leader or an artist of any kind, soak yourself in the Psalms. If you want to meet strong women of the faith, work your way through Ruth and Esther. And if you really want to build some spiritual muscle, eat the meat of Romans, Hebrews, Isaiah, and Daniel.

Once you have settled that you care about God’s word enough to read it, do you care to get it right? Do you care about correct interpretation? Do you seek to apply God’s word to your life? Can you lead and instruct others safely using scripture? We all have to start somewhere. Grab a study Bible and read through the notes and check the cross-references. Start memorizing, meditating, and making connections. Listen to sermons and see how they’re structured. Ask questions in Sunday School and don’t settle for mediocre small groups. Take the Bible to task. God’s word will not return empty.

Faithful stewards are skilled workers, laboring with the Law of the Lord, leading others to Jesus.





# Big Idea

God gives us 3 ways faithful stewards can guard against false teachers: being sanctified vessels, pure-hearted servants, and skilled workers. These faithful stewards of the gospel are dedicated to God, ready to risk it all. They genuinely care for others while displaying the character of Christ. And they labor with the law of the Lord, leading others to Jesus.

This is our big idea: God calls faithful stewards to guard against false teachers. Faithful stewards are called to be shepherds, guarding God's sheep, protecting the flock. He summons his shepherds, strategically placing them in the church, with a standard to hold. By being sanctified vessels, pure-hearted servants, and skilled workers, God calls faithful stewards to guard against false teachers.

# Gospel

To prevent our stewardship from turning into pride, it's important that we look to Jesus, our Chief Shepherd. He was headed for the cross, and he wanted to teach his disciples one last lesson. He said:

*You call me '**Teacher**' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and **Teacher**, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an **example** that you should do as I have done for you. (John 13:13-15)*

The true Teacher is a servant. He serves his students. Jesus was washing the dirty feet of his disciples, setting an example of humble service. But he was also teaching that they had to be clean. They needed to be washed by his blood. The same lesson applies to you today. Come to Christ and be clean. Your sins can be forgiven. This is the greatest lesson that anyone can ever learn: If you believe and confess that Jesus is the Son of God, that he died for your sins, and that he resurrected again – you will be saved. You will experience true and full life today, and you will have a home with him in Heaven.

*The **blood** of Jesus his Son **cleanses** us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to **cleanse** us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:7)*

If we're honest with ourselves, we sometimes see false teachings in the thoughts and ideas from our own hearts. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick. But God has the cure to our own gangrenous lies. We can break away from our bondage. We can escape from the dungeons of our own devices. We can flee from false teachers and false teachings. Continue to look to the Lamb of God.

## Applications

Here are several broad applications from our text today.

Start by appreciating your pastors. After seeing what we've learned in our passage, it would be wrong to not give thanks to God for our pastors. Show them that you care. A practical way to care for them is to pray for them. My family prays for our pastors every Tuesday. Our church has staff meetings every Tuesday, so we take the time to pray for them as they plan and prepare to lead God's people.

Next, arm yourself with truth. Commit to coming to church, but also keep your heart and mind engaged with truth throughout the week. As the Social Media Officer, I try to provide a variety of resources for you. Our church offers different podcasts, and I also link to some great articles and online materials – including books, videos, and more. The Internet can be an incredible tool to force you forward in your faith.

Finally, assess for false teachings and faulty worldviews. Constantly be on guard for creeping thoughts and slippery ideas. Think about the messages and meanings behind your favorite shows and movies. Train your mind to see what the news is really communicating. Everyone has an agenda. Commercials, ads, and sponsored posts can slowly pollute your mind. They will poison your heart. Nothing is neutral. There is dark, and there is light. Paul left us with this warning so that we would pay attention.

# Conclusion

We've all heard scary stories about pastors and leaders who abuse their power. They tear churches apart and cause Christians to stumble. How can we protect ourselves from false teachers? And how can we guard our hearts against the toxic thoughts and ideas of the world? God is not caught off guard. He isn't afraid or worried. God calls faithful stewards to guard against false teachers. No false teacher, thought, or idea will be able to snatch you out of the sovereign, saving hands of Jesus.

Adam and Eve failed to combat the false teaching of the deceptive serpent. They were unable to correct their opponent. But there is one who is a true and better Teacher. When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, Satan took him to the holy city and placed him at the top of the temple, saying: "If you are the Son of God, if you really want to prove who you are, throw yourself down." And he quoted Psalm 91, saying: "The angels will save you." But if you go back and you read Psalm 91, you'll see that Satan took this verse out of context. He misused it to manipulate Jesus (ESV Study Bible). But our Lord did not lose. He did not fail. He guards against false teaching by rightly handling the word of truth, quoting Deuteronomy 6:16, saying: "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test." (Matthew 4:5-7). Satan, the first false teacher, is checkmated by the Master.

Jesus is more than just a good teacher. He is wisdom. He is knowledge. As opposed to everything that is false, he is the truth. If you know Jesus, you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.





# A Teacher and a King

What a privilege it is  
To have the word of God!  
It softens hardened hearts,  
Renews our mind and thoughts.

Like a tree that's planted  
By living water streams,  
The man who loves the law  
Is blessed, unwavering.

It's living and it's active,  
And sharper than a sword.  
It leads us when we stray –  
And guides us back on course.

Reflecting like a mirror,  
It shows us of our sin.  
Revealing and exposing  
The wickedness within.

But if we're found despairing  
With broken hearts, contrite –  
His word is reassuring:  
Our God will not despise.

You'll find a risen savior,  
A teacher and a king.  
His words are everlasting:  
Children, taste and see!

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