



40 Rules for Christian Ministry

By

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Now that we know how to be saved, how to study the Bible, and the importance of serving God – let's look at the process of doing just that – serving God. I'm going to share with you 40 Rules for Christian Ministry. I did not make up these rules. They come directly from the Apostle Paul, which means they come directly from God.

I chose these particular rules because they are in Paul's final letter. He was in a Roman prison – just days or weeks from dying for preaching the Gospel. I believe Paul wanted to share the most important things that Timothy would need to know to continue the ministry they had shared for many years.

Keep in mind that these are 'rules' – not suggestions. Christianity is not a 'cafeteria service' where you can pick and choose how you serve God. God is not in the 'cafeteria' business. He wants His people to obey Him, bring glory to His Name, and finish the work He gave them to do. The sooner Christians understand and do that the better.

Rule #1

Have genuine faith

Paul noted that Timothy's faith in Christ was genuine. The Greek word is *anupokritos* and means 'without hypocrisy, sincere, unfeigned.' Christians cannot have a genuine ministry unless they have a genuine faith in Jesus Christ. One of the reasons I eventually became an atheist as a teenager was because of the hypocrisy I saw in church leaders. Their 'faith' did not appear to be genuine. I don't remember any of them ever sharing the Gospel with me. The way they talked and lived outside the church building was so often opposite of what I heard the pastor preach from the pulpit. If your desire is to serve God and reach people for Christ, you must have 'genuine faith' in Christ.

Rule #2

Stir up the gift of God which is in you

The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians and Romans that every Christian has 'spiritual gifts.' Paul told Timothy to 'stir up the gift' of God that was in him. The Greek words *anazópureó* to *charisma* mean 'kindle afresh the grace-gift' that God gives freely to His children. The purpose? So they can serve God and share God's love and grace with other people. All Christians have spiritual gifts, but they often need to be 'stirred up, kindled afresh.' Our spiritual lives and ministry can sometimes become stagnant. We get distracted or lose interest in serving God and helping others. That's when we need a 'stirring, a rekindling' of love for God and others (Mark 12:29-31).

Rule #3

Don't fear, but have a spirit of power, love, and a sound mind

Christians are human beings. That means we have many 'fears.' One of those fears may be 'ministry.' If it was easy to tell people about Jesus, more Christians would do it. The sad fact is that less than 30% of Christians talk with unbelievers about Christ (Barna Research, [Lifeway Research](#)). Why so low? Some Christians fear rejection. Some think sharing the Gospel is culturally inappropriate. They fear offending people. Others believe it's wrong to try to change someone else's religious beliefs. Most Christians have never had any training in how to share the Gospel with someone. Whatever the reason – ask God to give you 'a spirit of power, love, and a sound mind.' God has given each of us a responsibility to share the TRUTH about Jesus Christ. He is the 'only way to the Father' (John 14:6), so why would Christians not want to let unbelievers know that?

“How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!” Romans 10:14-15

Rule #4

Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, but share in suffering for the Gospel according to the power of God

The 'testimony' of the Lord speaks to being a 'witness.' The Greek word is *marturion* and means 'evidence given.' It carries the idea of 'suffering' for giving that evidence. The word 'martyr' is a transliteration of *marturion*. The context also points to the real possibility of 'suffering' for Christ. Paul invited Timothy to share with him in the sufferings 'for the gospel according to the power of God.' The Greek word translated 'share in suffering' is *sugkakopatheó* and means 'suffer together, be a partaker in afflictions, suffer hardship in company with, share another's ill treatment and the pains that go with it).

Keep in mind that Paul wrote 2 Timothy from a Roman prison. He suffered there, but had also suffered in many other prisons during his years in ministry. He suffered when people would stone him and scream at him to leave their city. The idea of really suffering for sharing the Gospel with people scares a lot of Christians into not talking about Christ with unbelievers. They don't want to suffer. Timothy had seen how much Paul had suffered for telling people about Jesus, so Paul reminded him not to be 'ashamed' (*epaischunomai*) of the testimony of the Lord. The Greek word means 'to feel shame, be disgraced, be humiliated, be singled out.' It's easier to just blend in with the world and not be singled out as 'different' than everyone else, so many Christians don't speak openly about their faith in Christ. Remember that Jesus 'humbled' Himself for us when He left the comfort of Heaven and came to earth to die for our sins. He "made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." (Philippians 2:7-8)

He was 'singled out' for suffering FOR US. The least we can do in return is to tell unbelievers about what Jesus did for them by dying on the cross and rising from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:1-8).

Rule #5

Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you learned from Paul

The idea of ‘holding fast the pattern of sound words’ (*hupotupósis echó hugiainó logos*) is to ‘retain the example of healthy words’ that Timothy had heard from Paul. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul’s words, so that means he was speaking and writing those things that God had shown and told him. ‘Holding fast’ to anything God says is a smart thing to do. Timothy needed to hear that. So do we.

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Rule #6

Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus

Paul told Timothy to ‘be strong’ (*endunamoó*) in the ‘grace’ (*charis*) that is in Christ Jesus. Paul was about to leave the earth for Heaven. He had spent decades preaching the Gospel, seeing people reconciled to God, starting churches, selecting elders, and training them for ministry. Here in his final letter Paul told one of the men who had ministered with him longest (Acts 16) the ‘rules for ministry.’ Timothy had traveled to many cities with Paul and seen how he had faced opposition and persecution. Paul addressed that a little later in this same letter:

“But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered

me. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” 2 Timothy 3:10-12

Paul knew Timothy would suffer greatly when he and others (e.g. Titus) took on Paul’s mantle to continue taking the Gospel of Christ to the Gentiles. Paul knew it would take to keep going and not giving up. Timothy would have to ‘be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.’ Trying to do something as difficult as ministering to a world filled with people who hate you would take far more than your natural courage. It would take a ‘supernatural’ ability that would come directly from the grace of Christ. That’s true for all of us.

Rule #7

Commit Paul's words to faithful men who will be able to teach others also

Paul told Timothy to 'commit' (*paratithémi* – entrust, commend, place alongside) Paul's words (which the Holy Spirit inspired) to 'faithful men' (*pistos anthrópos* – faithful, trustworthy, loyal to faith, people, humans) who will be able to 'teach others also' (*kai heteros didaskó* – cause to learn, instruct, impart knowledge). This is important to God's plan for how His Word would continue to be heard and understand after the death of the apostles. Many people call this the 'Timothy Principle.'

We know very little about Timothy's ministry after Paul's death (no known letters have been attributed to Timothy). Various church traditions have Timothy continuing to serving as an apostolic representative to the early Church even as he had done for years with the Apostle Paul. Other tradition has him serving as the bishop of the church in Ephesus until he was murdered for his stand for Christ and against paganism. Whichever is true, I believe we can be assured that Timothy did what Paul told him to do. Timothy would have committed Paul's word to faithful men who would be able to teach others also. That chain of people 'committing Paul's words to faithful men' continues to this day. It is one of God's 'rules for ministry.'

Rule #8

Endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ

The Greek words Paul used at the beginning of 2 Timothy 2:3 were *sugkakopatheó hós kalos stratiótés*. The idea of what Paul was telling Timothy is that he should ‘suffer in hardship with’ others who were also suffering. *sugkakopatheó* can also be translated as ‘partaking in affliction with others.’ Paul used the example of that ‘shared suffering’ ‘as a good soldier’ of Jesus Christ. Soldiers are often wounded or even killed in wars. That’s one of the ‘shared sufferings’ of being a soldier. Even if you are not the one who is wounded or killed, you share in the sufferings and pains that go with being a soldier. Soldiers often march for days with limited amounts of food and drink, only to arrive at their destination to spend hours in fighting against an enemy. Timothy had traveled with Paul for years in ministering and knew the many types of suffering involved in ‘fighting’ battles for the Gospel of Christ. Paul knew that

would not change after his death and wanted to remind Timothy of that fact.

Notice also that Paul used the words ‘good soldier’ (*kalos stratiótés* – good warrior) of Jesus Christ. The Greek word for ‘good’ that Paul used means ‘good that inspires (motivates) others to embrace what is lovely (beautiful, praiseworthy)’ (*Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*). Ancient as well as modern armies were and are divided into small groups led by lower ranking officers. Those officers are responsible to higher ranking officers who are responsible to even higher ranking officers. Each officer at every level of a military unit has the opportunity to ‘inspire’ their soldiers to do their jobs well and be the best they can be. The same is true as a Christian who understands what Paul was telling Timothy. Paul believed that a big part of his ministry was to inspire and motivate other Christian leaders to embrace what was beautiful and praiseworthy about the positions God had given them. Whether you are a foot soldier or an officer in the Army of the Lord, remember Paul’s words to Timothy – ‘endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.’

Rule #9

Do not entangle yourself with the affairs of this life

Paul continued with the ‘soldier’ example by writing – “No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.” The idea of being ‘engaged in warfare’ comes from the Greek word ‘*strateuó*.’ It means ‘contending as a soldier, fighting like a soldier, serving in a military campaign.’ No one involved as an active duty member of the military who is involved in fighting in a war should ‘entangle’ themselves with the affairs of this life. What does that mean? The word ‘entangle’ (*emplekó*) means being ‘entwined’ or ‘involved’ with something in a way that would keep them from performing their work. What was it that Paul didn’t want Timothy or other Christians to entangle themselves? The ‘affairs of this life.’ The Greek word for ‘affairs’ (*pragmateia*) means ‘transactions, negotiations.’ The word for ‘life’ (*bios*) simply means ‘everyday life.’ Why would Paul write that a soldier of Jesus Christ should not become entangled in

transactions of everyday life? Because doing that takes a soldier's eyes, ears, and thinking off fighting and on to the transactions of everyday living. That's not what God called His people to do. Read the verse again: "No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier." Who enlisted Paul as a soldier of Jesus Christ? Jesus Christ! Who enlisted Timothy as a soldier of Jesus Christ? Jesus Christ! Who enlisted you as a soldier of Jesus Christ? Jesus Christ! We cannot serve two masters. We must focus on what God has called us to do as 'good soldiers of Jesus Christ.'

Rule #10

Compete according to the rules

Paul moved from ‘soldiering’ to ‘competing’ in his ministry examples for Timothy:

“And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.” 2

Timothy 2:5

The Greek word for ‘competes’ is *athleó*. It means to ‘compete as an athlete, to contend or strive in competitive games.’ Some translators chose the word ‘wrestle’ because wrestling was a major part of Greek and Roman ‘games’ in the 1st century AD. It’s interesting that Paul chose the word *palé* in Ephesians 6:12 when he wrote: “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” Though the words are different (*athleó* and

palé), they carry a similar idea of struggle against an opponent.

Even as Christian Ministry is similar to the conflict that soldiers endure in battle, so the competitive athlete endures conflict in competition. Paul's point with the athlete is that " he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. Let's focus on three ideas:

- crowned (*stephanoó*)
- competes (*athleó*)
- according to the rules (*ean mé nomimós*)

Winning a crown in Ancient Greek athletic competitions brought the winner special status in religious, economic, and political arenas. Only one person was crowned in ancient games, unlike the Olympic Games of today (e.g. gold, silver, bronze). The winner was believed to have won because of the decision of the god Zeus. Many people viewed the winner becoming a demigod and standing above the

‘ordinary’ people in social status. Winners would wear an honorary wreath, receive free meals for life, have statutes built to memorialize their victory, and possibly receive special political positions.

However, athletes had to compete ‘lawfully’ (*nomimós*) which meant competing according to the ‘rules’ of the games. Cheating meant severe financial penalties and personal beatings as well as public humiliation. That humiliation could impact the cheater’s family and even his entire town. Cheaters were often banned from competing in future athletic competitions.

Timothy would have immediately understood what Paul was saying about the importance of a Christian ministering according to the ‘rules’ that God had established for His children. No cheating allowed. No self-glory allowed.

This particular verse is what started the idea for this series. We Christians must compete ‘according to the rules.’

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Rule #11

Remind them of these things

Every Christian has ministry gifts (*charismatōn*). That's clear from Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. We learn in Ephesians 4 that Jesus Christ 'gave gifts to men' when 'He ascended on high.' Those gifts (*domata*) are: 'apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.' Notice the difference in 'gifts.' Some are 'grace gifts' (*charismatōn*) so that every believer has a special ministry in the Body of Christ. Some are 'gifts, presents' (*domata*) that the Lord gave the Church for its orderly function.

We know that Timothy functioned as an apostolic representative (Paul called him a 'fellow worker') and also had received *charismatos* with the 'laying on of the hands of the eldership' (1 Timothy 4:14). We don't know what spiritual gift Timothy received, but Paul did tell Timothy to 'do the work of an evangelist' and 'fulfill your ministry' later in 2

Timothy. Whatever ‘grace gift’ Timothy received most likely was connected to his ministry with Paul.

One of the things Paul wanted Timothy to do was ‘remind’ people ‘of these things.’ The Greek word for ‘remind’ is *hupomimnḗskó*. It means ‘to put in mind, suggest to one’s memory, remind quietly, to remember because prompted.’ The context of Paul’s ‘reminder’ rule is what preceded 2 Timothy 2:14.

Rule #12

Charge them before the Lord

Paul wrote that ‘reminding’ people should lead to ‘charging’ them ‘before the Lord.’ Invoking the name of the Lord was a powerful way that prophets and apostles emphasized the importance of what they were saying. The word ‘charge’ is *diamarturomai* and means ‘to attest or protest earnestly, thoroughly bear witness, give solemn, earnest testimony.’

Paul’s focus for Timothy’s ‘charge’ was specific. He did not want Christians to ‘strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers.’ I find that interesting on several levels. One is that this continues to be a problem among Christians and church leaders almost two thousand years after Paul wrote Timothy. Another is that this is a problem that Christians and church leaders have dealt with through all the centuries of Church history.

The Greek word for 'strive' is *logomacheó* and means 'quarrel, dispute on trifles, dispute about words.' One my first memories of the hypocrisy of Christians and church leaders occurred when I was twelve years old. I was old enough to attend a church business meeting, so I did. Unfortunately, the meeting turned into a massive quarrel among church members and leaders. Some of the ugliest words I heard spoken that day were among leaders of the church. The things I heard people say to and about each other that day was the beginning of my eventually leaving my parents' church and becoming an atheist. I doubt anyone in that meeting understood that their 'striving about words' that day would lead to the 'ruin' of myself and other hearers in the meeting. The word 'ruin' in the Greek is *katastrophé* and means 'destruction, ruin, demolition, catastrophe, subversion, overthrowing of.' I was 'ruined' for a time by their words, but was saved years later by the love and grace of God.

The Apostle Paul knew that Christians and church leaders would get involved in quarrels and disputes about words and those quarrels could lead to the ‘ruin’ of hearers’ (*akouó* – audience). So, he told Timothy to ‘charge’ members and leaders of local churches NOT to do that. Unfortunately, Paul’s words have been ignored by Christians for the most part for the past two-thousand years. Enough already. Christians and church leaders need to stop playing ‘god’ and get back to obeying God.

Rule #13

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed

The Greek word translated ‘diligent’ is *spoudazó*. It means ‘endeavor, labor, make every effort, be earnest, be prompt, be earnest, be eager, be diligent, use speed.’ That sounds pretty important, doesn’t it? It’s as if Paul was saying ‘there’s no time to waste .. get busy.’ What did Paul think was so important? ‘to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed.’

The word ‘approved’ in the Greek is *dokimos* and means ‘tried, accepted as genuine.’ This is important. Remember that Paul emphasized Timothy’s faith being ‘genuine’ at the beginning of this letter (2 Timothy 1:5). Paul then moved to Timothy’s ministry being ‘genuine.’ There’s a difference that we find explained well in Ephesians 2:8-10.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

Faith is a free gift that God gives people. It's not of works because people would brag about what they had done to be saved. However, we are God's 'workmanship,' created in Jesus Christ 'for good works.' We are not saved by works of righteousness which we have done (Titus 3:5), but we are saved with a view toward 'doing good works.' That's ministry. Our salvation is a free gift. Our ministry is serving God through good works. Make sense? God approves of us as His children by grace through faith, 'and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God.' God approves of our ministry (service) for Him through our diligence as workers who do not need to be ashamed.

The word 'worker' is *ergatés* and means 'laborer, workman.' The words 'does not need to be ashamed' are a translation of the Greek word *anepaischuntos*. It basically means 'unashamed, not ashamed.' I would think that every Christian and every church leader would like to God to view them in a positive light – being 'unashamed.' However, that is far from reality. Many Christians and their leaders are 'not approved' by God and should be 'ashamed' of themselves. Why? Because they do not 'rightly divide the word of truth.' What does that mean?

Rule #14

Rightly divide the word of Truth

The Greek is ὀρθοτομοῦντα τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας. The word ὀρθοτομοῦντα (*orthotomounta*) means ‘to make a straight cut, to dissect correctly, to handle correctly, rightly divide.’ λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας (*logon tēs alētheias*) means ‘the word, the doctrine, the teaching, the communication, the word, of truth, of fact, of reality). It is up to every Christian to ‘rightly divide the word of truth’ – which basically means making the correct interpretation based on understanding the Word of God correctly. The fact that Christians have come up with hundreds (even thousands) of different interpretations for the same portions of Scripture is evidence that a lot of people have not ‘rightly divided’ the Word of Truth. There is ‘one truth,’ not hundreds.

Christians should be ashamed of themselves. Hundreds of millions of Christians living now and those living in the past have made serious errors in their studying and teaching of God's Word. Don't be one of them.

Rule #15

Shun profane and idle babblings

Paul also told Timothy to emphasize to Christians that they should ‘shun profane and idle babblings.’ The Greek is βεβήλους κενοφωνίας περιῖστασο and means to ‘avoid empty worldly babblings.’ The word ‘wordly” (*bebélos*) means ‘profane, wicked, godless.’ The word for ‘idle babblings’ is *kenophónia* and means ‘empty chatter, vain and fruitless discussion.’ The word ‘shun’ is *periistémi* and means ‘avoid, keep away from, block out, avoid all contact.’ Whoa! That sounds serious. Did Paul really mean that Christians should avoid Christians and their leaders whose conversations are vain, empty, and fruitless? Yes, that’s exactly what Paul told Timothy. If more Christians and church leaders followed Paul’s apostolic command, the ‘church’ would be in less of a mess than what it is now and has been for thousands of years.

Why is this important? Let's finish Paul's command: "But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness." The Greek is γὰρ προκόψουσιν ἀσεβείας and means that allowing Christians to keep talking wicked, profane, fruitless chatter will 'lead' (*prokoptó* – increase, drive forward, advance) 'ungodliness' (*asebeia* – irreverence, wickedness, lack of respect).

Paul's words to Timothy were not hypothetical. He had seen it with his own eyes. In fact, he gave Timothy a real-life example:

"And their message will spread like cancer. 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. Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." (2 Timothy 2:17-19)

My guess is that you have seen many examples of this kind of behavior. I know I have. What did you do about it? Did you ‘avoid’ the ‘idle babbler’ or did you listen to what they said? If you gave ear to what they said, you were part of leading others to disrespect God’s Word and ‘overthrow the faith of some.’ If you avoided the ‘idle babblers,’ good for you. However, I’ll bet you paid a price for doing that. I know I did. It cost me and my family a lot to stand against the wickedness and ungodliness in churches, but I still believe it was the right thing to do. I hope you do as well.

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Rule #16

Flee youthful lusts

The Greek for this next rule reads: Τὰς δὲ νεωτερικὰς ἐπιθυμίας φεῦγε. Timothy was not a young man when Paul wrote his second letter to him, so why mention fleeing from ‘youthful lusts’ in verse 2:22? I think the immediate context will help:

“But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.” 2 Timothy 2:20-21

Paul had just rehearsed for Timothy two men, ‘Hymenaeus and Philetus, who were the kind of leaders in the church who should be ‘shunned.’ Paul wrote that the men had ‘strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past;’ and had overthrown the faith of some people. Paul then told Timothy that ‘in a great house’ there were two types of ‘vessels.’ Some ‘for honor’ and some ‘for dishonor.’ Paul wrote that ‘if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.’ That’s what Paul wanted for Timothy – to be a ‘vessel for honor’ who was set apart and ‘useful’ to Jesus Christ – ‘prepared for every good work.’ Might I add that every Christian leader should want the same for members of their church.

That context then leads us to the ‘text’ – ‘Flee also youthful lusts.’ The word translated ‘flee’ is *pheugó* and means ‘escape, run away from, vanish.’ The word ‘youthful lusts’ are *neóterikos epithumia* which mean ‘passionate desires that a young person would have for what is forbidden.’ Why would Paul say that to Timothy? Because Timothy had to be an example to others of what it means to control one’s passions

both inside and outside the church. Paul knew that Timothy would spend the rest of his life struggling with the impulses that come from the 'sin nature' that plagues all of God's children until they go to be with the Lord and are 'changed.'

Remember what Paul wrote Timothy in his first letter about the qualifications for a church bishop (pastor, leader, elder):

- A bishop then must be blameless
- the husband of one wife
- temperate
- sober-minded
- of good behavior
- hospitable
- able to teach
- not given to wine
- not violent
- not greedy for money
- but gentle

- not quarrelsome
- not covetous
- one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?)
- not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil
- Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil

Rule #17

Pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace

Paul continued:

“Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

The words ‘flee’ and ‘pursue’ are important to notice here. We’ve already seen that the word ‘flee’ (*pheugó*) means ‘to escape, run away from.’ The word ‘pursue’ is *διώκω* (*diókó*) and means ‘follow after, press forward, chase aggressively, chase after.’ Paul told Timothy to run away from ‘youthful lusts,’ but aggressively chase after righteousness, faith, love, and peace. That demonstrates how different weak and ineffectual ministry compares with strong and effectual ministry. One type of ministry is negative. The other is positive. One is inappropriate. The other is appropriate. One

displeases God. The other pleases God. Which type of ministry do you want?

Here are the types of ‘ministry’ God wants:

- righteousness (*dikaïosuné* – approved character, justification)
- faith (*pistis* – persuasion, proof based on evidence)
- love (*agapé* – love and goodwill, love centered on moral preference)
- peace – (*eiréné* – rest, quietness, joined together, wholeness)

That’s the difference from a Christian and church leader who are self-centered and Christ-centered. Paul pointed Timothy to the latter. It’s interesting that Paul also made this statement immediately after: “with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” When Christians and their church leaders ‘minister’ correctly, they are joining a host of people who ‘call on the Lord out of a pure heart.’

The word 'call' is *epikaleó* and means 'appeal to, invoke for aid.' The word 'pure' is *katharos* and means 'clean, unmixed, purified.' When you 'minister' according to God's rules, your heart is clean and pure. Isn't that a beautiful picture of how we should serve God?

Rule #18

Avoid foolish and ignorant disputes

The word ‘avoid’ is *paraiteomai* and means ‘reject, decline, shun, refuse.’ Paul told Timothy to ‘avoid’ disputes among Christians that were ‘foolish and ignorant.’ The word ‘foolish’ is *móros* and means ‘stupid, dull, absurd, mentally inert.’ The English words ‘moron’ and ‘moronic’ come from this Greek word. The word ‘ignorant’ is *apaideutos* and means ‘unlearned, untaught, uninstructed.’

Unfortunately, many of the disputes (*maché* – quarrels, fights, conflicts, disputes) we see in churches and denominations now and have seen in the past are both ‘foolish and ignorant.’ What did the Apostle Paul tell Timothy to do about those kinds of disputes in churches? ‘Avoid’ them. However, that’s easier said than done. If you are a member of a church that is embroiled in disputes about stupid things and no one will listen to what God says in His Word, you have a choice to make. I recommend you begin by taking your concerns to

church leadership. That may be a way to get a positive resolution to the problem. However, since so many of the 'moronic' disputes come from church leaders, you may run into a wall that you cannot overcome. Do you stay or leave? I think it depends on what kind of ministry you want to have as a follower of Christ. Pray earnestly that the Holy Spirit will guide you in making the decision that pleases Him.

Rule #19

A servant of the Lord must not quarrel

Even though you might want to – Paul wrote that ‘a servant of the Lord must not quarrel.’ The word ‘quarrel’ is *machomai* and means ‘argue, to war, fight, dispute.’ Remember who we are – ‘servants of the Lord.’ The word ‘servant’ is *doulos* and means ‘bond-servant, slave, fully-devoted servant, someone who belongs to another.’ It’s important in Christian ministry that we remember we are ‘not our own.’

“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.” 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

The God who ‘owns us’ says that His servants ‘must not quarrel.’ That’s an important and oft overlooked rule in ministry.

Rule #20

A servant of the Lord must be gentle to all

An important part of not ‘quarreling’ is being ‘gentle.’ The Greek word is *épios* and means ‘affable, kind, mild.’ The word means more than just what’s in your heart. It also goes to what you ‘say.’ Your words should be kind and mild. Also notice that God’s servants must be ‘gentle to all.’ It would be easy to speak kindly to people who agree with you, but that’s not the context of 2 Timothy 2. Those Christians whose ministries are ‘approved’ by God have to deal with Christians whose ministries are not approved by God. Those who are not approved start a lot of the problems in churches because they are not interested in obeying God’s Word. They are often deluded into thinking that they are right and anyone who disagrees with them are wrong. That’s why many church ‘fights’ (including church leadership meetings) get heated and ugly. While the ‘natural’ inclination is to fight back, God wants His ‘approved servants’ to be ‘gentle to all.’

The devil loves to see Christians fight with each other. He know that destroys their effectiveness in ministry, which is exactly what he wants. Don't give it to him. Don't quarrel and be gentle to all.

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Rule #21

A servant of the Lord must be able to teach

Paul didn't say that a servant of the Lord had to have the spiritual 'gift' of teaching, but he did say that a servant of the Lord must be 'able to teach.' The Greek word is διδακτικόν (*didaktikos*) and means 'apt to instruct, able to teach.' This 'aptness' or 'ability' to teach comes from God and from a Christian's commitment to learning God's Word. Even a Christian who happens to have the spiritual 'gift' of teaching must go through a process of 'learning' before they can teach. The root word is *didaskó* and means 'to disseminate information.' The idea is of 'communicating' information, either through writing or the spoken word. Paul was writing to Timothy, but Timothy had heard Paul 'preach and teach' for years. Paul had the gift for both. He was 'apt to teach' and said that's what a 'servant of the Lord' must be able to do.

I can hear some of you saying to yourself that you are not a teacher – that you cannot disseminate information the way a preacher or teacher can. That's not what Paul was saying. You need to be 'apt, able' to teach. Have you ever taught someone how to do something? Have you ever disseminated information to another person so they would learn something? Maybe it was teaching them how to play a game. Maybe you taught them how to do a craft. Maybe you helped a new employee learn the basics of their job. Maybe you taught your child how to behave or act in a responsible way toward other children. All of us have had some experience where we 'taught' another person something they didn't know until we taught them. That's what every Christian should be 'able' to do. You know the Lord. If you've read and studied God's Word, you know many vital things about the spiritual world that other people desperately need to know. You can do that. You 'must' be able to teach at every opportunity God gives you.

Rule #22

A servant of the Lord must be patient

Being ‘patient’ is another important attribute for God’s people when they serve God and minister to the needs of others. Many people struggle to understand spiritual things. Even Christians who have been in churches for decades often know very little about the Bible. They need your help, but they also may need your patience. New Christians are often wide open to learning new things about God, but older Christians are often reticent to admit they need to learn new things. That’s where patience often becomes necessary.

The Greek word for ‘patient’ is *anexikakos* and means ‘enduring of ill, forbearing, patient.’ It’s the idea of enduring or ‘bearing up’ when treated unjustly or when you receive an injury that is undeserved. Believe me when I tell you that happens often in churches. Paul faced that during his entire ministry and knew that Timothy and those he trained would face the same. If you haven’t had to deal with unfair

treatment at the hands of others in a church or denomination, you most likely will. Prepare yourself now to be 'patient' when it happens.

Rule #23

In humility correcting those who are in opposition

“And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.” 2 Timothy 2:24-26

Also go into any service for the Lord in ‘humility.’ Remember that our Lord ‘humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross’ (Philippians 2:8). Jesus is our example of ‘humility’ in service to God. It is that ‘humility’ that gives us the spiritual attitude to ‘correct’ people who oppose God’s Word and your ministry to them. If you are active in Christian Ministry, you will face opposition. Though Paul told Timothy not to quarrel and be ‘gentle to all,’

that did not mean he didn't want Timothy to teach and correct them.

One of the primary purposes of ministry is to teach and correct. Paul will tell Timothy a bit later in this letter that: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (2 Timothy 3:16)

The Greek word for 'correct' is *paideuó* and means 'discipline, instruct, correct, train up, chastise.' Timothy's ministry with Paul as an apostolic associate is different than yours will be, so you may wonder how you would 'correct' someone. If you are a parent, an important part of ministering to your children is 'correcting' them. That will continue for many years. They will eventually grow up and live on their own. The years you spent 'correcting' them will play an important role in what kind of adults they become. If you are a church leader (e.g. pastor, elder), you will have opportunities to 'correct' members. You may do it from the pulpit, in group studies, or private meetings. That should continue as long as those members attend your church. As

long as you follow Paul's guidance for how to 'correct' them with 'humility' and teach them the Word "rightly divided," that will play an important part in what kind of ministry they will have in the world.

However, be ready for some church members to 'oppose' your correction. The Greek word for 'opposition' in verse 25 is *antidiatithémi* and means 'to set oneself opposite, be disputatious, set oneself up in opposition.' The purpose of 'correction' in this context is that 'God perhaps will grant them repentance.' One of the reasons that we correct 'in humility' is because changing minds is not something we do – it's what God does. The word 'grant' is *didómi* and means 'give, minister, bestow, deliver.' God can use your ministry of 'correction' to guide people to 'repentance.' The word *metanoia* means 'reversal of previous decision, change of mind.' People who oppose your ministry can reverse their position through repentance to do what's right in God's sight 'so that they know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.'

This is the oldest ‘rivalry’ in history: God’s will vs. Satan’s will. The devil has been opposing God’s will since before the Garden of Eden. Remember what the devil asked Eve in Genesis 3? ... ‘has God indeed said ...?’ Satan and his evil kingdom are behind most of the spiritual problems in families, churches, denominations, and other ministries. What can Christians in ministry do about that? ‘... in humility correcting those who are in opposition.’ That’s the part we play. God’s part is to ‘grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.’

Notice that people who oppose Christian ministry need to ‘come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil.’ The Greek word for ‘senses’ is *ananéphó* and means ‘become sober again, recover one’s self.’ The Greek for ‘snare’ is *pagis* and means ‘a trap fastened by a noose or notch.’ It was used for both physical and moral traps. The word for ‘captive’ is *zógreó* and means ‘to capture. ensnare, catch, take captive, take alive.’ That’s what the devil does. What caring Christians need to do is minister to the needs of those who have been

take 'taken captive' by the devil to do 'his will.' The word 'will' is *theléma* which means 'desire, pleasure, determination, choice.' Satan takes 'pleasure' in choosing to hurt people, which reminds me of this verse from 1 Peter 5:

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” 1 Peter 5:8

Rule #24

Know this about people in the last days

“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!”

2 Timothy 3:1-5

Many members of your church will not remain the same year after year, decade after decade. As Paul prophesied ‘perilous times’ will come in the ‘last days.’ The words ‘perilous times’ are καιροὶ χαλεποί (times, opportunities, seasons, that are perilous, difficult, violent, dangerous). Paul prophesied that these violent times would come ‘in the last days.’ The Greek words are ἐν ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις. The word ἐσχάταις

(*eschatos*) is where we get the word ‘eschatology,’ which is the ‘study of last things.’

Paul did not give exact dates of when these ‘last days’ would occur, but he did describe what those days would be like.

People would be:

- lovers of themselves
- lovers of money
- boasters
- proud
- blasphemers
- disobedient to parents
- unthankful
- unholy
- unloving
- unforgiving
- slanderers
- without self-control

- brutal
- despisers of good
- traitors
- headstrong
- haughty
- lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God
- having a form of godliness but denying its power

If Paul was describing ‘unsaved ‘unchurched’ people, we could say that almost anytime in the last two thousand years would fit those descriptions. However, since the context of 2 Timothy 2 concerns ‘approved and disapproved workers’ in churches, we see that Paul was describing a time when a massive number of people in churches would fall away from doing God’s will because the devil had taken them captive to do his will.

I think one of the key parts of this section is where Paul wrote – ‘having a form of godliness but denying its power.’ The Greek word for ‘form’ is *morphósis* and means ‘appearance.’ The word godliness is *eusebeia* and means ‘holy, devout.’ That’s what we see in many churches and denominations today. Leaders and members live life devoid of godliness, but present themselves as ‘godly.’ They have a ‘form or appearance’ of godliness, but they deny its power. The word ‘deny’ is *arneomai* and means ‘refuse, reject, disavow, renounce, disown.’ What are they rejecting? God’s supernatural power. The word is *dunamis* and means ‘miraculous power, force, ability, strength.’

Rule #25

From such people turn away

This was Paul's advice to Timothy and people Timothy would train. When the people, including leaders, get so bad that they reject correction and choose instead to remain in the devil's trap, Paul wrote – 'from such people turn away!' Why? Paul answered –

“For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was.” 2 Timothy 3:6-9

This is similar to what Paul wrote Titus in an earlier letter:

“For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain. One of them, a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.” This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth. To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.” Titus 1:10-16

Even as Paul wrote Timothy that the church leaders and members would have a ‘form of godliness’ but deny its power, Paul wrote Titus that people in churches would ‘profess’ to know God, but deny Him in works. Paul told two of his closest associates to watch out for the same problem in the early church. The answer? Correct with instruction until it became necessary to ‘turn away’ from those people. The Greek word for ‘turn away’ is *apotrepó* and means ‘avoid, deflect, turn away from.’

That may seem harsh to many, but Christians who want to serve God must consider seriously who they are trying to please. God or people? Paul’s choice was obviously God. That should be our choice as well.

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Rule #26

You must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of

Paul drew a comparison for Timothy between how many church members behaved and how Paul had lived his life for all to see. First, those who should be avoided:

“For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was... But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.” 2 Timothy 3:6-9, 13

Notice that Paul referred to them as:

- resisting the truth
- being men of corrupt minds
- disapproved concerning the faith
- they will progress no further
- their folly will be manifest (known) to all
- evil men and imposters will grow woe and worse, deceiving and being deceived

It's fascinating that after almost two-thousand years of church history, Paul's description matches much of what we see in leaders and members of modern churches, denominations, and their schools, colleges, and seminaries.

Next, Paul recommended the type of behavior of a Christian of whom God approves:

“But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution ... But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

2 Timothy 3:10-12, 14-15

Here are Paul's primary points:

- follow Paul's example of doctrine (teaching)
- follow Paul's example of his manner of life
- follow Paul's example of purpose in ministry
- follow Paul's example of faith
- follow Paul's example of longsuffering
- follow Paul's example of love
- follow Paul's example of perseverance
- follow Paul's example of facing persecutions
- follow Paul's example of dealing with afflictions

Paul wasn't telling Timothy a 'story' – he was telling Timothy 'history' that Timothy had seen with his own eyes and heard with his own ears. He knew Paul was telling the truth.

Paul, who was just days or weeks from martyrdom, encouraged Timothy to ‘continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them.’ Timothy had what few Christians have ever experienced – to travel with the Apostle Paul and be an integral part of his Spirit-led ministry.

Rule #27

Know that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God

Timothy had the benefit of knowing the ‘Holy Scriptures’ from childhood. That was because of the genuine faith which dwelt first in his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice (2 Timothy 1:5). Paul reminded Timothy again in chapter three of the importance of Scripture. What is written in God’s Word is far more than just words on a page. They are the very words that the Holy Spirit inspired chosen men to write – ‘All Scripture is given by inspiration of God’ (2 Timothy 3:16).

The Greek word for ‘inspiration’ is *theopneustos* and means ‘God-breathed, divinely breathed in.’ The Holy Spirit is the ‘breath, wind’ of God. You’ll find that in both the Hebrew (*ruach*) and Greek (*pneuma*) words for the Spirit of God. The Apostle Peter also addressed it in his 2nd letter:

“And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” 2 Peter 1:19-21

Peter wrote that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation. Prophecy never came by the will of men. Holy men of God spoke as they were ‘moved by the Holy Spirit.’

Rule #28

Know that all Scripture is profitable

Paul wanted Timothy to know the importance of Scripture. Yes, it's important because God 'inspired' its writing – but why did God inspire its writing? Just for the sake of historical information about the ancient world? No, much more than that. God inspired the writing of Scripture because He knew people would 'profit' from knowing what He inspired. The Greek word for 'profitable' is *óphelimos* and means 'helpful, useful, advantageous.'

Paul knew that studying the Scriptures would give Timothy and other Christian ministers an 'advantage.' They would know things and understand things about life that others would not. God knew that Christians would find the Scriptures 'useful' and 'helpful' to them in family life, community life, business, and of course relating to the Almighty God. Paul went on in the verse to give Timothy

more specifics about the type of profitability that comes from the Scriptures:

- profitable for doctrine (*didaskalia* – teaching, instruction, learning)
- profitable for reproof (*elegchos* – proof, evidence, conviction)
- profitable for correction (*epanorthósis* – straightening up again, straightened out, making straight, restored, reformed)
- profitable for instruction in righteousness (*paideia* – disciplined training, disciplinary correction, nurture)

Paul wrote that ‘all’ Scripture is profitable. The word ‘all’ is *pas* and means ‘all manner of, every part.’ That’s why I say that a Christian who wants to serve God cannot look at Scripture with ‘cafeteria eyes.’ We can’t pick and choose what ‘tastes good’ to us. All Scripture is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and righteousness. However, don’t forget what Paul wrote Timothy earlier in this letter. We must ‘rightly divide’ God’s Word. Taking it out of context or attempting to make it say what we want it to say will not be ‘profitable.’ We must study Scripture within context, from the original language, to the original reader. Then, and only then, can we know that what we ‘rightly divide’ in God’s Word will help us, guide us, meet our needs and the needs of those to whom we minister.

Rule #29

That the man of God should be complete

One reason for studying Scripture carefully and receiving ‘profit’ from it is so the ‘man of God should be complete.’ What does it mean to ‘be complete?’ The Greek is *artios* and means ‘ready in the present, qualified, sufficient in the moment, perfect, complete, whole, serving the destined purpose.’

Every Christian has God-given abilities and spiritual gifts. Why? So that we can ‘serve’ Him. We need to be ‘qualified’ to serve Him. How do we do that? By loving Him completely and relying on what we learn in the Scriptures for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. We must be ‘ready in the present,’ meaning that we are always prepared to serve God. A true servant is always at the ready to do the bidding of the person who hired him. A Christian has an even higher reason to be prepared to serve God because He ‘owns’ us. Jesus Christ, God’s eternal Son,

redeemed us, bought us, with His blood shed on the cross.
Our 'destined purpose' is to serve Him for all of eternity.

Rule #30

That the man of God should be thoroughly equipped for every good work

Another reason for studying Scripture carefully and receiving ‘profit’ for it is so the ‘man of God should be thoroughly equipped for every good work.’ The Greek word for ‘thoroughly equipped’ is *exartizó* and means ‘fully equipped, completely furnished, made suitable for, thoroughly fit for.’

What Christians are ‘thoroughly equipped for’ is ‘every good work.’ The Greek is *πάν ἔργον ἀγαθόν* and means ‘all manner of accomplished labor that is beneficial.’ What we do in our service to God, our ministry, should be beneficial to others. The word *agathos* means ‘inherently (intrinsically) good.’ What is the source of that ‘goodness?’ It is God. Any goodness that comes from us originates in Him and is empowered by Him.

This reminds me of what Paul wrote about how spiritual ‘gifting’ works in a Christian’s life:

“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.” 1 Corinthians 12:4-7

Notice that the ‘gifts, ministries, and activities’ for Christian ministry all come from God. Each Member of the Godhead plays a different role in our ministry, ‘but it is the same God who works all in all.’ The ‘manifestation’ (*phanerósis* – exhibition, expression) of the Spirit of God is given to every Christian ‘for the profit of all.’

That seems easy enough to understand, yet, we have so many problems in churches that divide Christians from one another. What happened? We are not following the rules.

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Rule #31

Preach the word

Timothy and all those who followed him in Christian ministry were to 'preach the word.' The word 'preach' is *kérussó* and means 'proclaim, publish, herald, announce, declare.' They were to 'proclaim' the 'word' (*logos*). Who is the 'logos' in the Christian context? Jesus Christ:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” John 1:1-4

Also in this context is the fact that the 'Word' is what God says. It's the Scriptures that Paul wrote about two verses earlier. That's what Christians are to 'preach, proclaim, herald.' What does your pastor 'preach' on Sundays? What do teachers in your church 'proclaim' in their classes? What do Christians in your church talk about with each other, with their neighbors, fellow students at school, co-workers?

The fact that Jesus Christ, the God of Creation, will one day judge the living and dead should weigh heavily on our minds and hearts as we interact with people God puts in our lives.

Rule #32

Be ready in season and out of season

Paul continued by writing that Christians should ‘be ready in season and out of season.’ What does that mean? The words ‘be ready’ in Greek is *ephistémi* and means ‘to stand upon, be present, be at hand.’ The idea is to be ‘ready’ to be confronted. The word is also translated ‘assault, stand over.’

The words ‘in season’ in the Greek is *eukairós* and means ‘opportune time, season.’ It comes from the word *eukairos* which means ‘well-timed, in time of need, timely.’

The words ‘and out of season’ in the Greek is *akairós* and means ‘untimely, lacking occasion, lacking opportunity.’

Paul was telling Timothy that a Christian involved in serving God and ministering to the needs of other people should be ready at all times. Christians will have many opportunities to minister to the needs of others. Sometimes those needs come steadily. Sometimes there are moments when needs come more slowly. God knows when those times will happen, but we don't. We need to be 'at the ready' at all times to serve Him and others. How do we do that?

Rule #33

Convince

Paul mentioned 'convince' first. The Greek word is *elegchó* and means 'admonish, convict, rebuke, reproof, expose with evidence.'

Rule #34

Rebuke

The word 'rebuke' is *epitimaó* and means 'to charge, warn, censure, forbid.'

Rule #35

Exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching

The word ‘exhort’ is *parakaleó* and means ‘urge, beseech, call for, to call near, help, comfort’ The word *paráklētos* comes from the same root of the word Jesus Christ used for both Himself and for the Holy Spirit:

“If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.” John 14:15-18

Jesus Christ ‘comforted and helped’ the disciples while He was on the Earth. Jesus rules and reigns from Heaven now and the Holy Spirit ‘comforts and helps’ members of the Body of Christ on Earth now.

Returning for a moment to our primary Scripture for these five rules:

“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: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.” 2 Timothy 4:1-2

Keep in mind that each aspect of the ministries Paul commanded Timothy and all Christians were based on the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His Kingdom. Paul wrote those words to Timothy two-thousand years ago, which seems like a long time to humans, but it is but is but a flash in Heaven. Jesus is coming soon and He will bring with Him His mighty angels, ‘in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.’

“... which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.” 2 Thessalonians 1:5- 10

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The Final Rules of Christian Ministry

I can imagine the Apostle Paul sitting in his prison cell in Rome as he wrote what would be his final letter. He had written many letters to churches and a few to individuals involved in Christian ministry. I think Paul knew this would be his final letter, so he took everything God had taught him about ministry during the previous decades and shared it with Timothy and told Timothy to share it with ‘faithful men who will be able to teach others also.’

“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand.” 2 Timothy 4:6

Rule #36

Be watchful in all things

The Greek word for ‘watchful’ is *néphó* and means ‘to be sober, abstain from wine, not intoxicated, be sensible.’ Here’s the context – the reason why Paul told Timothy to ‘be watchful in all things:’

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.” 2 Timothy 4:3-4

There have been many times in 'Church' history when people in churches have not 'endured' sound doctrine, but have turned to teachers who tell them what they want to hear. We are certainly living in a time just like that. Today's churches, denominations, Bible colleges and seminaries are filled with false teachers, and the people 'love it.' It reminds me of what the Prophet Jeremiah wrote a short time before the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple:

"The prophets prophesy falsely, And the priests rule by their own power; And My people love to have it so. But what will you do in the end?" Jeremiah 5:31

Good question – what will you do in the end? If you want to serve God and serve the spiritual needs of people, you must 'be watchful in all things.' Don't allow yourself to be drawn away by people who have a form of godliness. That's tantamount to becoming intoxicated with wine. Stay vigilant. Beware and be aware.

Rule #37

Endure afflictions

Taking a stand for the truth of God's Word will not make you popular in today's world. Even as 'Christians' heap up for themselves false teachers who will lead them away from truth, those Christian ministers who are determined to remain true to the Word of God 'rightly divided will face persecution and 'afflictions.'

The Greek word for 'endure afflictions' is *kakopatheó* and means 'endure hardship, endure suffering, suffer hardship, undergo hardship, suffer trouble.' One of the interesting aspects of the word's meaning is that what the Christian minister experiences may appear to be a 'setback,' but it's not. Keep in mind who is behind Christian Ministry – the Holy Spirit. Here's a reminder of what Jesus Christ told His disciples the Holy Spirit would do in the world:

“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.” John 16:12-15

The Spirit of God lives in each of His true children and He will not fail us. Even when we suffer hardship, persecutions, and severe afflictions, God is with us and is accomplishing His will.

Rule #38

Do the work of an evangelist

It is because of what the Holy Spirit is doing in the world that Paul told Timothy to ‘do the work of an evangelist.’ The word ‘evangelist’ is *euaggelistés* and means ‘one who proclaims good news, one who preaches good news.’ That goes back to a previous verse in Chapter Four where Paul told Timothy to ‘Preach the word!’ That’s what every Christian should do. That’s what your pastor should do. That’s what your group study leader should do. That’s what your children’s ministry workers should do. That’s what your youth leaders should do. Preach the word and do the work of an evangelist.’

Rule #39

Fulfill your ministry

The word 'fulfill' is *plérophoreó* and means 'fully persuade, fully accomplish, completely convince, make full proof of.' The idea is doing God's work to the 'fullest extent.' People committed to serving God don't stop until the work is finished. Who know when it's finished? God does. He will tell us when we have fulfilled our ministry (service) for Him and to others.

Rule #40

Fight the good fight, finish the race, keep the faith

This may be one of the best-known and most quoted of Paul's writings. After all that he had told Timothy about how to minister and how to teach the people who would be able to teach other, Paul wrote this:

“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.” 2 Timothy 4:6-8

Timothy knew Paul well. They had traveled together in ministry for many years. Timothy knew that Paul was being truthful when he said, 'I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.' Timothy was a witness to Paul's testimony as a Christian minister. Timothy also knew that Paul's time on Earth was quickly coming to an end and that Timothy and other people Paul had trained would need to take up his mantle and carry forth the life-giving message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Is there a reward waiting for Christians who carry out the Gospel ministry faithfully? Absolutely! They will receive a 'crown of righteousness' which Jesus Christ will give them on the Day of His appearing. May we be among that number.

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In Christ's Love and Grace,

Mark McGee

GraceLife / Faith and Self Defense / Grace Martial
Arts / Substack

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