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Is What You Believe That Big of a Deal?

2 Timothy 4:3: (NASB) *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires...*



Christianity is about transformation - at least, that is what it is *supposed* to be about. The problem is when we look at Christianity, what we often see is something else, something different. In some ways it seems as though Christianity has fallen into the trap of a competitive evangelism recruiting as many new believers as possible. Now wait a minute! Aren't we supposed to do that? Yes we are, but *how* are we supposed to do it? What do we believe the name of Jesus saves us from? What do we believe a Christian life should look like? What do we believe is God's plan for the masses? Do any of these things really matter? Should we just be focusing on being good, honest and loving?

Our ultimate answer to the question...YES! What you believe REALLY DOES MATTER!

We start by looking at the context of today's theme text. The Apostle Paul's life is almost over as he writes a personal letter to Timothy of Christian love and responsibility.

This was Paul's dying charge: 2 Timothy 4:1: (NASB) *I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: Paul was handing over responsibility to Timothy to carry on the work of the Gospel. The solemnity of this charge was based on the highest authority upon which Paul could call - in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing (his second presence) and His kingdom.*

Why Timothy? He was not known as a great orator and did not have the credentials of the Apostle Paul. But he was a simple, driven Christian who needed to have a boost of confidence to take responsibility. He was trustworthy.

Paul, as Timothy's mentor, told him to preach the word with deep conviction and fearlessness: 2 Timothy 4:2:

Be ready - be in the moment, ready to do whatever it is you have to

In season - when the opportunity arises, when it is convenient

Out of season - unseasonable, when it is inconvenient

Reprove - admonish/convict

Rebuke - censure, make sure those following are holding up to the standard

Exhort - call near, invite

Great patience - forbearance, refraining from enforcement of something that is due - have a benevolent sense about you

Instruction - the act of indoctrinating - teach them how to think

Why is this charge so fundamentally important? 2 Timothy 4:3: *The time will come - a clearly prophetic statement - prophesying what?*

Satan wants to corrupt God's truth to prevent the development of His true church. Paul warns us this had already begun in his day, so these words are important to us now.

When people do not hold themselves up against sound doctrine, who is in control? Is the purity of the original teaching in control, or are those who are supposed to be taught in control?

Not enduring sound doctrine is the great "hijacking" of Christianity.

2 Timothy 4:3: (NASB) *...but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will **accumulate** <2002> for themselves teachers in accordance to their own **desires** <1939>.*

Wanting to have their ears tickled - **Tickled:** (Greek Lexicon) scratch, tickle, wanting to hear something pleasant In other words, you want to hear what you want to hear.

Accumulate teachers according to their desires -**Accumulate:** Strongs #2002 *episoreuo* ep-ee-so-ryoo'-o; to heap up, accumulate in piles In other words, they will listen to those who only say what they want to hear.

Many Christian churches today say whatever they need to in order to bring in the numbers of parishioners at the expense of the indoctrination of what the true Gospel says.



Desires: Strong's #939 *epithumia* (ep-ee-thoo-mee'-ah); a longing (especially for what is forbidden)

The day will come, according to the Apostle, when these things would come - teachers whose followers want them to feed the desires of the followers. This is our world today! Is Christianity just about feeling good? Once we begin down a self-serving path, we create a momentum that is hard to stop. This momentum forms a vortex of emotions, and we develop an insatiable need to be fed what we feel we want.

The end result: 2 Timothy 4:4: (NASB) *and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.*

By accumulating to ourselves teachers who will *tickle our ears* and tell us only what we want to hear, we turn our ears away from truth towards fiction as though it were truth. This can be very emotional and fleshly. There is a conscious choice made to disbelieve truth and embrace fiction in its place.

Paul's specific instructions to Timothy: 2 Timothy 4:5: *Be sober* - (do not just act that way) be discreet, calm and collected in spirit even when things are not going well *Endure hardship* - suffer evils, be afflicted *Evangelize* - be employed in spreading the Gospel

Our job in life is to not only spread the Gospel, but to have it consume our every day. This is more than just being a "good person."

Fulfill your ministry: 2 Timothy 1:5-8: Paul reminded Timothy he had a generational legacy of those who were spiritually-minded. For Timothy, fulfilling his ministry meant leading, speaking, standing and suffering for the truth of the true Gospel. He was entrusted with it, as the Apostle Paul would be taken off the scene in death. Paul was instructing him to be a true follower of Christ as well as a leader.

What was it that Timothy was supposed to stand for? The truth of the Gospel - what it taught and not just how it made you feel.

Let's make a personal application. What do YOU believe about being Christian?

Belief: What does a Christian life look like? **Responsibilities of those beliefs:** Is Christianity about being given status or giving away status? Is it about the blessings of wealth or a wealth of blessings? Is it about a life of personal comforts received or a life of spiritual overruling believed? Is it a life of striving to get what you want or learning to want what you get? Is it a life of dreams coming true or a life of the discipline to see it all the way through? Christianity is not a fairy tale.

The Christian Questions Belief System - what we believe a true Christian life involves:

Deny ourselves: Matthew 16:24-26: True Christianity means the willingness to trade my temporary and faulty will for the will of God through Jesus! What you believe translates into who you will become. **Separate ourselves. True Christians are called to a specific role with specific responsibilities that we need training for!** 1 Peter 2:9-12: Because of these specific roles and the necessary training, we are also called upon to be different. Do people see a difference in behavior between us and the rest of the crowd? Do we rise above? We have to be high-minded in terms of spiritual things and different in Christ-likeness. **Bear each other's burdens:** Galatians 6:1-5: Earlier we talked about the great "hijacking" of Christianity. These last three items are a good example: Deny ourselves - **False Christianity says: Deny yourself? God wants you to be happy. He wants you to have, hold, be, accomplish and see success. These things are good for your Christianity.** This attitude waters down our being willing/able to walk away from earthly ambitions.

Separate ourselves - We believe Christianity is "come as you are," but then *expect to change* - be willing to separate yourselves from the rest of the world - and come up higher. **False Christianity says: Come as you are because Jesus loves you, and then stay as you are. You do not need to change.**

Bear one another's burdens - **False Christianity says: Because everyone is okay the way they are, we might be trying to help others bear burdens they should not have because they are against Scripture.** Jesus dying on the cross bore the burdens of the entire world. We cannot do what he did, but we can help bear the burdens of our brother or sister without taking away their responsibilities.



We are not only to be fully accountable for taking care of our own responsibilities, we also must be aware of and willing to contribute to the bearing of the weight of others' responsibilities as well! What if someone professes Christianity but does not do these things? What if they are a good, righteous and loving person but have no interest in separation, self-denial, transformative spirituality and so forth? Do we look at them as "false" Christians? How would Jesus treat them?

Galatians 6:7-10: We do not have to judge someone's character because God has that handled and does the judging. **Rather than focus on judgment of another's character, Galatians tells us what to do:** *⁹Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. ¹⁰So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith. This household of faith includes those called to be Christ's as well as those who appreciate the call but are not called. They love Jesus but do not want to separate, sacrifice, bear one another's burdens and so forth. We are to love them, respect them and serve them! Some are "fans" of Jesus but not true followers. True footstep followers of Christ are called disciples, sons and bride of Christ - all part of a much larger household. We have an obligation to those who may not be living up to what we believe is true Christianity, but we do not treat them with less respect or integrity. We should love the fact they appreciate Christ.*

We live in a time when the general body of Christianity does not endure sound doctrine. They do not measure themselves against pure teaching, but rather against something less, something easier and more convenient and perhaps more entertaining - something that brings you away from true Christianity. The Apostle Paul was emphatic in his instructing Timothy to not only know the TRUTH of the Gospel but to stand up for it, to preach it, to use it to correct and encourage and to use it to spread hope. Timothy was told that there would be many who would have no interest in truth but would only pursue status using the name of Christ. We also must focus on what we believe to be the truth of the Gospel based on God's Holy Word. Too often we treat our Christianity with a nod of agreement rather than really believing it.

Belief: What do YOU believe about prayer? **Responsibilities of those beliefs:** Does God answer prayer? Must you be a Christian to have your prayers heard? Does God ignore some prayers?

Our belief on this subject includes: **Asking God to hear your prayer certainly implies that He may not:** Psalm 102:1-7: There is great honesty and humility in prayers that will be heard by God. **Be open for and seek righteousness before you pray!** Proverbs 15:28-29

The further we travel on the path of godliness, the more we align ourselves with God: Proverbs 15:6-9: Living faithfully and righteously enables our prayers to be heard. One prominent example was Cornelius. His prayers were stored up until such time the Gospel call went out to the Gentiles. Then his prayers were answered. **His heart was in accordance with the will of God:** Acts 10:31

Jesus even remarked on the Father hearing him: John 11:40-43: Jesus said this out loud so the glory would go to God and not himself. This is a dramatic picture of the power of prayer. **Examples of God's attention and answers being focused only in certain directions:** James 5:16: Prayer should not be recited by rote; it should be energetic and in the present moment. 1 Peter 3:12

Belief: What do you believe about salvation and punishment? **Responsibilities of those beliefs:** What does salvation look like? Must you be a Christian to obtain salvation? What does punishment look like? Is every non-Christian in line for punishment? What happens to those we mentioned earlier - "fans" of Jesus?

Our belief on salvation includes: Salvation - worldwide salvation begins with justice: 1 Corinthians 15:20-22: Death came through a human being named Adam, so death came to all men. No one is exempt from that sentence. But so, too, did a resurrection come through a man, Jesus. All die in Adam, all in Christ will be made alive. That does not exclude anyone and is perfect justice. God's justice will prevail.

Salvation - worldwide salvation is built upon obedience. By God's grace, the obedience of the few can affect the destiny of the many! Genesis 22:15-18: Abraham was given a very



specific promise and a tremendous privilege. His descendants would become powerful and numerous like the sand on the seashore and stars of heaven.

In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed - God's further response to Abraham's obedience was that his family (both physical and spiritual - see [Galatians 3:29](#)) would eventually bless the entire world. This promise was given for the purpose of blessing, because justice was met by Jesus. Abraham is the perfect example of obedience and faith being rewarded.

Salvation - worldwide salvation is the will and desire of God: [1 Timothy 2:3](#): *To come to the knowledge of the truth* - the Greek word for knowledge here means "full disclosure." This is a deep-seated knowledge of God's will and His way - not readily available in this world today. Notice this coming to full knowledge happens AFTER all men are saved.

Salvation - worldwide salvation was and is the mission of Jesus: [John 1:29](#): (NRSV) *The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!* These are simple scriptural statements (and there are many more) about salvation. We want to give people hope!

Salvation - worldwide salvation came to us at a high price: [Hebrews 2:9](#): This great price was required by justice to cancel the sin of Adam. Without that great price - life for life - justice would not have been served and salvation not available.

Belief: What do you believe about salvation and punishment? Our belief on punishment: Sin produces death, not eternal torment. [Romans 6:23](#) [Romans 8:6](#): Life and death are opposites; not life and torment.

Those who pursue a life without Christ will find death at the end of that road:
[Matthew 7:13](#) [Philippians 3:19](#)

Total destruction is the biblical end for the incorrigible - those who will not even respond to resurrection and restoration: [Acts 3:23](#): Unfortunately Christianity has assumed traditions of men that started back in ancient Egyptian mythology, creating an environment of fear. Obey or burn - obedience through fear. Tradition also says if you are not a Christian, salvation is lost, regardless of whether or not one ever had the opportunity to be a Christian.

Belief: Is there a difference in salvation between Christians and non-Christians? We believe there are two phases of salvation.

God's plan has always had room for true justice and mercy to be served to every human in history! [1 Timothy 4:10](#): Here we have two groups God is taking care of: *all men* and *those that believe*. [1 John 2:2](#): Here we have two groups Jesus atoned the sins for: *ours* and *the sins of the whole world*. The Bible absolutely makes a distinction between true followers of Christ and everyone else, but does not teach "we" are saved and "everybody else" is lost forever.

While both groups are in line for salvation, their path to salvation is very different: [Romans 8:18-19](#): Again we see the two groups: *the creation* (the "everybody else") and *the sons of God*. The difference is the true followers are redeemed first as *sons of God*, and then *through* them the longing of the rest of the world is fulfilled! The world wants an answer to the mess it is in. How do they get it? Through the true sons of God. [Romans 8:20-22](#): The world's suffering is trapped in a longing for a hope that they cannot see, but the groaning is only temporary. Those called to follow Christ have the privilege to be able to see that hope first.

[Matthew 6:10](#): (NKJV) *Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.* Jesus was specific about his true followers going to heaven. Then why would he tell his true followers to pray for God's future kingdom to come on earth? For the "everybody else!"

It does make a difference what you believe. God has a plan. Find that plan in Scripture and hold onto it. Walk with it as your guide for life so what you believe changes your life and those around you.

**So, is what you believe that big of a deal?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!**