

## 2 Timothy 2:23-26 — Christians In Conflict.

**March 7, 2021**

Does anyone get tired of reading the news? When I go to bed, that is about the time my father opens his computer to catch up on the news of the day. My parting joke as I leave his room after saying “Good-night” is, “If you find something positive in the news, be sure to wake me and let me know.” So far, he hasn’t woken me once.

The news is filled with stories of conflict. It is about fighting. It is about a struggle for power. Before I wrote this sermon, I checked the news. The top headline was about the latest effort to remove Governor Cuomo from office on the East Coast for his COVID nursing home mismanagement. The next headline was about the recall effort of Governor Gavin Newsom in California for his COVID mismanagement. I thought, “This is perfect. The news is about coast-to-coast conflict.”

I am sure you know the news is not just about reporting conflicts but it also serves to create conflicts. When we meet people and discover they hold different political positions, the news has trained us to not just disagree with them but to look down on and even despise them. The news does more than report conflict. It creates conflict.

This morning, we are going to talk about how to handle conflict in the church. We will look at how we conduct ourselves when conflicts are foolish and petty. We will learn a little about how we conduct ourselves when conflicts are serious. We will learn how the devil tries to use conflict in the church to divide God’s people and and destroy our effectiveness for Christ and his kingdom.

The focus of our study will be 2 Timothy 2:23-26, but let's read from verse 20 to set the context for our study.

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. 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 2:20–26 (ESV)

Verses 23 to 26 are a continuation of what we studied last week. It will help if we begin with a little review of what we learned last week. Last week, Paul wrote to Timothy about the importance of putting himself in a position where he was able to accomplish the greatest good for Jesus. The big idea Paul taught Timothy, and that he taught us, was that the holiness of our lives determines the usefulness of our lives. As Christ is advancing his kingdom in this world and reaching people with the gospel, he is not using particularly skillful people in that work. He simply uses holy people in that work.

**Review — The holiness of my life determines my usefulness for God in life.**

Last week, Paul gave us an analogy to help us understand the way things work. In a great house, there are many vessels. Vessels are household items. There are many dishes, plates, cups, silverware, and cereal bowls. The only ones that are useful to the master are the clean dishes, the clean plates, and the clean silverware,. A dirty dish in the sink cannot be used to serve a meal. It needs to be washed and cleaned before it is useful to the master. The same is true for

us. As a dish or cup in God's house, God desires to use us, but if we are filthy and sitting in the sink, we are not useful for the master. We need to be a clean dish to be a useful dish. Last week, we looked at three areas where we need to be clean.

**I want to pursue holiness in my heart to be useful for God.**

What was Paul teaching us with the analogy of the dirty dishes? He told Timothy, and he told us, that if we want to be of maximum effectiveness for God in this life, we need to address areas of sin in our lives that leave us dirty, especially hidden areas in our hearts. Tolerating heart-level sins, such as the things we watch on the Internet that nobody else knows about, or the relationships we have with other people that we hide from our spouses, do have an impact on our lives. While heart-level sins may have not bitten us, and we think we can manage them, the truth is God knows about the sin we enjoy in our souls. It does impact us. It impacts our usefulness for God. When God is growing his kingdom in his church, he may want to use us but decide to pass over us because he knows our hearts. He know that at the heart-level we are dishes in the sink.

**I want to pursue holiness in my relationships to be useful for God.**

Last week, we also learned that holiness before God is not limited to hidden sin in our lives, but holiness in our relationships is also important. We need to be careful how closely we associate ourselves with those that claim to love Jesus but are living lifestyles openly opposed to Jesus. Their lack of holiness can rub off on us as we can begin to imitate their godless lifestyles. Last

week, I gave you an example what that looks like. In my freshman year at a Christian college the upperclassmen took the freshman on our floor out to watch a midnight horror movie. After one movie, I couldn't keep going with them. The gore was seriously messing with my head. I realized I needed to separate myself from that kind of life or I would be drifting away from Jesus in a hurry.

There are plenty of people who claim to be Christians but are living far from God. We need to realize that just because someone claims the name of Christ does not mean his or her lifestyle is worth following when it comes to following Christ.

Paul wrote about this In 1 Corinthians 5.

**But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. 1 Corinthians 5:11 (ESV)**

Sin in our lives impacts our usefulness for Jesus in this life.

**I want to pursue holiness in my character to be useful for God.**

Last week, we didn't just talk about the importance of holiness in our hearts and the importance of holiness in our relationships, we also talked about the importance of holiness in our character. There are some things we are to run from in our character and other things we are to run toward in our character if we want to put ourselves in positions to be useful for God.

We are to run from youthful passions. Last week, we learned that Scripture is not just talking about sexual passions. It is talking about the emotions and reactions that characterize young leaders such as pride, ego, and selfishness. While we are to run from those poor character traits, we are to

pursue, that is run after, good character traits. We looked at the ones Paul detailed for us last week.

We are to pursue active righteousness. That means we are to take initiative and go out of our way to do what is right when we have the opportunity. For example, if you see a young mom in the church who has a bunch of sick kids, take the initiative and offer to bring the family a meal. When we take that kind of initiative, God will start using us in all kinds of ways to build people in Christ and grow his kingdom.

We are to pursue faithfulness in our character. That means we pursue being the kind of friend that is trustworthy, loyal, and true. When we are known for our faithfulness in friendships, God will start using us all over the place.

We are to work hard at loving people. The love talked about here is love of choice. We are to go out of our way to love people that are different than us, people who are not naturally attractive to us. When we do that, God will start using us all over the place.

Lastly, we are to pursue peace and harmony in our relationships. When we are the kind of person who creates peace between people, not division between people, God will grab us and use us for building his kingdom in ways we wouldn't expect.

This morning, as we continue our study in the following verses, Paul shifted to telling us how we can put ourselves in positions to be useful to God when we are in a conflict, specifically church conflict. How we handle ourselves in a conflict will have a huge impact on our usefulness for God. Every conflict is

an opportunity to take a big step backward and diminish our impact for Christ or take a big step forward and grow our usefulness for Christ. It all depends what we do under pressure. Let's learn how to be useful for Christ in a conflict.

**I want to avoid pointless controversies to be useful for God. They breed quarrels.**

Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. 2 Timothy 2:23 (ESV)

Paul's words to Timothy were simple. If we can avoid silly arguments and disagreements, we should. Steer clear of foolish disagreements. Don't get sucked into petty disagreements.

This was not new instruction to Timothy. If we go back to 1 Timothy, we see Paul also warned Timothy in this earlier letter about not getting sucked into foolish, pointless, ignorant controversies. Foolish arguments breed quarrels like frogs breed tadpoles.

As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions. 1 Timothy 1:3–7 (ESV)

Let's go back to 2 Timothy and see how Paul described these pointless arguments. He called them foolish. In the Greek, that is the word *moros*. That is where we get the English word moron. Paul literally said, "Avoid the kind of arguments that only a true moron would get themselves sucked into." Yes, you heard me right. I used the word moron in church. That is because we study the

Bible as it was originally written. I was cutting the word straight and telling you the way Paul spoke it.

These types of controversies are not just moronic, they are also the kind of controversies that only ignorant people get themselves involved in. The point is that if you would just read your Bible, it wouldn't take long for you to realize the foolishness of what you were wasting your time arguing over.

So Paul was clear on the principle. Here are a few examples of what foolish, ignorance, and speculative arguments look like.

In Mark 12, we read about the Sadducees asking Jesus about a woman who was married to seven different brothers. Each brother died without leaving a child. The custom of Levirate marriage forced the next younger brother to marry the widow. This continued until all seven brothers were married to her but none of them had a child through her. They asked Jesus which of the seven brothers she would be married to in the resurrection? Jesus immediately saw this as a foolish, time-wasting question that would lead to a pointless argument. Jesus pointed out that if they just studied the Bible a bit more, they could have realized the foolishness of their argument on their own. In the resurrection, people are not married. Who would this woman be married to in the resurrection was a wrong-headed question.

Foolish, time-wasting questions and speculations that we should avoid are around today. For example, some people argue over the question, "Do angels have wings?" Others argue over the question, "Did Adam have a belly button?"

While we laugh over these pointless debates, the church has a history of getting caught up in pointless debates about questions that cannot be definitively answered.

For example, take the return of Christ. Is Jesus coming back? Yes. Is he going to resurrect our bodies? Yes. Is he going to set up a new heaven and earth where heaven and earth are combined and we live with Jesus forever? Yes. Those pieces are clear. Then people get out their charts and graphs to figure out the way things will happen. The exact details of what will happen and when things are going to happen is good to discuss, but it is foolish to fight over answers to those questions. It is foolish to break fellowship with a brother or sister in Christ over answers to those timing questions. It is foolish to fight to the death and draw blood over answers to those questions. When we battle to the death over these issues, we are making foolish choices.

Another example of a complete waste of time was the book the Boy Who Came Back From Heaven. It was the story of Alex Malarkey and his supposed experiences in heaven after a traffic accident in 2004. Many Christians read the book and took it as a definitive on angels and life after death. The truth is that it was all speculation. It was all story. Alex Malarkey later recanted his entire story, telling people he made it up. Following his story was a waste of time and an exercise in foolish speculation. Paul told Timothy, and us, to avoid these kinds of things. If you want to know the truth about angels, stick to the Bible. That is the only definitive book on the angelic world and life after death.

Another one of my favorite silly Christian controversies is the King James-only debate. There is a group out there that insists the King James Bible is the only allowable English Bible. These people insist there is a conspiracy to take verses out of modern Bibles and the missing verses are only found in the original King James Bible. This is similar to a QAnon for Jesus conspiracy. It is pointless and silly.

How many verses fit the category of not being mentioned in modern English New Testaments? Approximately 16. Why were they taken out? They were taken out of the main body of English text because when better and older manuscripts were found, it was discovered that they were never in the original Greek manuscripts in the first place so they should not be included in our Bibles. Where did they go? The footnotes!

The King James-only debate wouldn't be that important if the King James-only crowd was willing to work with the rest of the modern church. Unfortunately, many of them are not. Many of them refuse to work with other churches unless they use the King James Bible. My friends, that is a silly, pointless, and foolish debate that divides the church.

While we laugh at these pointless debates, the reason Timothy was to avoid them and the reason we are to avoid being sucked into them is because they breed quarrels. They divide Christians. Christians end up fighting one another on pointless issues instead of reaching people with Jesus.

Folks, at CrossWinds we try to avoid these silly, pointless debates because we don't want to be sidetracked by quarrels. We want to stay focused

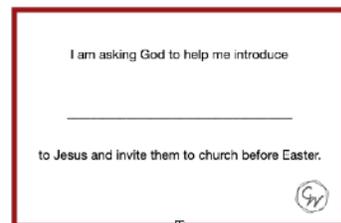
on our mission, which is to reach people with Jesus. At the end of the day, it doesn't matter if you guessed the right way the end times will unfold. It doesn't matter if Adam had a belly button. It doesn't matter if you read the King James or a modern copy of the Bible that is easier to read. What matters is if we know Jesus, if we have lived for Jesus, and if we are reaching people with Jesus. That is what will count in eternity, not most of the stuff we quarrel over.

While most of us are not quarreling over things that distract from our mission, with COVID and social distancing, most of us were distracted from our mission. Now that we are beginning to meet, it is a good time to get back to our mission. Who are you trying to reach with Jesus? My hope and prayer is that every single one of us has one person in our sphere of influence that we believe doesn't know Jesus that we are praying for. In prayer we ask God to help us tell them about Jesus. We ask God to help us invite them to church where they can hear about Jesus. That is our mission. That is what we are focused on.

If we are focused on reaching people with Jesus, controversies among us will be minimal. If we lose our focus of reaching people with Jesus, we will start to fight and debate over pointless stuff that won't be worth a hill of beans in eternity.

This week, in your bulletin, you have a card.

Take this card, put it in your Bible, and write the name of one person on it that you are asking God to help you reach with Jesus between now and Easter. What is the name of one person in your sphere of influence that God has placed so you can tell them about Jesus, and invite them to church



I am asking God to help me introduce  
\_\_\_\_\_  
to Jesus and invite them to church before Easter.

Small circular logo in the bottom right corner.

where they can hear about Jesus? You would be shocked how much unity is in a church when people are focused on reaching people with Jesus in a church.

**Jesus is the model servant of the Lord who shows us how to face conflict.**

**And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, 2 Timothy 2:24 (ESV)**

Paul told Timothy he was to see himself as the Lord's servant. That language doesn't ring a bell for many of us, but to Timothy, it probably brought to mind Old Testament passages from the book of Isaiah. In Isaiah, there are passages that describe Jesus as the ultimate servant of the Lord, the ultimate pastor, elder, and teacher. Isaiah prophetically spoke about how Jesus would conduct himself in a world of people who wanted to fight with him and quarrel with him. Nobody received more quarreling and hatred from God's people than Jesus. Nobody put himself in a position to be more useful to God in those conflicts than Jesus. Paul said to Timothy, "Do you want to know who to follow in a conflict? Do you want to know how to put yourself in a position to be useful for God in a conflict? Follow Jesus. Learn from Jesus." Look at what Isaiah said about Jesus as the servant of the Lord and what he was like.

**He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street... Isaiah 42:2 (ESV)**

Jesus was not a hell-fire-and-brimstone preacher. He was not somebody who yelled at people to get his point across. He was gentle and soft spoken.

**...a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. Isaiah 42:3 (ESV)**

Jesus was not someone who beat down discouraged and weak people when he taught. He cared about the hurting and the weak.

I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting. Isaiah 50:6 (ESV)

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. Isaiah 53:7 (ESV)

As a pastor and teacher, Jesus put up with terrible evil done to him. He didn't open his mouth and cuss anyone out. He kept speaking the truth. He kept loving people. He didn't defend himself. He kept loving his enemies and trusted what would happen to him in the hands of God the Father.

Paul said to Timothy, "Remember Isaiah? Remember Jesus? If you can't avoid a conflict, Jesus is the model to follow when you end up in a conflict. Walk in his footsteps." Let's look at how Paul developed this thought.

#### **The Lord's servant is not to be quarrelsome.**

Did you notice that Jesus did not his best to not be drawn into pointless debates? Interestingly, Jesus refused to be drawn into the political debates of his day. Jesus did not want to be labeled as falling on one side or the other of most political issues. That is not because politics are not important but because our relationship to Jesus is far more important than politics. Look how Jesus sidestepped politics.

And they came and said to him, "Teacher, we know that you are true and do not care about anyone's opinion. For you are not swayed by appearances, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?" But, knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, "Why put me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me look at it." And they brought one. And he said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They said to him, "Caesar's." Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they marveled at him. Mark 12:14–17 (ESV)

Today, Christians are quickly drawn into politics in the church. The problem is that when our foyer talk becomes all about politics we are drawn into agreement with some people, but we start alienating other people. Soon people are leaving church because in the foyer there is more talk about politics than about Jesus.

Years ago, I served in a church where the local Republicans wanted to put a supposedly non-partisan voter guide into church bulletins. I may not remember it exactly right. They may have requested to put the voter guides in the church foyers. The leaders in the church refused to allow that. That was the right choice. Later, the voter guides were ending up under people's windshield wipers in the church parking lot. We had the ushers remove them. Why did we do that? Is it because we should avoid politics all the time? Absolutely not. I just don't want people coming to church thinking the church is about politics when it is about Jesus. I don't want people of an opposing political party who need to meet Jesus being turned away from Christ's church because they think our church is more about politics than it is about Jesus.

At church, I want people to take about Jesus, not a political party. A political party cannot change your life. Only Jesus can change your life. A political party cannot save your soul. Only Jesus can save your soul. A political party cannot change your opinion on things. Only Jesus can change your opinion on things. I don't want to alienate people who need to meet Jesus by promoting politics instead of Jesus.

Think about how Jesus handled this. His primary calling card was not politics. He tried to avoid those quarrels. He was focused on people and their relationship to him, because in eternity that is what matters. A hundred years from now it won't matter who you voted for in the last election. What will matter is have you trusted Jesus?

**The Lord's servant is kind to everyone.**

...but kind to everyone...

Remember this was written to Pastor Timothy. Pastor Timothy was not to have a reputation for quarreling but for kindness, and not just kindness to some people but kindness to all people. Pastor Timothy wasn't allowed to play favorites in church. That is the way we are to be. We are to be kind and loving to everyone. That is the way Jesus was. Wasn't he willing to extend grace and kindness to everyone?

When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick. Matthew 14:14 (ESV)

I love the compassion of Jesus. Jesus didn't have people fill out a background check before he healed them. He didn't check their voter registration card. It didn't matter what they had done. It didn't matter who they hurt. Jesus had compassion on them when they cried out to him. That is the way pastors are to be. That is the way we are to be --- kind to everyone, even to our enemies.

Can a pastor spend the same amount of time with everyone? No. However, he must genuinely love everyone. Remember the purpose of these verses. For a pastor to be effective, especially in times of conflict, the pastor must

go out of his way to love everyone and be kind to everyone to be as effective as possible for Jesus.

This is easy to talk about until someone is not kind to us, until someone is hurtful toward us. When people go after me or say things that are not true about me, my natural response is to be defensive. My natural response is to not be kind. I need to get on my knees and pray a lot, asking Jesus to help me love and pray for my accusers.

The way to stay useful for God in a conflict is when the conflict is over, wouldn't it be great if people said, "He or she was kind to me even when we disagreed"? When that happens, people will have more respect for you after the conflict instead of less respect for you after the conflict.

On this point, I think of Jesus as they whipped him, as they nailed him to the cross. What did Jesus say to those who were crucifying him? "Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing." That is kindness to everyone.

### **The Lord's servant must be able to teach.**

...able to teach...

This is an interesting term. It is used only one other time in the New Testament to describe the skills needed of a pastor or elder, in 1 Timothy 3:2. They must to be able to teach. This doesn't mean they just need the ability to collect and organize data. This word teach pertains to the skill needed to communicate God's truth in a way that people can understand it and apply it to their lives.

As I thought about the ability to teach, I felt like this teaching ability was not meant to be understood as standing in isolation from the words around it.

Before this little phrase, Paul spoke of the need to be kind to everyone. After it, Paul spoke of the importance of patiently enduring evil. I think this is saying that as a teacher, Timothy needed to be able to teach, but he needed to be able to teach with kindness, gentleness, and graciousness even when he was being attacked and undermined by contentious and divisive people. An effective teacher for Christ, especially in a time of conflict, does not use his pulpit to browbeat his opponents.

As I was studying this, what came to mind was an Old Testament class I took at Trinity Seminary. My professor was Dr. Willem VanGemeran. He held a covenantal view of Old Testament texts. There was another teacher in the school, Dr. John Sailhammer, who taught a similar class, but he taught Old Testament texts from a different perspective. Since these teachers were so different, as students, we asked them to spend one class in debate. They were kind and agreed. They were both so smart. About 15 minutes into the debate they were beyond my understanding. I think they were beyond almost everyone's understanding.

Even though I was lost in the debate, in my mind, I knew who won the debate. It was Dr. VanGemeran. Why was he the winner? While I didn't understand all of Dr. Sailhammer's theology, what I did understand were the cheap shots and slightly sarcastic comments he made to Dr. Van Gemeran about his covenantal view of the Old Testament texts. Dr. VanGemeran taught and debated in a completely different way. He was extremely kind to Dr. Sailhammer. He was very gentle toward him. He ignored the pot shots and didn't take any pot

shots. He never raised his voice. He kept his finger in the text and didn't try to make anybody look bad. In that debate, the kindness and gentleness Dr. Van Gemeren had for his opponent won in my heart.

I admired him so much that after I proposed to Cindy, I asked him to perform our wedding. A Christian's character when teaching and debating someone is extremely important. More hearts will be won by Christ-like character in our debates than by browbeating content during our debates.

**The Lord's servant is to patiently endure evil.**

...patiently enduring evil.

This is the hardest statement. When people are doing evil things to us and speaking evil against us, it is hard to endure evil. We want to get our pound of flesh and get even.

What path did Jesus choose when the religious leaders of the Jews were trying to kill him? Jesus patiently endured the evil spoken against him and done against him. He patiently suffered and entrusted the results to God.

If we are going to be a useful vessel for the Lord in times of conflict, we must set in our hearts that we will patiently endure evil. We are not to be people who try to get revenge for evil done to us. We are not to be people who develop bad attitudes because of the evil done against us. We are not to be people who spend all of our time defending ourselves and threatening people with our lawyers.

Why are we this way? Jesus was insulted, but he didn't insult back. When Jesus suffered, he made no threats. He chose to be kind in his character. He refused to retaliate. He trusted the God the Father with the results.

For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. 1 Peter 2:21–23 (ESV)

If a pastor is going to be a useful vessel in God's hands, especially in a time of conflict in the church, he must maintain a gentle demeanor. When people yell at us, we must refuse to raise our voices. When people slander us on social media, we must refuse to slander them back. We must not be known for our fighting. We must not be known for our bitterness. The more that we patiently endure evil, the more useful and influential we become for Jesus in that conflict.

Remember that God the Father is still on the throne. He is in charge. No matter what people say about us or do to us, God the Father knows the truth about us.

We cannot let the hurtful things done to us or said about us turn us into bitter, vengeful, nasty, angry people. That would ruin our witness. That would ruin the difference Christ can make for his kingdom through our lives.

Like Jesus, the gentler we are, the less defensive we are, and less bitter we are, the more useful we become for Christ and His kingdom.

As I thought about this in my own life, I know this is one area I need to work on. I need to remember to patiently endure the evil done against me and trust my life into God the Father's hands, knowing that he knows the truth. He can save me and rescue me. In those times of hurt, the gentleness of my character counts.

When the world falls apart around you, and people have done evil against you, endure the evil, trust yourself to God and continue doing good. Know that

God is in charge of your life. He loves you. He has a good plan for you. He hasn't forgotten you. Our character, patience, love, and kindness toward those who have done evil toward us will make us useful to Christ and his kingdom in those moments.

**The Lord's servant is to correct opponents with gentleness.**

...correcting his opponents with gentleness... 2 Timothy 2:25 (ESV)

This little section is an important counterbalance to what we just read. On the one hand, we are to patiently endure evil. We put up with it, like Jesus did. We are not to let the evil done to us turn us into hateful, nasty, and vengeful people. That doesn't mean we can't say anything to correct people when they are wrong. We can correct people, but we don't correct them with vindictiveness. We correct them with gentleness.

The word gentleness means mildness or softness. We show people the error of their ways in a mild and soft manner.

The idea is that we try to maintain a relationship rather than destroy a relationship when we correct someone. We are not trying to hurt a person. We are trying to correct a person because they love him or her.

**The goal of a Christian in conflict is compassion not revenge.**

Paul told Timothy to be humble but instructive. He was to be gracious and gentle, but he was still to speak what needed to be spoken. As Paul came to the end of what it means to be a useful vessel for God in a time of conflict he answered the "why" question. He told us why we are kind to everyone, why we are to patiently endure evil, and why we are to refuse to be a quarrelsome

person. The reason why we act this way is because the goal between Christians in conflict is compassion not revenge.

These verses have some important lessons in them.

**Pray God grants repentance to conflictual Christians who have drifted.**

**God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth... 2 Timothy 2:25 (ESV)**

In a conflict, the only reason someone can repent of his or her sin is because God gives the gift of repentance. Just as God the Father enabled us to see our sin and gave us the gift of repentant hearts for our sin when we became Christians, in the same way, God is the only one who can give anyone the gift of repentance in a conflict.

What role do we play? It is our kindness to everyone. It is our willingness to patiently endure evil. It is our gentleness when we correct that God uses as a tool in his hand to lead others to repentance. Even though the gift of repentance comes from God alone, our handling conflict well enables us to be used by God to bring repentance in the lives of others.

What could be better than to be used by God in this way? This is why we are to have hearts of compassion toward brothers and sisters in Christ who have become our enemies, not revenge.

**Christians can be trapped by Satan to do his will.**

**...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 2:26 (ESV)**

This is a verse that is new for many of us. Did you realize that Christians can drift away from Christ and be captured by Satan to do his will in the church?

When Christians are captured by Satan to do his will, Satan has them become bitter and divisive people in the church. This is another reason we want to be used by God in a conflict. We want to be used by God to help free people from the clutches of Satan. The way we are kind to everyone, the way we absorb the evil done to us, the way we correct like Jesus, the way we pursue being like Jesus in a conflict is used by God to help free people from Satan's clutches. What could be better than being used by God to bring people to the point of repentance and free people from Satan's trap?

At CrossWinds, we want to be people God uses. We want to be useful tools in the hand of God, even in conflicts. We want to be people who God the Father is able to use because of our kindness, patience under evil, and gentleness in correction to lead those who have strayed to repentance and free those who are caught in Satan's trap and have become bitter and divisive people.



Dr. Kurt Trucksess is ordained in the Evangelical Free Church of America. He enjoys reading, writing, and time with his family. Feel free to contact him at [www.Christ2RCulture.com](http://www.Christ2RCulture.com) ([www.c2rc.com](http://www.c2rc.com))

© You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided (1) you credit the author, (2) modifications are clearly marked, (3) you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction, (4) you include the web address ([www.Christ2RCulture.com](http://www.Christ2RCulture.com)) on the copied resource.

