

Changing Lives One Person at a Time **2 Timothy 2:24-26**

Introduction:

1. What images come to your mind when I say the word “change?” In many churches, the word “change” is a dirty word. Change is not always well accepted.
 - In a church for others, not only is change tolerated, it is embraced.
2. The gospel of Jesus Christ is all about change. There is an inherent power in the gospel of Christ that changes a person from the inside out when it is accepted by a person. Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:18; 2 Corinthians 5:17
3. In a church for others, lives are being changed one person at a time. God desires to use our church (our people), and to use you to lead people to make life-changing decisions at crossroads times in their lives (marriage, graduation, starting college, death of loved one, birth of child, divorce, move into area, etc).
4. This is what the apostle Paul taught a young pastor named Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:24-26.
5. How can our church change lives one person at a time? This passage holds the keys:

First, we must believe that God’s truth can change anybody.

1. In verse 26, the picture is of people that are in total bondage to Satan.
 - The phrase, “*may recover themselves*” literally means “to become sober again; to regain one’s senses.” It conveys the idea of someone coming out of a drunken stupor. It describes a person who has lost his sense of reality.
 - “*snare*” – a trap (as fastened by a noose); a trick
 - “*taken captive*” – to take alive; make a prisoner of war
 - They have stumbled, fallen into Satan’s trap, and been taken alive as prisoners. It is not a pretty picture.
2. But, God says these people can be brought to repentance, and can be recovered! They can be set free. They can be changed and transformed (a new person).
3. Many times, we are too quick to write a person off, and we say, “He’ll never change. You’ll never convince him. He’s too hard a nut to crack.”
4. Paul really believed that lives can be changed. Why? Let me remind you of the guy God used to write this book of the Bible.
 - Paul sought to destroy the church. He dragged believers to prison, he blasphemed, he slaughtered believers, he was full of rage and anger, and he was violent and abusive.
 - But the gospel of Christ completely transformed him into a different man.
 - There are over 25 verses that deal with Paul’s ruthless, bloody, and barbaric behavior before he accepted Christ. Why is this in the Bible? It is to teach us that nobody is beyond saving.
5. I’ve heard people say, “He’s gone too far. He has crossed the limit. He is beyond saving.” I am so glad that God’s grace knows no boundaries. It is never too late, until you die. Once you die, your eternal destiny is settled. Romans 5:20

6. A church for others is at the prisons, juvenile delinquency centers, drug rehab centers, etc. Why? Because a church for others believes that God's truth can change anybody. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11
7. Has God's truth changed you? Have you experienced the power of the gospel?

Second, we must be available to share God's truth.

1. God's truth can change anybody, but not if they don't hear it! Romans 10:14
 - Our job is to proclaim His truth. This is why the church exists. 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 1 Timothy 3:15
2. Look in our text at verses 24-25. As servants of the Lord, this is **our** job. Not **my** job... **our** job. If you are a servant of the Lord, this passage explains clearly what you are to do and how you are to do it.
3. We are to teach and instruct those in bondage to Satan.
 - We aren't to give up on them, write them off, or tell them off.
 - "Instructing" means "to teach; to educate."
 - Remember the snare that they are in? The snare of Satan is his lies. We must counteract that with the truth of God's Word (vs. 15). This is what we are to be teaching.
4. How are we to share God's truth?
 - "be gentle unto all men" - kind
 - "patient" - forbearing
 - "In meekness" - a spirit of humility
 - We should never share God's truth in an arrogant or hostile manner. When it says, "must not strive," this means "to quarrel; dispute."
5. You and I can't save anybody. Our job is to share God's truth and then pray that God will use it in a powerful way in that person's life.
6. Romans 6:17 says that these people "*were the servants of sin.*" Paul **delivered** to them the truth and they obeyed it. The result was that their lives were radically changed (vs. 18). We are God's delivery boys!
7. Why is our church growing and why are lives being changed? Because we have a lot of people who are dedicated to sharing God's truth with others. This is so crucial. John 8:32

Third, we must lead people to repentance.

1. Repentance leads to recovery from Satan's bondage (vs. 25-26). Without repentance, there is no true, lasting recovery.
2. Repentance is not:
 - Being sorry because you got caught.
 - Being embarrassed because your sin was exposed.
 - Seeking God because you want God to simply change your circumstances and take away all your problems. You're in a mess and you want God to bail you out.
3. True repentance is seeing your sin as God sees it, then turning from sin and self unto God and embracing His truth. It is awareness that what we have done is wrong and that we have offended God.

- The word “*repentance*” in verse 25 means “reversal.” It is a U-turn, a complete one-eighty.
 - Example: 1 Thessalonians 1:9
4. Every ministry of our church is geared towards sharing the truth and leading people to repentance. Example: Counseling – the goal is not to simply make people feel better, but to get to the root of the problem.
 5. If people are to be recovered from the snares of the devil, it will take repentance and turning to the truth. The person in bondage is the only one who can decide to do this. vs. 26
 6. We can share God's truth and lead people, but it must be their decision. You've heard the expression, “You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink.” You can share God's truth and lead people to repentance, but you can't make them repent and turn to God.
 7. Every day that God withholds judgment from planet earth, He is giving us an opportunity to repent and turn to the truth. Romans 2:4b

In Conclusion:

1. As believers and servants of the Lord, we should be all about seeing lives changed one person at a time. What will it take?
 - We must believe God's truth can change anybody.
 - We must stand ready and willing to share God's truth.
 - We must lead people to repentance and see them set free through God's truth.
2. In a church for others, truth is changing lives.