

## **2 Timothy 2:23-26** **“Tongue twisters”**

### **I. Introduction**

### **II. Vs. 23 When to talk, when to not**

### **III. Vs. 24-26 Six guidelines of behaving right while being right**

#### **I. Introduction**

As Paul wrote this letter awaiting his death, he understood that the world that he was leaving behind for his son in the faith Timothy was going to become far worse for all believers. Timothy not only was facing adversity from the outside he was facing it from the inside as well as the church was no longer into practicing the truth instead as Paul tells us in chapter 3 verses 1-5 they would have a form of godliness but deny its power. That’s the backdrop to the section we are looking at his morning. How to live in a world of filled with conflict and in a church filled with controversy.

If we were to take a poll as to what the hardest things to do in our ministry to others I’m pretty certain that keeping our cool with those who are losing their cool towards us has got to be in the top 5. Paul is going to address this difficult challenge in chapter 2 verses 23-26, so if you are like me and find this a great challenge then you make want to take some notes.

#### **II. Vs. 23 When to talk, when to not**

Vs. 23 The first issue Paul takes up is how to handle what he calls “*foolish and ignorant disputes*” in the church. I like how the Revised Standard Version describes this as “*stupid, senseless controversies.*” This clarifies what we believers should avoid doesn’t it? There are those who are so passive who think that this passage is saying to not get

involved with any kind of biblical controversy, never take a side on any issue if it creates an argument. Recently an Episcopalian church made headlines as they not only allowed a Muslim Community to hold worship services in their building they also allowed all Christian symbols to be covered or removed as the Imam complained that they found them offensive. In 1 Corinthians 11:19 Paul says that “*There must be factions among you (the church) that those who are approved may be recognized.*” In other words when controversy breaks out you can tell a lot about who is truly mature and who isn’t. These controversies have help clarify what truth is and what is important as we see in the book of Acts Chapter 11 when Peter spoke on gentile believers not first having to become Jewish converts before accepting Christ. Paul describes two types of disputes to avoid:

1. **Foolish**: The word here in the Greek is the root word for our word moron, which suggests that these controversies are on trivial matters which no matter how long and passionately they are debated they do nothing to advance the Person and work of Christ. People argue over things like the indication of the person who will be the Anti-Christ and have the number 666. These foolish disputes though interesting do nothing to further the person or work of Jesus, instead they just divide the body of Christ and give ammunition to those who are looking for a reason to reject Jesus on the grounds that believers can’t get along.
2. **Ignorant**: The word translated “*ignorant*” is the appropriate translation as it describes a dispute that comes from ignorance. These are the kind of disputes that are based upon ignorance and folks making an argument out of something that we cannot know for certain. These kind of disputes are common in Israel when considering the exact geographical location of certain events in the Bible. Unless there is archeological

evidence that proves a location the best we can do is come up with conjecture. Yet Church's divide over location. These are senseless disputes that we should just avoid, that go along the same line as which translation is the best.

It is important that we understand that discussion is fine but disputes and division is not!

### **III. Vs. 24-26 Six guidelines of behaving right while being right**

Vs. 24-26 But what about biblical areas where there are attacks on the validity of the word of God, or moral and social issues addressed in God's Word? How are we to deal with issues that we cannot just disagree agreeably with? Paul gives Timothy **6 guidelines of how to behave right while being right (1 negative 5 positive)!**

1. Vs. 24b "*A servant of the Lord must not quarrel..*": This one is put in the negative and speaks to what we shouldn't do even if we are right, we must not be argumentative. **We are not out to win arguments, we are called to be involved in winning souls.** We need to be willing to listen, examine and discuss not put down and discredit
  
2. Vs. 24c "*Gentile to all*": The next 5 are put in the positive, starting with the exhortation to be gentle or kind to ALL. **We must treat people that disagree with TRUTH with respect and kindness otherwise the truth that we possess will get lost in our wrong actions.** The word "*gentile*" comes from a word that is translated "*approachable*" and that is what we must make sure we are when handling the truth. I wonder how many times in my life has someone rejected the TRUTH of God's Word not on the merits of the TRUTH but rather upon the harshness of my actions.

3. Vs. 24d *“Able to teach”*: This deals with the skill full art of communication. The gift that allows a person to communicate truth passionately and purposefully yet not get sided tracked into feelings, and experiences. Gifted communicators keep people fixed upon facts not diving into fantasies. Stories and illustrations are salt and pepper to the meal but they never taste good if they become the meal!
4. Vs. 24e *“Patient”*: A person that can keep their cool when someone is deliberately bating them into a fight. My grandfather once talked to me about my habit of getting into name calling saying, *“Son, you should never get into a soccer match with a one legged soccer player, because even in winning you look foolish.”* That’s what Peter said of Jesus in 1 Peter 2:23 saying that, *“When He was reviled, He did not revile in return; but He trusted in Him who judges rightly.”*
5. Vs. 25a *“In humility correcting those who are in opposition”*: This guideline is a summation of all the above. Paul reminds Timothy that the best way to correct others is in humility and brokenness, where the attitude is not superiority but rather that you are the worst sinner you have had the displeasure of knowing. The phrase *“who are in opposition”* is rendered elsewhere as *“those who oppose **THEMSELVES**”*. When we oppose TRUTH we are in opposition against our self. That’s why you can’t convince someone intellectual of truth they have to be at a place by the Holy Spirit that they are open to hearing. One of Jesus’ favorite phrases to say to people with regards to truth was “he who has ears to hear” which is found some 33 times in the gospels. The word correction is word employed elsewhere in the Greek language as *“child training”*. The idea is not just telling a person they are wrong but teaching by demonstration what is right.

6. Vs. 25b-26 “....*that they will repent and come to know the truth...escape ... the snare of the devil....captured by him to do his will.*”: This is perhaps the most important guideline of all as it deal with **four important things that will keep us focused on the goal of our conversation when we are in a dispute against those who disagree with TRUTH:**

- **The GOAL of the conversation:** “*That they will come to know the truth*”.

When engaged in this kind of dispute we must realize that **our goal isn't in winning the argument but in being used to preset the truth.** The fact that Pal says “*that they will come to know the truth*” is very suggestive as it tells us that such understanding may take time and that will require an investment from us. Many times we are in too big of a hurry to listen and we just start thumping our bibles as if we are in a speeding reading championship. I'm a strong proponent of “***friendship or relational***” evangelism as it I by far the most effective form of communicating truth.

- **The MOTIVATION behind getting involved in a dispute:** “*That they will escape the snare of the devil*”. We must remember that a person who is in error in regards to Biblical truth has been caught without their knowledge the in a web of lies carefully crafted by the enemy of their souls. We know this to be true because we also at one time were caught in this same web. Far too often we forget this and instead of seeing ourselves as liberators we see ourselves as commandos and kill those who are hostages instead of being involved in setting them free.

- **What to KEEP IN MIND with the person who is in error:** *“That they are captured by him to do his will”*. This third thing to remember is difficult because those who are captured become combative against the truth in the same way a person who can’t swim fights against the very people who have come to rescue them from drowning. Satan has been a master at getting believer to fight against the wrong enemy, as we attack the very people we are called to rescue. We will need to exercise patient as we wait for them too tire of the fight and come to an understanding that their enemy is the lies they are defending not the truth that will set them free.
- **The DIVINE POSSIBILITIES:** *“That they will repent”*. The last thing to remember is that this whole dispute aim is getting them to change directions and this is always a spiritual battle not merely an intellectual battle. If acceptance of truth was merely about education we would only need to hand folks a Bible of a gospel tract. No it is fundamentally a spiritual battle that must be fought in the power of the HOLY SPIRT and not the energy and strategy of the flesh.