

FLEE YOUTHFUL LUSTS AND FOLLOW AFTER THE LORD

2 TIMOTHY 02:22–26

Introduction

This is a critical charge to young people. Any young person who fails to heed this charge is doomed to a barren and empty life and to a lost eternity.

- I. Flee youthful lusts (v. 22).
- II. Follow after the Lord (v. 22).
- III. Avoid foolish arguments (v. 23).
- IV. Do not argue or fight with others (vv. 24-26).

I. 2 Timothy 02:22 *Flee Youthful Lusts*

First, flee youthful lusts. The Greek word “desires” (epithumai) means passionate lusts and cravings. It can mean either good or bad desires, and its meaning is always to be determined by the context (Wuest). The point is this: passionate desire and craving is normal and natural. God made us to desire and crave. It is when we use our passions to hurt and damage that they become evil. What are the *lusts or desires* of youth?

- => *The desires of the eye*: youth desire to have and possess. To have and possess are normal desires, but the normal desire can lead to the lust for possessions and people.
 - => *The desires of the flesh (sinful nature)*: youth desire the companionship of the opposite sex. Attraction is normal and leads to marriage and the carrying on of the human race. However, the normal desire can lead to illicit sex and immorality.
 - => *The desire for acceptance*: youth want friends. They want to fit in with their peers. They want approval, and they want to be recognized. This is normal, but it can lead to compromise — the compromise of one’s values and morality and of the truth. It can also lead to rebellion against authority.
 - => *The desire to achieve*: youth desire to be successful, to find their place in the world. However, this can lead to seeking authority and power over people and to the manipulation and using of people for one’s own ends.
 - => *The desire for recognition*: youth desire to be the top gun, the star, the best looking, the smartest, the most popular. They constantly picture themselves as winning the game in the last second; winning the beauty pageant; winning the contest; being the one most recognized, and a host of other daydreams. This can lead to either pride and arrogance or to a sense of inferiority and low self-image. It can lead either to the hurting of the less gifted or to the downing of oneself.
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- ⇒ *The desire to act and to act now*: youth, bursting with energy and idealism, want to see things done now. This can lead to impatience and to the mistreatment of people: bypassing and disregarding the peace and security of other people.
- ⇒ *The desire to be original and creative*: youth want to have the new and fresh idea, the better thought, and the better way for doing things. This can lead to a critical and argumentative spirit. It can also lead to cheating in order to be recognized. It can lead to the restating and rewording of things and ideas and claiming that they are creative ideas.

The charge to youth is direct and forceful: flee youthful lusts — flee the evil desires of youth.

Eph 5:3, 5 *But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person — such a man is an idolater — has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*

1 Tim 6:7-10 *For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*

2 Tim 3:2 *People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy;*

Mat 5:27-28 *“You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”*

1 John 2:15-16 *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world — the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does — comes not from the Father but from the world.*

1 Th 4:3-5 *It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honourable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God;*

2 Tim 2:22 *Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*

James 1:14-15 *But each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.*

1 Pet 2:11 *Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.*

II. *2 Timothy 02:22 Follow After the Lord with Other Believers*

Second, follow after the Lord. But note a significant point: join with other believers in following after Him. As a youth, you need the companionship and fellowship, the experience and maturity, the direction and guidance of others. Other believers can help you; therefore, join with them and pursue, follow after the Lord. However, make sure they are genuine believers — that they “call on the Lord out of a *pure heart*.” Only the pure in heart — only the genuine seeker — is really following after the Lord. It is the genuine believer with whom we are to fellowship and walk-through life. Note what a genuine believer follows after: the very things for which men long and crave.

1. Righteousness (see note 2, pt. 1, 1 Tim. 6:11).
2. Faith: (see note 2, pt. 3, 1 Tim. 6:11).
3. Love: (see note, *Love*, 1 Th. 3:12).
4. Peace: (see note 2, pt. 3, 1 Tim. 1:2).

III. *2 Timothy 02:23 Guard Your Tongue*

Avoid foolish arguments, speculations, and senseless controversy. There are two things that need to be said and heeded about this verse.

1. Far too much time is wasted on foolish arguments, foolish speculations, especially among ministers and teachers and those who are preparing for the ministry. Too many...
 - ignore the Word of God for the speculations of theology.
 - neglect the study of God’s Word for a discussion of theory.
 - reject God’s Word for the ideas of men.
 - take the easier road of theological discussion over the more difficult road of studying God’s Word.

Too many sit around reading and discussing the speculations of theology instead of focusing upon God’s Word and the mission of reaching and growing people for Christ. Too many substitute discussion for deeds. Discussion and speculation may be stimulating and invigorating to the mind, but it does not get the job done. Just think of the time we waste in the speculations of the latest religious craze instead of ministering to the lost and needy of the world.

2. Far too much time is wasted on senseless controversy, especially among members of churches. Think of the things that church members sometimes argue and get upset over — things that matter so little. Think about this: controversy and differences in the church are seldom over the great issues and doctrines of God’s Word. They are usually over...
 - buildings and facilities
 - position and authority
 - likes and dislikes
 - opinions and preferences

- personalities and traits
- abilities and gifts
- desires and wants
- recognition and acceptance

The list could go on and on, but the point is well made. Too many within the church are embroiled in senseless controversy and hurt feelings while multitudes within every community are dying from loneliness, emptiness, neglect, abuse, rejection, disease, hunger and sin.

The charge is direct and forceful: avoid foolish arguments, speculations and senseless controversy.

***Phil 2:3** Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.*

***1 Tim 1:4** Nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God's work — which is by faith.*

***1 Tim 6:3-5** If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.*

***2 Tim 2:14** Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarrelling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen.*

***2 Tim 2:23-24** Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.*

***Titus 3:9-11** But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless. Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.*

IV. 2 Timothy 02:24–26 Arguing and Quarrelling

Fourth, do not argue or fight with others. This charge is to “the Lord's servant” — the person who really wishes to serve the Lord.

We cannot argue and fight and at the same time serve the Lord. A person who argues and fights is not serving the Lord, no matter what he may claim. The charge is clear: “the Lord's servant must not quarrel.”

1. He must be kind (epion): gentle, reasonable, considerate, soft, tender.

=> When people oppose him, he does not react, he reaches out in gentleness.

=> When he has to correct people and point out their weaknesses, he is not mean but gentle.

Eph 4:2 *Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.*

Col 3:13 *Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

1 Th 2:7 *But we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children.*

2 Tim 2:24 *And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.*

Titus 3:2 *To slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men.*

James 3:17 *But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.*

2. He must be able to teach: prepared and ready, able and capable, skilful and qualified to teach. Remember: he cannot teach the truth unless he knows the truth; he cannot settle disputes and help those who oppose him...
 - unless he knows what God says about handling problems.
 - unless he walks in the Lord day by day.

Mat 28:20 *“And teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

1 Tim 3:2 *Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach.*

1 Tim 4:11 *Command and teach these things.*

2 Tim 2:25 *Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth.*

3. He must be patient, not resentful (see note, pt. 11, 1 Tim. 3:2-3).
4. He must correct others in a spirit of gentleness. Within the church there are those who often oppose the minister and the ministries and actions of the church. How are opponents to be approached? Not in a spirit of reaction and meanness; not in a spirit that criticizes, reproaches, whips and berates. We must approach opponents in a spirit of gentleness (see note, pt. 6, 1 Tim.6:11). There are two reasons for this.
 - a. A gentle approach is the only approach that can lead a person to repentance. Arguing and fighting with them will only drive them further away from us and the church. In fact, if we argue with them, we are guilty of the same wrong that they have committed, and we give them reason to cry “hypocrite.”
 - b. A gentle approach is the only approach that can free a person from the trap of the devil. People who are controversial and argumentative, critical and gossiping may not like to think that they are ensnared by the devil, but Scripture clearly says they are. Note

the verse — argumentative and quarrelsome persons are said to be caught in the trap of the devil. Such persons are even said to be taken by the devil at the devil’s will.

What is the hope for the argumentative and criticizing person? His only hope is for the minister and believers to approach him in a spirit of gentleness — to reach out to him, attempting to lead him to repentance.

Ga1 6:1-2 *Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.*

Eph 4:11-13 *It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

Phil 4:2-3 *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, loyal yoke-fellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.*

2 Tim 2:14 *Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarrelling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen.*

Isa 57:18-19 *“I have seen their ways, but I will heal them; I will guide them and restore comfort to Israel’s mourners.*

Jer 3:22 *“Return, faithless people; I will cure you of backsliding.” “Yes, we will come to you, for you are the LORD our God.”*

Jer 30:17 *‘But I will restore you to health and heal your wounds,’ declares the LORD, ‘because you are called an outcast, Zion for whom no one cares.’*

Hosea 14:4 *“I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them.”*

Micah 7:19 *You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea. ■*