

STUDY 2

WAGE GOOD WARFARE

OBJECTIVES

- ❖ To be able to identify what makes a persuasive and appropriate testimony.
- ❖ To be able to discern and utilise a genuine prophetic word as a source of encouragement and confidence.
- ❖ To explain the Biblical description of the term ‘spiritual-warfare’.
- ❖ To describe when it is proper to publicly shame a Christian leader who commits apostasy.



BACKGROUND

The apostle Paul had had a long relationship with the Ephesian church. After Apollos had arrived there and taught many people about Jesus, it seems that he had won several converts, but he had not understood the significance and importance of water baptism (Acts 18:24-26). Eventually he was corrected by Priscilla who explained to him “the way of God more accurately” which must

have included showing him why water baptism in the Name of Jesus was different to the baptism that John Baptist performed. From Ephesus, Apollos went to Corinth (“Achaia”, Acts 18:27). This explains Paul’s epistle to the Corinthians where he refers to the strong following that Apollos had garnered among the Corinthians after Paul had left there (1Cor. 1:12; 3:4-6). While Apollos had left Ephesus to go to Corinth, Paul left Corinth to go to Ephesus. When he arrived there he found a small band of disciples who were ignorant of either the significance of Christian water baptism or the baptism with the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1-7). Paul then taught in the synagogue for the next three months, and then a further two years in a Bible College of sorts called the *Hall of Tyrannus* (Acts 19:8-10).

Objective 1. To be able to identify what makes a persuasive and appropriate testimony.

A *testimony* is a legal term. It is presented by a *witness* (another legal term). In a court of law, a witness has one task — *to tell what they have witnessed or know to be true to the judge and jury*. All they are required to do is to answer questions. It is not the task of the witness to *persuade* the judge or jury (that’s the lawyer’s job).

1. The task of a *Christian* witness in sharing their testimony is to
 - a) add a bit of poetic licence to their testimony to spice it up a bit.
 - b) focus on the wickedness of their past sinful lifestyle.
 - c) try and make your testimony as interesting as possible by using some colourful exaggeration.
 - d) simply tell the truth.

The Book of Acts records Paul on several occasions sharing his testimony of how he was converted to Christ (refer to Acts 22:3-21; 26:2-23). In each of these accounts his testimony is a bit different — but not different *factually*, but in its *emphasis*.

2. In the two examples of Paul's testimony in the Book of Acts, he was speaking to a Jewish audience. But read the way that Paul shares his testimony with the Ephesians in First Timothy 1:12-16. Why do you think that Paul may have emphasised that when he was converted he was also *corrected* (1Tim. 1:13) and that he was the worst sinner in the world (1Tim. 1:15)?

3. If you were asked by a *non-Christian* who had never been to a church what led you to become a Christian, what *might* you emphasise and what would you *not* emphasise? Discuss.

Every believer has a story of how and when they came to Christ. By far, most of these stories are not dramatic — but they are still impactful because the Holy Spirit can use each of our stories to touch the heart of a non-Christian.

4. If you heard someone's testimony who emphasised their life of depravity and sin and only briefly mentioned how they came to Christ, what might you point out to them from Paul's statement in First Timothy 1:16-17 about where he placed the emphasis in his testimony?

Objective 2. To be able to discern and utilise a genuine prophetic word as a source of encouragement and confidence.

Prophecy is a gift of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 12:6; 1Cor. 12:10; 14:6). It seems to have been quite common in the early church. Prophecy could be in three different forms: (i) p _ _ _ _ _ e ; (ii) f _ _ _ _ - t _ _ _ _ _ g ; or, (iii) d _ _ _ _ _ e .

5. Match each of these descriptions with each of the 3 prophecy types-
- ___ prophecy which tells someone what they are to do.
 - ___ prophecy which describes what will happen before it happens.
 - ___ prophecy which declares God’s praise or reminds people of God’s Word and usually is encouraging.

It seems that when Timothy was a young man he had received several prophetic words from God through other believers that he was called to be a preacher and church leader (1Tim 1:18).

6. What might we learn about Timothy’s emotional state from these references by Paul to him in First Timothy 1:18 and Second Timothy 1:6-7? Why might he have *needed* prophecies to overcome these traits? Discuss.

7. How does the New Testament instruct a believer to treat a prophecy they might be given from another believer? (Note 1 Thessalonians 5:20-21)

Paul does not refer to Timothy receiving “a” prophecy, but rather, that Timothy had received “prophecies”. Thinking a prophecy should perhaps include whether there are a number of independent sources of a similar prophetic word. It would also be wise to consider whether the source of the prophecy was a credible believer known to be of good character. When the Apostle Paul received a word from the prophet Agabus in Acts 21:11-13 he received it as being from the Holy Spirit because it appears that the Spirit had already revealed it to him (note Acts 9:16; 20:23). Genuine personal prophecy is nearly always confirmed by other sources.

Objective 3. To explain the Biblical description of the term ‘spiritual-warfare’.

Paul was fond of using military language when writing to Timothy (1Tim 6:12; 2Tim. 2:3-4). In First Timothy 1:18 Paul tells Timothy to “wage good warfare”. There is nothing in Paul’s military language to either Timothy or the Ephesians that suggests that ‘spiritual warfare’ ever involves ‘praying against’ or ‘binding territorial spirits’.

8. In Ephesians 6:10-20 Paul describes the spiritual armour necessary to engage in spiritual warfare. From this passage, list at least three things that the Bible regards as genuine spiritual warfare-

Objective 4. To describe when it is proper to publicly shame a Christian leader who commits apostasy

‘Apostasy’ is what happens when a believer, particularly a believer who is a leader, walks away from Christ and denies the essential claims of Christianity.

9. Why does James state that not many believers should seek to be teachers (leaders)? (Read James 3:1)

10. How did Paul advise Timothy to respond to elders within the church who wilfully go on sinning and do not repent – and why did he say that it was necessary for this happen? (1Tim 5:19-20)

The Greco-Roman world of the first century was an “honour-shame” culture. That is, *honour* was prized more highly than wealth (note Prov. 22:1) and the worst thing a person could experience was *shaming*. Perhaps this might help us to better understand First Timothy 1:20. and when it might be necessary to publicly shame leaders who betray Christ and His Word.

APPLICATIONS

Discuss and share-

11. If you were to share your testimony of how you came to Christ, and you only have *three minutes*, what would *you* say in the first minute to describe your life before you came to Christ? What facts would you include in the second minute about the moment when you surrendered to Jesus as your Saviour? Which details of the transformation that Christ caused in your life would be helpful to share in the third minute?

12. If someone gave you a prophetic word, how would you determine whether it was really from God?

13. If you were under a spiritual attack, what steps would you take to engage in 'spiritual warfare'?

14. If it became known to you that an elder in your church was guilty of repeated and multiple incidents of sexual misconduct with young, vulnerable church members, and when confronted they denied all the allegations, and the church leadership sought to cover it up and not remove them as an elder, what would you do?
