How To Consecrate Your Life For God's Purposes

Pastor Josh Howerton · Fight The Good Fight · 2 Timothy 2:16-17; 2 Timothy 2:20-22

AT A GLANCE

In week five of Fight the Good Fight, his series through 2 Timothy, Pastor Josh Howerton argues from 2 Timothy 2:20-22 that the direction of a life, not its intentions, determines its destination. A disciple becomes a vessel fit for God's noble purposes only by fleeing what defiles — lust, divisive speech, self — and pursuing righteousness, so Christ's redeeming power, not the vessel's own worth, is what makes a life useful.

- Good intentions do not save you from a bad direction; the daily decisions you actually make determine where your life ends up.
- You are the vessel, not the treasure inside it; God's power, not your talent or your record, gives your life its value.
- Fleeing lust, divisive talk, and self-focus isn't legalism — it's how a vessel stays clean and empty enough for God to use it.

> *"Direction, not intention, will determine the destination of your life."*

EXPOSITION

Scripture engaged

2 Timothy 2:16-17 — [16]Stay away from people who talk about useless things that are not from God. That kind of talk will lead a person more and more against God. [17]Their evil teaching will spread like a sickness inside the body. Hymenaeus and Philetus are men like that. (ERV)

2 Timothy 2:20-22 — [20]In a large house there are things made of gold and silver. But there are also things made of wood and clay. Some of these are used for special purposes, others for ordinary jobs. [21]The Lord wants to use you for special purposes, so make yourself clean from all evil. Then you will be holy, and the Master can use you. You will be ready for any good work. [22]Stay away from the evil things a young person like you typically wants to do. Do your best to live right and to have faith, love, and peace, together with others who trust in the Lord with pure hearts. (ERV)

The argument

The Primacy Of Direction Over Intention — why decisions, not desires, chart a life's destination

Pastor Josh Howerton opens with an analogy: you can pack, plan, and intend to vacation in Galveston, but 'if you get in your truck and hop on I-35 north, I don't care what your intentions are, you ain't going to Galveston.' He applies this financially (spending versus saving) and physically (wants versus needs) before turning it spiritual: 'the direction of your life, not the intentions of your life, determine the destination of your life.' This reframes 2 Timothy as Paul writing to Timothy — and to us — not about desired outcomes but about the concrete, present decisions that are already carrying us somewhere, whether we notice or not.

> **Insight** — *Spiritual destination is set by today's decisions, not by today's desires.*

Vessels Of Honor And Dishonor — what clean and empty mean for usefulness to god

From 2 Timothy 2:20, Howerton unpacks the 'great house' as the church, with vessels of gold and silver for honorable use alongside vessels of wood and clay for dishonorable use — pointing to first-century artifacts to make the contrast concrete: a clean cup set out for a dignitary versus a chamber pot kept out of sight. The difference isn't material worth but condition: staying 'clean' and 'empty' of self. He warns against Christians who 'live for minimums' with 'no elevated spiritual vision,' quoting J.C. Ryle's rebuke of 'a cheap christianity which offends nobody… which costs nothing and is worth nothing,' and setting against it his own longing that generations after him keep 'throwing haymakers for the kingdom of god.'

> **Insight** — *A life becomes noble not by natural worth but by staying clean and emptied for God to fill.*

From Condemnation To Redemption — the devil labels a life unfit; god remakes it

Building on 2 Timothy 2:21 ('if anyone cleanses himself… he will be a vessel for honorable use'), Howerton contrasts two builders' words used theologically: condemnation, where the devil 'points to something jacked up in your life… here's your label: unfit for use forever,' and redemption, where God 'can take one thing and turn it into another thing.' He points to Lake Point's Regen ministry — people once addicts, imprisoned, suicidal, or divorced now worshiping freely — as living evidence: 'My God can take a man who was one thing and he could turn him into another thing.' The posture here is tender rather than clinical: no one's past disqualifies them from being used.

> **Insight** — *The label your past earns you from the accuser is never the final word God speaks over you.*

Fleeing What Burns And Divides — youthful passions named as lust and quarrelsome speech

From 2 Timothy 2:22's command to 'flee youthful passions,' Howerton names two: lust and 'stupid fights.' On lust he distinguishes Ephesians 6:11 (stand and fight the devil) from fleeing sexual sin, insisting some enemies you outrun rather than resist: 'Can a man scoop fire into his

lap and not be burned?' On divisive speech, drawn from 2 Timothy 2:16-17's warning that irreverent babble 'spreads like gangrene,' he argues gossip and online quarreling cannot be managed, only cut off — invoking Titus 3:10's pattern of warning a divisive person twice, then parting ways, and Proverbs 18:21 as the ground for choosing 'buzzard' or 'hummingbird' speech toward others.

> **Insight —** *Some temptations aren't fought face to face — they're only escaped by running.*

Emptied Of Self, Pursuing Righteousness — maturity as conviction over feeling

Howerton reads the positive half of 2 Timothy 2:22 — pursuing 'righteousness, faith, love and peace' — as inseparable from self-emptying, drawing on Paul's later language of being 'poured out' and on Philippians 2's account of Christ emptying himself. He contrasts childishness with maturity: 'children live by their feelings and desires; christians and adults live by their convictions and their commitments,' naming the culture's self-love and self-expression as the opposite discipleship. Worship itself becomes the test case: 'we weren't worshiping you anyway... this is not all about you.' The call is concrete — ask the Spirit weekly where to see and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace actively.

> **Insight —** *Pursuing righteousness requires emptying the self that culture trains you to center.*

Cross-references

- Ephesians 6:11 — contrasted with fleeing sexual sin: stand and fight the devil, but don't stand and fight lust
- 1 Corinthians 6:18 — paired with Ephesians 6:11 to show fleeing, not resisting, is the right posture toward sexual temptation
- Proverbs 6:27 — the fire analogy explaining why no one escapes sexual sin unburned
- Titus 3:10 — the pattern for handling a divisive person: warn twice, then remove them
- Proverbs 18:21 — grounds the buzzard-versus-hummingbird contrast in how words carry death or life
- Philippians 2:7-9 — Christ's self-emptying held up as the model for pouring out one's own agenda
- Romans 8:1-2 — quoted against the devil's condemnation to affirm there is no condemnation in Christ

DEVOTIONAL

A pizza box is worth thirty-nine cents. Nobody frames it, nobody keeps it. But hand someone a pizza bare-handed, grease running down grubby fingers, and suddenly the box matters more

than almost anything in the room. Not because the box became valuable, but because of what it was asked to carry. That is the strange dignity offered to every ordinary, unimpressive life this message describes: you were never meant to be the treasure, only the vessel — and vessels only need two things, to be clean and to be empty. Most of us live with a label the enemy handed us long ago — divorced, addicted, ashamed, unfit for use — and we have believed it the way a condemned house believes its own placard, forever. But redemption doesn't argue with the label; it takes the coupon and turns it into brownies, takes the man and turns him into someone else entirely. The fire we scooped into our own laps does burn, every time, no exceptions — but the burning is not the end of the story God is telling. What's left, then, is not a performance but a direction. Not a resolution to feel differently by morning, but a decision, today, about which way the truck is pointed. Clean. Empty. Poured out. Not because you're finally impressive, but because the One who fills you never needed you to be.

Reflection

- Where in your life right now is the direction of your daily decisions quietly pointing away from the destination you say you want?
- What is one thing you've let the enemy label 'condemned' that Jesus wants to redeem instead?
- Is your tongue functioning this week like a buzzard or a hummingbird toward the people closest to you?

Closing prayer

Father, thank You for being willing to use weak vessels to carry Your power, because Your power is made perfect in weakness. Lead us in paths of righteousness. Show us the thing, Jesus, that we can do this week as disciples to walk nearer to You. We love You, and we pray this in the crucified, risen name of our Savior. Amen.

FORMATION

One thing to remember

If you remember one thing, let it be this: God doesn't call you to be impressive, only clean, empty, and pointed the right direction.

This week

This week, ask the Holy Spirit which of the three — lust, divisive speech, or self — you need cleansed from, then name one concrete step of faith you'll take toward righteousness, faith, love, or peace, and bring it to God in prayer as you go.

Return to 2 Timothy 2:22