

## THE CHURCH AWAKENING AN URGENT CALL FOR RENEWAL STUDY SEVEN

### How Should the Church React?

*2 Timothy 3:13–17*

*Hearing about danger is important but incomplete. What's missing is the right response. Responding to warnings is each person's responsibility.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**P**AUL warned that in the last days, which include our day, “there will be very difficult times” (2 Timothy 3:1). *That's putting it mildly!*

The same Greek word for “difficult” was used in Matthew 8:28 to describe two demonized men living among the tombs near Gadara. In this verse, the word is “violent”—and that sums up our contentious times, doesn't it? We can even say, “vicious,” “dangerous,” “menacing,” “savage.” It's not an exaggeration to also say, *diabolical*, because the shadowy figure behind the world's curtain pulling the strings of evil is Satan, the invisible enemy of all that is godly.

Our churches must awaken to the reality of the spiritual threats in our world. That's what our series, *The Church Awakening*, is about; however, realizing the danger isn't enough if all we do is turn over and fall back asleep. We must react to Paul's alarm with decisive, discerning, and dedicated action . . . but what should we do? Let's pick up where we left off in our previous *Searching the Scriptures* study and find out from Paul's instructions in 2 Timothy 3:13–17.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

## How Should the Church React?

2 Timothy 3:13–17



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

In spiritual warfare, prayer is our lifeline to God and link to His power. Invite the Lord into your study of His Word by inserting personal pronouns into this prayer and making it your own:

*May the God of peace—  
... equip [me] with all [I] need  
for doing his will.*

*May he produce in [me],  
through the power of Jesus Christ,  
every good thing that is pleasing to him.*

*All glory to him forever and ever! Amen. (Hebrews 13:20, 21)*



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Paul concluded his list of vices from 2 Timothy 3:1–5 with the admonition, “Stay away from people like that!” (2 Timothy 3:5). These people “love only themselves and their money,” and they “love pleasure rather than God” (3:2, 4). Worse yet, they wear religious masks and “work their way into people’s homes,” preying on vulnerable church members with their “counterfeit faith” (3:5–6, 8).

Paul bore scars from battling enemies of Christ, and he warned Timothy that “everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (3:12). Even so, “the Lord rescued” Paul, and the Lord will see us through our battles as we follow Paul’s example of faithful endurance (3:11).

In the verses to follow, Paul continued his instructions to Timothy with an action plan for living in difficult times.



### Observation: Four Reactions to Difficult Times

Observation is the first step of *Searching the Scriptures*, which includes examining the passage for parallel and contrasting concepts, logical flow of thought, and keywords. Reading different versions of the Bible can shed additional light on the text. Let’s get started!



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2 Timothy 3:13–17

### Stay Realistic—2 Timothy 3:13

*Second Timothy 3:13* begins with the contrastive *but*. Based on the context, with whom was Paul drawing the contrast? How did he describe the “people” in verse 13? What insights do you find in *The Message*?

The words *evil*, *imposter*, and *deceive* hint at the source of deception: the devil, the one who deceives even the deceivers and whom Jesus called, “the father of lies” (John 8:44). Realizing who we’re dealing with helps us *stay realistic* about our times, seeing through the devil’s deceptions and not being taken off guard when things get worse.

*Look at the word, evil. Let it say what it says. Don’t soften it. It means “evil.” Times won’t improve. Don’t be surprised if things are worse ten years from now. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

### Be Convinced—2 Timothy 3:14–15

The next verse also begins with a contrast, “But you” (2 Timothy 3:14), as Paul turned to address Timothy. What instructions did he give, according to *2 Timothy 3:14–15*? Why should Timothy trust his teachers? What did they teach him beginning in childhood, and what did he glean?



## How Should the Church React?

2 Timothy 3:13–17

Like Timothy, to endure our difficult times, we must *be convinced* of the longstanding truths we've been taught and be confident in the Scriptures.

*Don't question truth because it goes back to your childhood. Truth then is truth now.  
Reliable information is timeless. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

### Stand Firm—2 Timothy 3:16

The first line of [2 Timothy 3:16](#) reveals the reason for our confidence: “All Scripture is inspired by God.” Don't pass over this brief sentence too quickly. What important points do you observe? On what was Paul telling us to *stand firm* in the winds of false philosophies that blow us off track?

*When I'm not sure where to go, I seek the Scriptures, and I go to prayer. I ask the Lord for guidance, and I ask Him to open my eyes to see how to respond. By doing that, we are standing firm on the inspired Word of God. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

### Allow the Truth to Fulfill Its Purpose—2 Timothy 3:16–17

Because Scripture is inspired by God, it can speak to our souls in a way no other book can. Scripture has authority and power to accomplish what four benefits, according to [2 Timothy 3:16](#)? Read the paraphrase of this verse in [The Message](#) for added clarity.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_



## How Should the Church React?

2 Timothy 3:13–17

Through the world’s confusing chatter, God’s inspired Word calls us from the path of destruction to God’s path of wisdom. What is the outcome, according to 2 Timothy 3:17?

*When we read the Bible, we get straightened out. We adjust our thinking to fit the Scripture. The Word of God is our standard and our guide. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### Interpretation: The Meaning of Inspiration

In the interpretation section, we dig into the meaning of crucial concepts, such as, “All Scripture is inspired by God” (2 Timothy 3:16, emphasis added). The reason we can trust the Bible as truth is its divine inspiration.

Look up the explanation of this doctrine in your Bible study resources, such as Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s book, *The Church Awakening: An Urgent Call for Renewal*, pages 193–195. For an online resource, read Pastor Chuck’s article, “[Why You Can Have Confidence in the Bible](#),” at [insight.org](#). You can also consult commentaries on 2 Timothy, including Pastor Chuck’s *Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, and the online commentary, *Constable’s Notes*, at [netbible.org](#).

We sometimes say we feel “inspired” when we write a story or compose a song. But what did Paul mean when he said Scripture was inspired by God? How is biblical inspiration unique?



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2 Timothy 3:13–17

Truth has come under attack in our culture. Influential people claim there is no right and wrong, and they accuse those who hold a moral standard as hateful bigots. How might you defend the Bible as the cornerstone of truth in morally confusing times?

*The Bible is the most valuable source of information in the world. We need it to survive. We need churches that teach it, pastors who speak on its behalf, and fellow believers who hold us accountable to its truths. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### Correlation: The Process of Revelation

Along with Paul, Peter received divine inspiration, and in 2 Peter 1:20–21, he explained the process of revelation as it relates to the prophets of the Old Testament:

*Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet's own understanding, or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God.*

Sometimes God spoke directly to the writers of Scripture, who relayed His exact words as Moses and Aaron did before Pharaoh, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel.” Most of the time, the biblical authors were “moved by the Holy Spirit” as they penned the holy Scriptures.

What does it mean to be moved by the Holy Spirit? Pastor Chuck's online article, “[Why You Can Have Confidence in the Bible](#),” offers some help with the answer.



## How Should the Church React?

2 Timothy 3:13–17

The Bible contains the clearest and best information on life's most important subjects. It is reliable, authoritative, and inspired truth that can anchor us during tumultuous times.



### Application: How Should We React?

Try imagining your life without the Bible. It would be like being lost in a thick jungle with no trail to follow. Your only option would be to hack through the brush in one direction or another, hoping to stumble onto a right path but remaining forever lost. *Without the Bible, we would never find our way!*

Now imagine the benefits of having the Bible as your guide and the Holy Spirit as your illuminator. It's like someone with a map and compass coming to your rescue in the jungle and leading you in the right direction. What a difference! *With the Bible, we should never lose our way!*

As a result of this study, do you have more confidence in God's Word to help you know how to react in difficult times? How so?

In his book, *The Church Awakening: An Urgent Call for Renewal*, Pastor Chuck wrote, "An awakened church is a powerful and effective influence in a world that's lost its way."<sup>1</sup> How can your church be an effective influence when the forces of the enemy are so strong and intimidating?



## How Should the Church React?

2 Timothy 3:13–17

In his letter to Timothy, Paul encouraged us to wake up! Put into action these four principles:

1. Stay realistic about the spiritual warfare in our world.
2. Be convinced that the biblical truths we've been taught are still true.
3. Stand firm on the inspired Word of God.
4. Allow the truth to fulfill its purpose in our lives.

What can you do to act on these principles today?

It all comes down to knowing what God tells us to do and doing it—learning, believing, and living the inspired Word of God. But there's one other essential component that we'll discover in the next *Searching the Scriptures* study: loving Christ in everything we do.



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, You are the true author of all that's true and good, and You have communicated Your way in Your Word. More so, You sent Your Son, who is the Word, the ultimate message of hope, love, grace, and truth. I know how I must react in difficult times: cling to my Savior and what I know to be true about Him and what He's done for me. Help me stay faithful and kindle the fires of affection for Jesus, for it is in His name I pray, amen.*

#### ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *The Church Awakening: An Urgent Call for Renewal* (New York: Faith Words, 2010), 183.

