

How to Be on Offense in an Offensive Culture

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3-Year Bible Reading Plan

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This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the book of 2 Timothy 3. If you're not familiar with 2 Timothy, it's toward the end of your New Testament and 2 Timothy again is a continuation for those of you who are new to us, maybe guests, first time, of a Bible reading plan that we as a family of faith have been on now for about two years and I know you may be thinking, "Well, I'm kinda behind. There's too much to catch up." Don't worry about it. Just jump onboard wherever you find yourself, but the last couple weeks we have been in a section of the Bible that we call the pastoral epistles, in fact, last week we addressed the issue of how do we navigate a world that is so not only unprecedented but so difficult to walk through, and how oftentimes we just wish we had someone who was wise and who had the answers to sit down with us and kind of help us along, and we saw that what we know as 1 & 2 Timothy are actually at the end of the Apostle Paul's life, one who had been stoned numerous times, one who had been imprisoned, one who had seen all the ills of culture and society, and he takes a young man by the name of Timothy, he takes him under his proverbial wing and he teaches him and he walks him through how to live in these unprecedented days.

Well, today we kinda have a continuation therein. In fact, we find ourselves in the next to the last chapter that the Apostle Paul, the Lord's gonna give us through his life, and as we walk through 2 Timothy, today we come to chapter 3 and I want to address an issue that paradoxical tonight and it's how to be on offense in an offensive culture. Now can we all agree we live in a culture where everybody's offended at everything? In fact, there are some people that get offended when you're not offended. And so I want to address today how do we go on offense, how do we because last week we talked about taking a stand, last week we addressed how do we not give up any ground, but today we're gonna talk about moving forward, how do we go forward in this? How do we actually make progress? How do we take step-by-step in our life trusting the Lord to navigate us and to get us through this very offensive culture?

Now lest you think I'm talking about offensive meaning this side versus that side, this group versus that group, that's not what I'm addressing today, in fact, as we're about to read in 2 Timothy 3, when I talk about an offensive culture, I'm not talking among each other, I'm talking about in a culture that is offensive to God and in just a moment we're gonna read a string of statements and words and we're gonna see that this has nothing to

do with Person A versus Person B, or Group A versus Group B, but has everything to do with humanity as a whole though acting as individuals living a life that is offensive to God, and if we live in a culture that is offensive to God, how do we walk? How do we step? How do we make "progress" in our own personal lives?

2 Timothy 3, we're gonna read the entirety of the chapter but it's only 17 verses in length. It says,

1 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

Now push pause. You know, everybody talks about the last days, everybody talks about, oh, it's more perilous than days before, and how many times have you heard somebody say, "Well, I know it's bad but, you know, hundreds of years ago surely it was worse"? You do realize the Apostle Paul is saying this is how you know that the clock is ticking. This is how you know, as we just sang, that the trumpet is about to sound. How do you know it's the last days? As we pick up reading in verse 2, I think you're gonna see a pretty good description of the world you're living in today.

2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, 4 Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; 5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. 6 For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, 7 Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. 8 Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. 9 But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was. 10 But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, 11 Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. 12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. 13 But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. 14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; 15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

Now as I kind of ask the question how are we to be on offense in an offensive culture, you recognize, as we saw at the end of chapter 3 here, that there's this focus on the word

of God and when you go to Ephesians 6 and you talk about the armor of God, that how we are to protect ourselves against the wiles of the enemy, the wiles of the devil, you do realize the only offensive weapon the Lord gives us is the word of God. And so as we kind of walk through this today, I want to kind of use that as the backdrop. This is not one's personal opinion, one's philosophy but what the Bible says about the last days, what the Bible says about perilous times. Unless you need evidence to recognize that we are in these last days, that we are in perilous times, there is actually a list of 17 descriptors here in 2 Timothy 3 just so you don't miss it.

Now for those of you who are here on our campus, we've got it on the slide behind me. Those of you online, they're gonna shoot to another shot. I want you just to think about these, and by the way, for the sake of time we're not gonna walk through every single one of them, I won't torture you with that, but I want to do just sort of bring to the limelight some of those that are just overt and prominent.

How about lovers of ourselves? You do know we live in the day of selfies where we take pictures of ourselves and a research project was done some months ago where they took young people in particular but not necessarily all the same generation, and they told them to take a picture of themselves and to post it online to represent themselves. Did you know that the average person before they posted it either edited it or took a different one 17 times? We are so in love with ourselves we want to make sure that other people don't see who the real self is. Have you thought about that for a moment? Because if we showed you what it really was unedited at the wrong angle you may not like it, so we're so in love with ourselves we're gonna put a picture out that really doesn't even truly capture who we are.

Lovers of ourselves. How about this one, boasters? Those who speak of or talk of themselves. Now by the way, when I speak of boasting, I'm not talking about when someone in your family has a great accomplishment, letting people know. I'm not talking about celebrating a promotion or maybe something or success or whatever it may be in life. Do you know what the word boasting means? It means excessive rhetoric regarding a situation. In other words, you're so obsessed with talking about whatever it may be, that's all you ever address, that's all you ever talk about, that's all you put forth, and you specialize in the superlative, the superlative, any word with "est." It is the finest. It is the highest. It is the greatest. It is the most. Whatever it may be.

And so we live in a culture today, the evidence is before us, we take selfies like nobody's business, we boast and we brag and we speak about how great we are, but how about this one: blasphemers. Phew, that's just one of those words particularly in church, this kinda makes your hair stand on end, doesn't it? What does it mean to blaspheme? And we look back like at Mark 3 where Jesus and the Pharisees were discussing this issue and they were talking about what does it mean to blaspheme the Holy Ghost, and what would be the significance thereof, but in the context there was a group of individuals who were denouncing that Jesus Christ was God. Why is that critical? In our context today, we know we're in perilous times, we know we're in the last days when God is moving and man takes credit for it.

Allow me to illustrate. We've been walking through a global pandemic. We have seen things in the last six months we never dreamed we would see. We've walked through things we never dreamed we would walk through, and yet in the midst of that, there is this silver lining that God is still at work, and as we heard, he's still answering prayers. And I find it amazing, and some of you may know who I'm speaking of, that a couple of months ago there were people celebrating that they were being healed from this dreadful disease, that their lives were being restored, and they gave God the credit and one of our governors said, "God didn't do it, science did." Woo, you know what, he has 12 foot radius. Something to think about if you're in a meeting with him. But that's what blaspheming is. In other words, we don't recognize when God moves, we don't recognize when God acts. Even if it is supernatural, somehow we explain it as something that we came up with.

As we continue this journey, I promise we won't go through all 17, but verse 3, without natural affection. You know it is natural for parents to love their children. It is natural for us to desire the family unit. Those things are natural and yet today we live in a society and in a world where things are very unnatural. In fact, many of you would suspect that I would allude to Romans 1 where it talks about even in those days but most importantly in these last days, it said there are men doing things with men that are unseemly, and women doing things with women that are just unnatural. That's what the Bible calls it. But lest you think we stop there, you have seen what happened in California this week, right? You do recognize that the legislation going forth on the West Coast is completely utterly unnatural. Now lest you go, "I don't know what you're talking about." Due to the age of those who are present today, go look it up for yourself. But when you are desiring to engage in behaviors with people that have no business engaging with them, you're doing something very unnatural. It says in the last days there will be unnatural affection. We will desire relationships with those that have no business with us having a relationship with.

Look at this in verse 3, false accusers. Boy, if that isn't the truth for today. Everybody accuses everything of something and here's what blows my mind and some of you are gonna say I'm going to meddling, I think I'm just speaking truth. Why is it today that I can falsely accuse you of something and I don't have to apologize for it? I don't have to give evidence for it? I'll let you suffer the consequences therein? And what happens is we spend a lot of our time trying to claim that we were falsely accused. I thought we used to live in a place where we were innocent until found guilty. Today you simply accuse somebody of being guilty and all of a sudden they've got to prove they're innocent, and today there is false accusations everywhere, so much so that let's just be honest, we don't know who's telling the truth, we don't know what is real. We are in these last days. We're not only proud and boasters and high-minded, we're falsely accusing.

And notice this last one I want to address at the end of verse 3, despisers of those that are good. Do you find it interesting that when somebody says something that is proper, when somebody does something that is charitable, you know what our culture says? Well, there must be a hidden motive. They must be just trying to further their own selfish pursuits.

You can't even help somebody nowadays after a natural disaster without somebody questioning why you really did it. In other words, we despise people who are speaking good, we despise people who are doing good because as you see here in 2 Timothy 3, we are in perilous times.

So when I talk about that we're an offensive culture, I'm not talking about offending each other, I'm talking about offending God. It offends God when we're lovers of ourselves. It offends God when we boast. It offends God when we despise those that are good. It offends God when we are high-minded. The evidence is there so what does this expose? It says we see all these things in our society and in our culture is exposed some things. The first thing that is exposed is this, that our culture, our world, humanity is very fleshly. Very fleshly. Look at verse 4, not only are they traitors, heady, high-minded, listen to this statement, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. Let that statement sink in for a moment. Fleshly. We would rather have the pleasures of the flesh than pleasure in God's presence.

Allow me to illustrate. In the book of Exodus, the Israelites have been in bondage for 400 years. They have been in Egypt generation after generation after generation. They finally through the Lord's hand and the Lord's provision, they make it through what we know as the Red Sea. The Egyptian army is swallowed up within the water. They get to what we know as the other side. They're headed toward the Promised Land. Now I do want to kinda qualify this just for a moment. Do you realize that nobody that was on the other side of the Red Sea ever knew anybody who ever knew anybody who had not been a slave, and they had a slave mentality. They didn't understand what it meant to trust. They didn't understand what it meant to walk in the power of freedom. It didn't take long, in fact, it took about two weeks before they began to gripe and moan that we had it better in Egypt. Really?

Well, in the midst of all that struggle, the Lord calls Moses, he calls him to go up on what we know as Mount Sinai and spend a little time with him. The rest of the Israelites were under Aaron, his brother's umbrella of authority. They were down there in the valley and Moses was up on the mountain. A week passed. Two weeks passed. Three weeks passed. Pretty soon the murmuring and the mumbling began to take place of where is our leader, this one that supposedly was going to take us to a Promised Land, as if getting out of Egypt wasn't enough. And they began to murmur and such and 30 days passed, 40 days passed. No Moses. On the day that Moses was to depart from the mountain down to the valley, remember the conversation he has with the Lord? "I hear noise down there. I hear something taking place. What is that in my ears?" What had the people of God done? Now I want you to think about this in context. They had just seen God turn a river into blood. They had seen God wipe out a whole land with lice and with other creatures. They had seen God take out the firstborn of those that were not having the Passover blood over the door. They had seen all these miracles. They had seen the Red Sea part, they go on dry land and their enemies be swallowed up. They had seen all of this and all it took was about a little over a month and what did they do? Well, according to the account in Exodus and if you've seen the original 10 Commandments movie, it's a pretty good illustration. All of a sudden the clothes came off. All of a sudden the relationships began

to expand. All of a sudden the music got loud. They took off their earrings and their rings and they formed and fashioned an idol, a golden calf. Do you find it intriguing that everything that God wrote on those two tablets of stone is what the Israelites were guilty of at the bottom of the hill? Every one of them. Were they worshiping false gods? Yes. Had they created idols? Yes. Were they disobeying their parents? Yes. Were they committing adultery? Yes. Were they coveting? Yes. Were they killing? Yes. They were doing it all and yet it was in the flesh.

Here's the parallel here. You know what I find ironic is God is on the mountain with Moses while the people in the valley have run out of patience and saying, "We're just gonna do things the way we want to," and yet the Lord says very clearly in his word that Jesus Christ after he gave himself for our sins, he sat on the right hand of the Father. It's almost the same picture, that he is up high and here we are down on earth, we're living in the flesh and what we've been exposed to, what we're seeing here as we walk through this perilous time, is that our culture is fleshly. Let me give you just a little hint: if it feels good to the flesh and it's not ordained in the word, it's probably not good for you. And that's exactly what we see not just in the days of the Israelites but even in 2 Timothy 3.

But it's this next statement that really gets me. Here in verse 5 it says they have a form of godliness but they deny the power thereof, from such turn away. When we look at the exposure of our offensive culture, let me tell you what our culture is, our culture is fraudulent. It's a fraud. It's a fake. In other words, it presents itself as something that it is actually incapable of producing. How many times in recent days have you heard, "We just need to love one another"? How many times have you heard in recent days, "We just need peace. We just need people to get along. We just need people to understand. We need people to be selfless." You know what the problem with that is? Galatians 5 says the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, gentleness, temperance, self-control. You realize that everything that our world and our culture is promising us can only be attained through the Spirit of God dwelling in our lives. That's it. And yet just as we've heard this morning, we're crying out for anybody and anything to answer our problems except God and he's the only one who can solve it.

You know, this last week I have an annual opportunity that I take advantage of. About the middle of August every year I have the opportunity, pastors gather from all over the country in a doctoral seminar. I had the privilege of being their professor for that week, typically we meet in person but this week we couldn't do so because of the pandemic, we met on a multimedia device, you know it commonly known as Zoom. So as we met from coast to coast, one of the things they recommended and I was grateful for is nobody wants to look at me on a computer screen for five days, eight hours a day. I get it. Bring some guests. Bring some visitors. The title of the seminar was "Doing Evangelism in a Contemporary Culture." You do know our culture's changed a little bit since last year when I taught it?

So I had a variety of folks that were part of it. I want to share with you one session we had that I'll be honest was the best part of the whole week. We had a young man with us, his name was Dr. J. J. Washington. He is one of your North American missionaries,

alright? He resides in a little bit north of Atlanta, Georgia. In other words, when we give and a portion of that goes to missions, a portion of everything you give goes to what he is doing. Let me describe to you J. J. Washington. If he and I were to stand in the mirror, his complexion is a little darker than mine. Does that communicate? And he taught on the idea of the gospel and racial reconciliation. Now if that's not contemporary, I don't know what is. And do you know what he said? Do you know what he had the audacity to say? He had the audacity to say that if you don't have Jesus Christ as your Savior, you can't be reconciled to anybody. He said it doesn't matter what the issue is, it doesn't matter what the rift is. He said, "Here's the problem, we like to talk about this people group and that people group and those people groups need to get together," he said, "What about the people group of the family of God? It supersedes all other groups." Here's the problem, we want a culture today that says we want to love one another, you can't truly love until you're saved. You can't do it. We want a culture that says we want peace. You know we're not gonna get along until we're saved. The problem is we live in a culture that's offensive to God, it's fraudulent because it's saying, "We're going to have peace without you, God. We're gonna love one another without you, God. We're going to have temperance without you, God. We're gonna have self-control without you, God." And guess what? God finds it completely offensive.

We are a culture, we are fleshly, we are fraudulent, and it's also a culture of futility. Notice what it says here in verse 7, every learning and never able to come to knowledge of the truth. Ever learning. I know that at least this academic year has been somewhat topsy-turvy with the different mediums and modes. It's been a struggle. It doesn't matter what level of education you either facilitate or you're a part of, it's just been hard. It's just been hard. But think about, we still have access to knowledge. Those of us that we have the privilege of electricity and the worldwide web, I mean, anything you want is there, it's at your fingertips, you have access to it. You know, it has been said that if you will read today and you can do it online, a major newspaper publication whether that's the Los Angeles Time, the New York Times, whatever it may be, a major news organization, that the amount of knowledge, the amount of information that you will digest in that one Sunday edition is equivalent to the amount of information you would have learned in an entire public school education in the 18th century. That's how much information is out there. It is at our fingertips. Who would have thought years ago that we when looking for a statistic or information would have just said to our friends, "Just Google it." It's on our phones. We don't even have to go to the computer lab. We don't have to go to the library anymore. We don't have to do any of that stuff. It's just there.

But notice the second thing, without the truth. You know, it's interesting, it doesn't matter what your field of study is, it doesn't matter what your maturity rate as far as education is concerned, you could be a continuing lifelong learner, you could be in the throes of education formally, whatever it may be, let me give you some information when it comes to knowledge. You do realize that knowledge is supposed to steer us toward truth. Let me remind you what Jesus Christ said in John 14, "I am the truth." Your study of mathematics ought to lead you to understand how good and great and incredible Jesus Christ is. Your knowledge of literature ought to do the same thing. Your knowledge of science, your knowledge of engineering, your knowledge of whatever you study, if you

are studying something to receive information, it ought to reveal to you the truth. Here's the problem, we now live in a culture that's not only fleshly and fraudulent, it lives in futility. We gain all this information about everything around us and we completely miss the Creator in the midst of his creation.

Think about how many people have numerous degrees, numerous accomplishments, numerous certifications and they don't know truth because they've never met Jesus. When you do an honest inspection of academia, when you look through a microscope, when you look through a telescope, when you read the great works of authors, when you do the mathematical formulas, what it should cause you to do is take a step back and realize how good and how great and how gracious God is, and that he desires you to be in relationship with him. But what has our culture done? We've become offensive to God. We're not just dancing around the golden calf like they were in Exodus but we're fraudulent and we're futile. We're learning but not for his sake.

So how do we respond? Let me end in an encouraging manner. How do we take a step forward? How do we walk this? I want to fast forward in this chapter, go into verse 14, my favorite verse in the Bible, my favorite word in the Bible, "But." I mean, in light of all that we've read and, by the way, it can depress you, it can upset you and it can make you throw your hands in the air and say, "Oh, my, why?" Well, notice what it says in verse 14, "But continue." Continue. You know, we see in the Bible in 1 John 2:6, it says if we believe in him we ought to walk even as he walked. Over and over in 2 John it says that there's no greater love than for me to see my children walking in the truth. To continue means to just take the next step.

Can I give you some advice? In the midst of perilous times, in the midst of the last days, here's my advice: don't stop moving. Keep going forth. Keep taking that next step. Read that next Bible passage. Attend that next service. Listen to that next song. Hear that encouraging word. Just keep, because I will tell you that if you take enough small steps, you'll get to where you want to go eventually. It may take you longer to get there than you want to but continue. Stay faithful. Stay faithful. You know, in the book of Daniel it says that the enemy, Satan, do you know what he wants to do to you? He wants to wear you out. He's doing a good job, isn't he? It's exhausting but anytime you're in an exhausted manner whether that's a military application, a sports application or just doing your daily job application, sometimes you've just got to be willing to take the next step, engage in the next project, whatever it may be. Let me encourage you in perilous times, in difficult times when there are boasters and high-minded and lovers of pleasure more than God, just keep walking. You know, the last time I checked in allusion to literature of a younger sort, you know the tortoise wins the race every time, right? Every single time. Stay faithful.

Secondly is this, stay firm. Notice what it says in verse 15 that from a child you have known the holy Scriptures. By the way, I believe that every child needs a drug problem, they need to be drug to church. I believe that. Every child. It says you have known the Scriptures from your childhood and let me confess as I get older, you know it was a lot easier to memorize Scripture when I was younger than now that I'm older. It's amazing. I

can't remember like I used to remember but as a child, it's amazing, I can remember those Scriptures. In other words, the earlier we start the better.

But notice what it says in verse 16, that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God. That's the Scripture that society doesn't like and they call it politically incorrect, it's still from God. All Scripture is profitable. In other words, how do we respond, how do we encourage one another? Not only do we stay faithful, we need to stay firm. We need to stay firm that the Bible is the guide and the direction for our life. Notice what it says it's good for, it's good for doctrine, that's deep teaching. It's good for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness. Do you notice that that is not positive thinking there? If you need correction, you're in the wrong place. If you need reproof, you're in the wrong place. If you need instruction in righteousness, that means you're not being righteous. In other words, we need to stay firm that that which can address and correct our ills in life is not a new policy, not a new program, not even a new movement, it's the word of God. We've got to stay firm in the fact that it is the Bible that has the answers to our culture's issues through the person of Jesus Christ even if it's politically incorrect.

And last but not least, finish. Just finish. As we go on, verse 17, that you may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. I want to fast forward to chapter 4. This is the last thing chronologically we have from the Apostle Paul. He's pulling a young man to his side and saying, "Alright, son, it's about to get rough out there, it's about to be difficult. Let me help you here." And I want you to hear how he describes his finish. Notice in chapter 4, beginning in verse 6, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." Notice what he says, "I have run the race. I have finished my course." Not Timothy's course. Not Barnabas' course. Not John Mark's course. Not Luke's course. His course. You know, I think one of the biggest struggles that we have, and I hope this will be an encouragement to you as far as continuing and being faithful in our walk with the Lord, is we see what God's doing in somebody else's life and we so desire what he's doing in their life we forget the race he's given us. He says, "I finished my course."

Now I'll be honest with you, I'm not really much of a runner. I'm not built for running. In fact, one of my jokes is this, if you need somebody to run a long ways, you don't need to call me. I'm not your guy. If you need somebody to run really fast, I'm probably still not the guy you want to call. But if you need somebody to put a hole through a wall, give me a shout. I can help you out there. I'm good at that one. But I've seen races, I've been to races, I've attended races, you know, it's a very rare day where somebody finishes a race without perspiration, without exhaustion. In fact, you know what marathoners call it? Now they call it that and I've never experienced this because I've never run one, and by the way, I don't ever plan on it. Some of you have got stickers on your car that say 26., you know, I'll just take .26, I'll be good with that. But nonetheless, when these marathoners, do you know what they call it? Now it depends on how good you are at running, they call it hitting the wall. Sometimes it's mile 15, some it's 8. It depends on

who and how you run. They call it hitting the wall. There comes a point where you say, "I can't do this anymore." Their bodies are cramping. They're starving for fluids. And what do they have to do? Just keep going. Finish. Oftentimes and we've seen the videos when they get to the finish line, what do they do? They just collapse. They just fall over. Hey, I've got good news for you: you know that one day when we get to the Lord in person, we get a new body and it's not gonna get tired and it's not gonna grow weary.

So let me encourage you, stay faithful, stay firm on the word of God and just finish the race. You say, "But the race is looking ugly." I didn't say it was pretty. Just finish the race.