Keeping the Integrity of the Church

2 Timothy 4:2

Objective: Teach how to keep the church where it needs to be in spirit and in truth.

Introduction:

1. Illustration of leaky rowboat in farm pond. Could have been lifeboat in ocean.
2. Church is our lifeboat to get us to heaven's shore. Transform to image of Son, strengthen, encourage, challenge to grow, learn to love, forgive, etc.

We need to maintain the integrity of the church. (HOW?)

Integrity in the church means keeping it in the mold that Christ established. It means making sure that it holds to and teaches truth doctrinally. It also means that it and its members hold to truth in *heart and attitude*, i.e. in Spirit.

Of vital necessity, this means keeping ourselves deep in the very word of God, (Scriptures which 3:15 says are able to make you wise for salvation) the Bible, in order to point others to God's will and to nurture them in spirit and truth and to keep ourselves on an even keel as well. As a practical grounding point, I would suggest we all take 2 Timothy 4:2 as a memory verse to repeat to ourselves and others whenever we are wondering what to do is any given situation. READ.

The basic point is there plain and simple as a reminder to us;

I. Preach The Word.

A. God's Word *must* play a central role in keeping God's church on line.
   1. It is God-breathed. Authoritative. To make us adequate in every way. (2 Tim 3:16-17)
   2. His guide for us, to determine what we believe, how we live. Cf. 1 Timothy 3:14-15.
   3. When we don't know whether to stay and fight or turn and run, whether to stay and study or shake the dust from our feet; ***Ask God; Go to His Word!***

B. You are responsible to be ready with God's Word at any and all times.
   1. This *demands* some preparation on our part.
      a. You need to know what God's Word says and where to find answers. Start NOW!
      b. If you want to help keep Christ's church where Christ wants it to be, you need to study!
   2. This *demands* a willingness on your part.
      a. Willingness to devote some time and effort.
      b. Memory work is a good approach. *(Memory Cards?)*
      c. This way it is always available for you to use. (cf. Sunday evening experiences.)

It is worth your effort to study diligently to understand the Word, to know the Word, and to have the Word readily available at all times because we can…

II. Rely On God's Word To Take Care Of Any Problem In The Church.

A. God's Word is the cure for any possible error or problem you can imagine.
   1. Lack of knowledge; not knowing or doing the right thing for whatever reason. Outright heresy? Simple error? Is it ignorance, apathy, sloppiness …
      a. Example from Men's Retreat discussion. Dessain; "*Just keep teaching the Bible*"
   2. Lack of love? Integrity involves the *right spirit* as well as matters of doctrine.
   3. Are we where we need to be right now, or could we improve something?
      a. Cf. 7 churches of Revelation - All needed some correcting.
      b. Cf. Corrections on steering wheel even on a straight road.
   4. *God's Word is not just for proof texts, but for spirit as well*.
   5. Cf. Paul's urgency to maintain unity in Acts 21:17 ff. Do I have same spirit?
   6. Paul overlooks some different understandings in Romans 14. I'm afraid we might tend to press the issue to the point of division at times. Does our lifeboat have a leaky Spirit?
   7. *Paul proposes 3 ways of using the Word in this verse…*

B. Use it to *Correct*; Sometimes the church (members) need correcting.
   1. *ελεγξον*; *to expose truth*, to explain and reveal where the error is.

2. Sometimes people just miss a truth. Assume they know but don't. Apollos in Acts 18.
3. People often spend time discussing religious matters without going to the Word. Can spend ***days*** and get no where. ***WE NEED TO GET THEM IN THE WORD!***
   a. Is baptism necessary? Spend days talking human to human, or show them that it was Jesus who said it right in the Bible!? Cf. Schmidt; "Show me where JESUS says to get baptized."

C. Use it to ***Rebuke***; Sometimes the church (members) need rebuking.
1. *επιτιμησον*: means to set a value on and assess or "judge" a penalty.
2. You are *better* than that! You are God's child, a princess; you should be acting like it.
3. Shame on you. You ***know*** *better* than that.
4. Not nasty, but a "speaking the truth in love." Most powerful "rebuke" comes with tears.
   a. "You *know* that you cannot go to heaven if you keep living this way."
   b. "Remember what happened to Uzzah when he was irreverent?" (2 Samuel 6:7)

D. Use it to ***Encourage***; Sometimes the church (members) need encouraging.
1. *παρακαλεσον*: to call along side of, implore, encourage, incite, cheer, comfort.
2. Sense of "your doing just fine" "You can make it". Like a pep talk.
3. 1 Corinthians 14 view of what Holy Spirit is and how it is manifested. Edifies, builds up.
4. Communicate the power of God to them. Matthew 28:18, ***"…All authority …"***
5. Communicate the reliability of God; Romans 10:11, ***"…Anyone who trusts in …."***
6. The love of God. 1 John 3:1, ***"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us…"***
7. That effort is worthwhile; 1 Corinthians 15:58, ***"T_, m_ d_ b_, s_ f_. L_ n_ m_ y_…"***

Third part of the verse comes back on us who are trying to use God's word to keep Christ's church where Christ wants it to be. Because we are human, tend to get in a hurry and get sloppy. To keep the church on course, we need to …

III. Use The Word With Great Patience And Careful Instruction.

A. The call to patience and careful instruction indicates it will not be easy.
1. ***Expect*** it to be frustrating. May need to back up an pray about it. Get own spirit right.
2. Tell yourself they have a soul that God loves. Worth the effort. Die to self. Try again.
3. Cf. Example of Jean Lawrence evangelizing friend last Sunday evening.
4. Paul must have had great patience re; foods. Holidays etc. @ Romans 14.

B. Some folks will need to be trained ***repeatedly***.
1. If they need to hear it 1,000 times, give it to them 1,000 times ***at least***.
2. Folks don't stop gossiping when you tell them once. Not after 30 years of habit!
3. Some might correct language after being corrected once, many need to be worked with.

C. Some may need to have things explained repeatedly. (1,000 times?)
1. Remember they are God's children and they need careful nurturing. Love them enough.
2. I don't want you to quit trying to help me understand just because I am thick headed.

D. There are also dangers that need to be protected against repeatedly.
1. Internet has many hazards. One warning is not enough.
2. They see free and open sex with multiple partners 1,000 times a week. Will telling them Hebrews 13:4, ***"Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral."*** just once solve everything? They need to hear it frequently and often so it becomes a part of them.

So What?

The answer to keeping our lifeboat afloat is keeping it immersed in the Word of God. Memorize it. Remember it. ***"Preach the Word …"***

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We need to protect and maintain the integrity of the church.

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B. Use it to *Correct*; Sometimes the church (members) need correcting.
1. To expose truth, to explain and reveal where the error is.

C. Use it to *Rebuke*; Sometimes the church (members) need rebuking.
1. To set a value on and assess or "judge" a penalty.

D. Use it to *Encourage*; Sometimes the church (members) need encouraging.
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