

I. Thinking hard about these godless, difficult days (2 Timothy 3:1-5)

- A. Our days are the last days **[2 Timothy 2:1, 5c; Acts 2:16-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 9:26; 1 Peter 1:20]**
 - B. What makes these days so difficult? **[2 Timothy 2:2-4]**
 - 1. Disordered loves **[2 Timothy 4:10; 1 John 2:15-17]**
 - 2. The rise of "self-‐oriented living **[Philippians 2:20-21; 2:4; 1 Corinthians 10:24; Romans 15:2-3; Luke 9:23]**
 - C. We must seriously ask if our godliness is a mirage **[2 Timothy 3:5]**
 - 1. Godliness accords with sound doctrine **[1 Timothy 6:3-5]** and is great gain when coupled with contentment **[1 Timothy 6:6-10]**
 - 2. Power-denying godliness is not godliness at all **[2 Timothy 2:5; Ephesians 3:16-19]**
 - D. There are people we should avoid **[2 Timothy 2:5; 1 Corinthians 15:33; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; John 7:24]**

II. Godlessness in plain sight (2 Timothy 3:6-9)

- A. Godless people take advantage of others **[2 Timothy 2:6; 2 Timothy 4:3]**
 - B. Godless people are always learning but never arriving at truth. And what truth they do encounter, they oppose **[2 Timothy 2:7-8; 1 Timothy 2:4; Titus 1:1]**
 - C. Hidden dangers are all around us in plain sight **[2 Timothy 2:9; Matthew 7:15-23]**
 - 1. The fruit of our lives indicate the condition of our hearts
 - 2. As godliness can have a form but no power, so we can know facts about God but not know Him.

2 Timothy 3:1-9

But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. 2 For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholly, 3 heartless, unapeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, 4 treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. 6 For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, 7 always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. 8 Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith. 9 But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men.

sermon reflections

1. When you hear the phrase "*the last days*" what comes to mind? How can an understanding that we are in the 'last days' and that it will be difficult help us make sense of our world?
2. What are some examples of disordered loves? Why are disordered loves dangerous to our discipleship?
3. How is self-centered living antithetical to Christ and the gospel? How is moralistic behavior change really another form of self-centeredness?
4. Describe how the gospel truly transforms the heart unlike moral behavior change. How have you pursued moral behavior change as opposed to gospel transformation? What would gospel transformation look like in your life?
5. How can godliness be a mirage? Are there any ways godliness is a mirage in your life?
6. What are some ways godlessness is hiding in plain sight? How can you identify those dangers?

enduring faithfulness

2 TIMOTHY SERIES WEEK 5

These Godless, Difficult Days

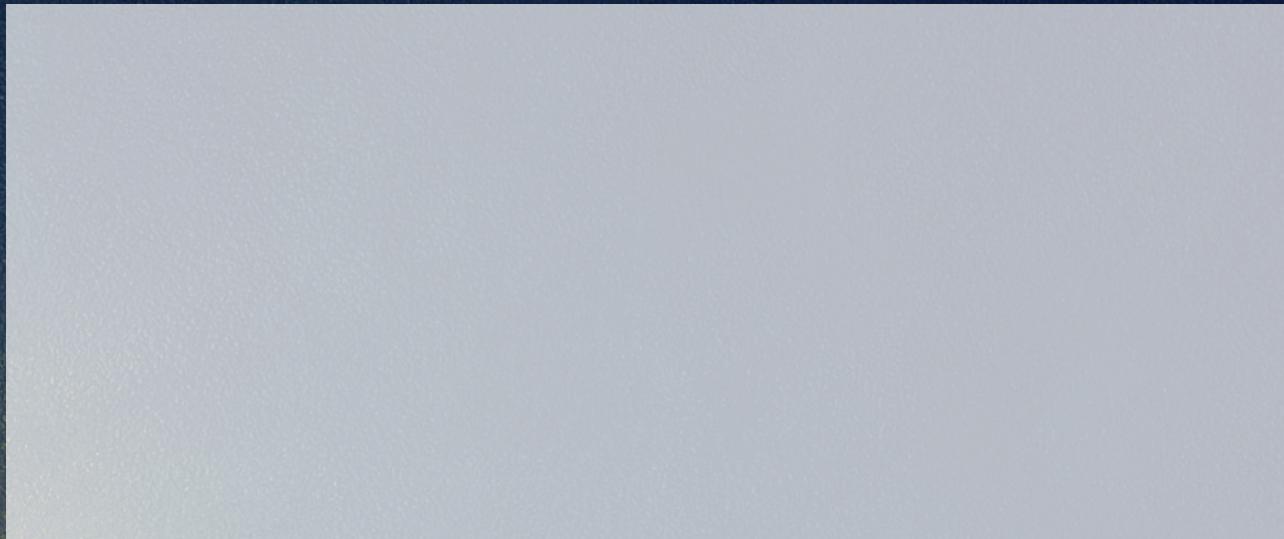
2 TIMOTHY 3:1-9



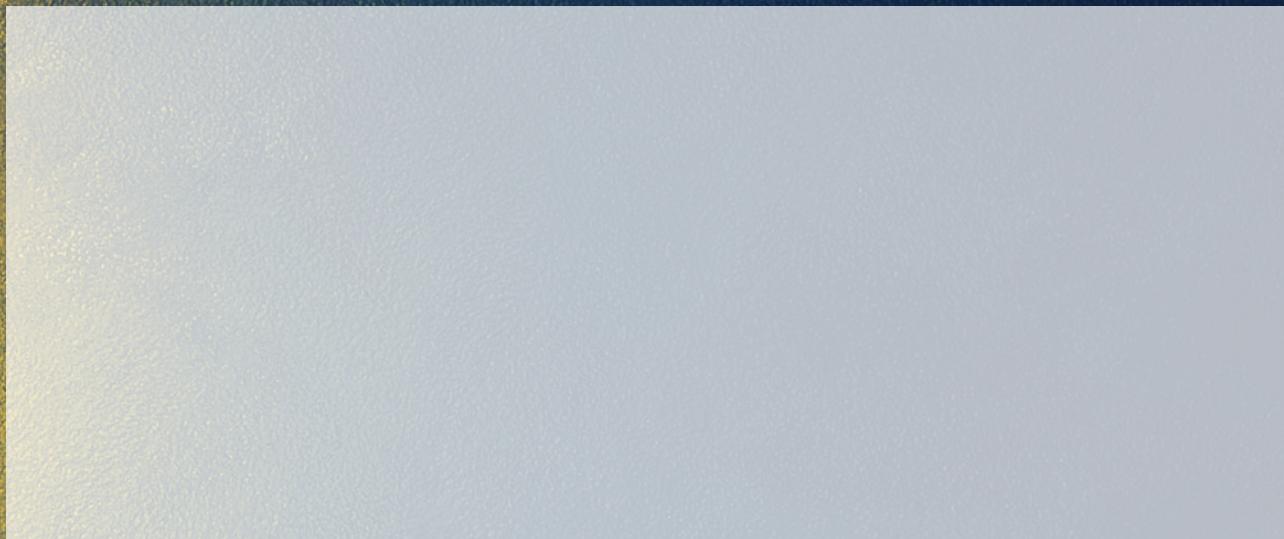
reading THE letter

Making observations in a passage is the best way to become familiar with it and grasp the basic meaning. One helpful technique is to use a notebook (or separate piece of paper) and make the following observations—

- List any **People/Places**—



- List any important **verbs** (actions), **repeated words/phrases**, or other **theological/special terms**—



observations

1 What does Paul want Timothy to understand about the last days?

2 How does Paul describe people in the last days? What do they love?

3 Why is Paul telling Timothy to avoid these people?

summary sentence

In your own words, summarize this passage in 1–2 sentences—

paul's encouragement TO timothy



“But understand this...” right from the start, Paul is grabbing Timothy’s attention. He wants Timothy to focus, to be on guard about what it means to live and minister in “*the last days*” **[3:1]**. “*The last days*” is a phrase we repeatedly see in the New Testament **[Acts 2:17, Heb. 1:2, 1 Pet. 3:3]**, referring to the period of time from Jesus’ ascension to when He returns for His people. The time Timothy lived in and the time we live in now are both part of the last days. Take heart, Timothy, the last days mean difficult days. Why? Because people will oppose God and His people.

Timothy is able to rightly discern who is a disciple of Jesus and who is just putting on a show is important, so important that Paul goes on to list 19 different adjectives or phrases to describe the evils that false believers will exhibit. Paul appeals to Timothy to avoid such people **[3:5]**, people who continuously show themselves to be “*lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God*” **[3:4]**. Why? Because the consequences of spending time with them, especially for weak women, are dire. While this passage is not implying that all women are easily led astray and weak, some are. Women burdened by sin are particularly vulnerable to being led astray. Paul reminds us of Jannes and Jambres, using them to give us an example of what these traits and behaviors look like in action. Jewish tradition tells us that Jannes and Jambres were magicians in Pharaoh’s court who opposed Moses **[Exod.7:11]**; they had all the appearance of godliness and piety; they denied the power of God. Though they could fool those around them for a season, ultimately, they were exposed for what they were, charlatans.

paul's encouragement TO US

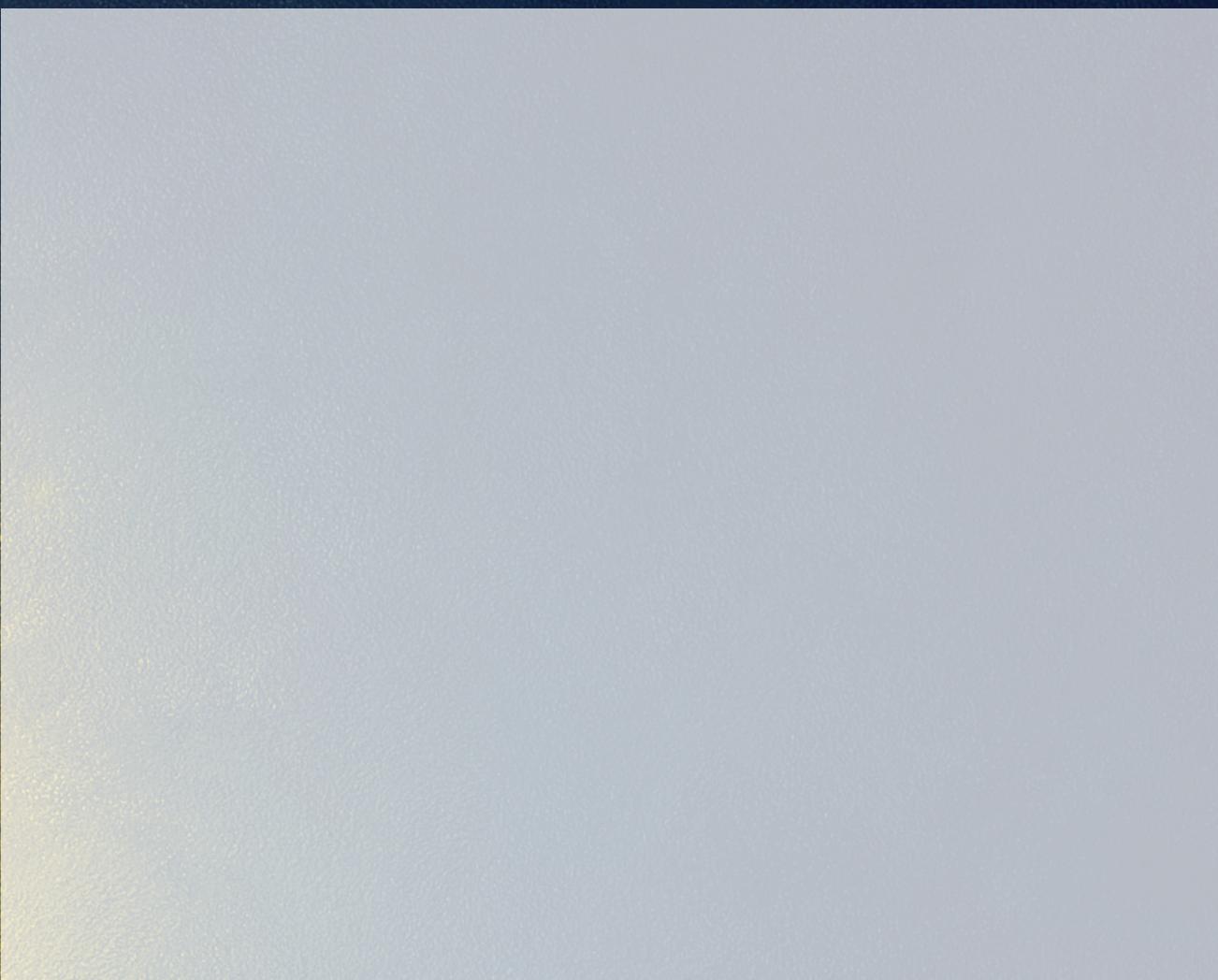
The issues that led Paul to write these instructions to Timothy are startlingly relevant today. It would not take more than a simple internet search to find examples of Paul's listed traits in verses 2–5. What was true then is true today; it is not difficult to find people who love themselves more than God. What is disconcerting is that we don't have to look outside of the body of Christ for these examples. Sometimes the people we sit next to on Sundays can be characterized as "*lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power.*" This warning of false believers is throughout the New Testament (**2 Pet. 2:1, 1 John 2:18–20, Jude 4**).

These warnings are not intended to scare us or make us suspicious of everyone we meet but rather raise our awareness and grow our discernment. We are not to naively follow those who say all the right things and perform godly acts in public as Jannes and Jambres did. We are called to be people who know how to rightly handle the word of truth (**2:15**), which means to know when it is mishandled or misapplied. We are to be students of God's word, not like the women in our passage who are "*always learning and never able to arrive at the knowledge of the truth.*" We already have the truth through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (**John 1:17**). We spend time in the inspired word of God because we long to know our Lord rightly and deeply, that through His word and our obedience, we will be conformed to our Saviors image. Remembering that "*the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.*" (**Jas 1:25**)

presenting ourselves approved TO THE world

responding questions

- 1 How does applying the perspective Paul gave in this passage change the way we view living in “*the last days*”? How does it change the way we approach temptation, happiness, suffering, success, and pain?



responding questions

- 2 In what ways are you allowing yourself to become "*puffed up in knowledge*" [1 Cor. 8:1] and yet, not grow in wisdom and humility under the authority of God's word?

