Say the Hard Thing
Conviction Without Contempt · Week Three · Discussion Guide
2 Timothy 2:22-26; Colossians 4:5-6

Getting Started

1. Where do you usually come up with your best responses: during the conversation, in the car afterward, or at two in the morning? Why do you think that is?
2. Think of someone who corrected you in a way that actually helped. What made it work?

Read the Context: 2 Timothy 2:14-26

Read the whole passage aloud, including the verses before Sunday's text.

3. Go through verses 14-26 and list every word or phrase about talking, arguing, or quarreling. What does Paul say these kinds of talk produce? (Look at vv. 14, 16-18, 23.)
4. What were Hymenaeus and Philetus teaching, and what was it doing to people (vv. 17-18)? Why does it matter that Paul is dealing with a serious error, not just a difference in taste?
5. Verse 22 begins with "So." How does the picture of vessels set apart for honorable use (vv. 20-21) lead into Paul's command to flee and pursue?

Look Closely: 2 Timothy 2:22-26

6. Verse 22 has two commands. What is Timothy supposed to run from, and what is he supposed to chase? Why might Paul start with Timothy's direction before talking about his conversations?
7. What could "youthful passions" include, given everything around it in this chapter? Can older believers struggle with these too?
8. Paul says to pursue these things "along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart." Why does he include other believers here? What does that say about trying to do this alone?
9. In verse 23, how does Paul decide which controversies to avoid? How is a foolish controversy different from a hard but honest question?
10. In verse 24, list what the Lord's servant must not be and what he must be. Why do you think "patiently enduring evil" comes right before "correcting his opponents"?
11. Read verse 25 slowly. Who does the correcting? How is it done? Who grants repentance? What does the phrase "may perhaps" add?
12. How does verse 26 describe the opponents? How does seeing someone as trapped change the way you'd talk to them, compared with seeing them as an enemy to beat?
13. Go back to 2:1. Paul tells Timothy to "be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus." How does that verse shape the way we read verses 22-26?

Connect the Texts

14. Read Colossians 4:2-6. Paul asks for prayer so he can speak "as I ought to speak" (v. 4), then tells the church to know "how you ought to answer each person" (v. 6). Why do you think prayer comes before speech here?
15. What do you think "gracious, seasoned with salt" might look like in an ordinary conversation? What changes when you answer "each person" instead of reaching for a stock answer?
16. Read 2 Timothy 4:14-15. What does Paul do about Alexander, and what does he leave to the Lord? How does this help us think about setting limits without retaliating?
17. Read John 21:15-19. Jesus addresses Peter's failure directly. How does he do it, and what does he give Peter along with the hard question?

Bring It Home

18. Think of a conversation you're preparing for or putting off. Be honest: what are you pursuing in it right now?
19. Is there an argument you need to refuse, or a conversation you need to pause and come back to later?
20. Recall a time you blurred "what Scripture says," "how I understand it," and "what I think we should do." What would it look like to keep those distinct next time?
21. What do you actually want for the person you need to address? What would it take for you to want their good?
22. Who could you ask to listen to what you're planning to say and to pray with you?
23. Choose one response for this week: make an apology, prepare for a necessary conversation, or close a thread you've kept alive because you enjoy the fight. What's your first step?

Pray

Pray for the person you named in question 18 or 21. Ask God to show you what you need to put away, to give you courage to say what needs saying, and to help you trust him with what happens next.