

**“BE CAREFUL HOW YOU LIVE” (1 and 2)
TWO SERMONS (Jan. 3 and 17, 2021)**

- 1) Attendance and Active Participation**
- 7) Being An Alternative Community**
- 2) Faithfulness to sound doctrine**
- 3) Spirit Fullness**
- 4) Orthodox Youth**
- 5) Community**
- 6) Service**

EPHESIANS 5:15

15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

2 Timothy 3

3 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. 2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, 4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— 5 **having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.**

6 They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over gullible women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, 7 always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. 8 Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these teachers oppose the truth. **They are men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected. 9 But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone.**

A Final Charge to Timothy

10 You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, 11 persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, **the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. 12 In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, 13 while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.**

14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, 15 and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All

Scripture is God-breathed (*theopneustos*) and is useful for teaching, rebuking (*elegchos*),

Outline of Biblical Usage:

1. a proof, that by which a thing is proved or tested
2. conviction

**correcting and training in righteousness (*paideia*),
17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

2 Timothy 4

4 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge:
2 Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. 3 For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.
4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. 5 But you, keep your head in all situations,

Outline of Biblical Usage:

1. to be sober, to be calm and collected in spirit
2. to be temperate, dispassionate, circumspect

endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

Galatians 6:9

9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. **10** Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

EPHESIANS 5:13-20

13 But everything exposed by the light becomes visible —and everything that is illuminated becomes a light.

14 This is why it is said:

“Wake up, sleeper,
rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.”

15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. 18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery.

Instead, be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

EPHESIANS 6

The Armor of God

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, **so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.** 14 Stand firm then, with the **belt of truth** buckled around your waist, with the **breastplate of righteousness** in place, 15 and with your **feet fitted** with the readiness that comes

from **the gospel of peace**. 16 In addition to all this, take up **the shield of faith**, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

17 Take **the helmet of salvation** and **the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God**.

18 And **pray in the Spirit on all occasions** with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. 19 Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

1 Chronicles 12:32

32 from Issachar, men who understood the times and knew what Israel should do—200 chiefs, with all their relatives under their command;

Clarke's Commentary on the Bible

Children of Issachar - According to the Targum they were all astronomers and astrologers: "and the sons of Issachar, who had understanding to know the times, and were skilled in fixing the beginnings of years, the commencement of months, and the intercalation of months and years; skillful in the changes of the moon, and in fixing the lunar solemnities to their proper times; skillful also in the doctrine of the solar periods; astrologers in signs and stars, that they might show Israel what to do; and their teachers were two hundred chiefs of the Sanhedrin: and all their brethren excelled in the words of the law, and were endued with

wisdom, and were obedient to their command." - T. It appears that in their wisdom, experience, and skill, their brethren had the fullest confidence; and nothing was done but by their direction and advice.

Treasury of Scripture Knowledge

understanding of the times That is, as the following words indicate, intelligent men, who understood the signs of the times, well versed in political affairs, and knew what was proper to be done in all the exigencies of human life; and who now perceived that it was both the duty and political interest of Israel to advance David to the throne.

Beginning of exposition

As the apostle Paul tells Timothy, **We live in evil times. And they will get worse. What should the Church do as a consequence?** What is the Holy Spirit telling us in this respect?

1) Emphasize and insist on **the basics of the faith. Return to the foundation. Cultivate the spiritual disciplines.**

RICHARD FOSTER'S LIST OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES (From *CELEBRATION OF DISCIPLINE*)

1. **The inward disciplines** Meditation
 Prayer Fasting Study

2. **The outward disciplines** (inward realities resulting in outward lifestyles) Simplicity
 Solitude
 Submission Service

3. **The corporate disciplines** Confession
 Worship
 Guidance
 Celebration

Strengthen ourselves spiritually and reconsecrate ourselves. Seek spiritual vitality. Examine ourselves and determine what areas of our personal life we should strengthen.

Back to the basics. Strengthen the fundamentals.

2) **Dedicate ourselves to reading, knowing and studying the Word.** This is known as Bible literacy.

Reading the Scriptures reverently and insistently, in the Spirit.

We have to **become more and more a church of the Word. Hold on resolutely to sound doctrine.**

Insist on orthodoxy, without it turning into rigid and mechanical self-righteousness.

I applaud the **new effort that we will be making in January to begin studying the Bible** in one year. This is extremely important, and if we commit ourselves in sufficient numbers, we will see a revolution in the life of this church.

This is **what Paul advises Timothy as an antidote to the increasing corruption** that will take place in the last days. **(See 2 Tim. 3:14-17 below).**

*14 But as for you, **continue in what you have learned** and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, 15 and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 **All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,** 17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

3) As time passes, appropriate cultural alternatives for Christians will become scarce. **Congregations will have to become alternative societies**, providing all the nutrients that normal human beings need for their emotional, social and spiritual sustenance.

This **does not mean that we isolate ourselves from *the world***. But it implies a **growing sense of identity and difference** between what we embrace and what people who do not know God embrace and practice.

We **have lost this sense of difference** and separation from the world in our desire to ingratiate ourselves with the culture. **The Bible seems to emphasize this separation**, however.

(Being separate from the world as opposed to winning the approval of the world.)

I believe we are entering a time now when this will become more urgent than ever. The need for this will become even more clear.

This depends on those who are affiliated with this church **understanding that we have to make a mutual pact to support, participate in, and strengthen the church's efforts** to promote community among us.

Attend spiritual and social gatherings; support pastoral leadership efforts to promote fellowship among members. **Example of New Year's Eve special service through Zoom.**

It is **useless for us to strive to offer new programs and efforts**, if people do not support them, based on a sense of commitment and loyalty towards the initiatives of their leaders.

In this regard, it is important to **join an affinity group that helps us bond emotionally with the church**, at this time when the natural inclination is towards isolation and separation due to the effects of COVID.

It fills me with hope every time I hear from **people who are being nurtured through these groups, be it prayer, meetings like those led by Sister Myriam Diaz**, which involves dozens of members of

our congregation and even people from other countries.

Another way to stay connected is **through the different ministries of the church** such as *Lazos de Amor*, Honduras, street ministry, different groups of intercession and pastoral care. This undoubtedly involves an investment of time. **Christian life has to become our life, the most important thing for us.**

This difficult and crisis-ridden time may be the time of the greatest renewal our church has ever experienced.

This can be a time of transformation and tremendous personal growth. It can be a time of spiritual renewal, and of becoming aware of who we are, and what our Christian identity consists of.

4) We must ensure that **our young people know the Word and receive solid, biblical teaching.** We have to do everything possible to **form in them a biblical and orthodox sensibility.**

Those in our church who teach youth should have this as their primary responsibility and mission.

Right now **our Christian youth in general are slipping from the truth**, and Christianity is filling up with churches that provide light and unscriptural teaching.

We are **not providing a confrontational gospel**, but one that merely affirms and encourages, and portrays, a **falsely tolerant** and overly benevolent God. This type of teaching is **not accompanied by the demands of holiness and adherence to biblical doctrine**. This has to change!

In order for our youth to resist the deception that increases every day, they need to be **inoculated through the solid, insistent teaching of the Word** and the principles of the gospel.

5) I insist that one of the most damaging effects of the COVID epidemic, for many, will be **the loss of the practice of attending church and meeting corporately**.

1Over the last few months **many people have lost the continuity of this practice**, and now they will have to rediscover it and put it back into practice.

As a pastor, I feel a great sense of duty to defend this practice of going physically to church and to sound the alarm, so that our people realize **the danger we are facing**, and how much we must work to rediscover this practice of attending church physically.

I always say the same thing: I understand very well **those who experience some kind of legitimate apprehension to come to church for any reason due to COVID.**

But I urge all those who have no legitimate reason to stay away from church to make every effort and ask the Lord to help them re-find that habit of physically gathering together.

6) A Spirit filled Church. We will not be able to resist the deception that will increase in these days if we are not sealed with the Holy Spirit.

This means that we have to seek the infilling of the Holy Spirit, **seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit.**

Without this impartation of power **(a)** we will not be able to be **effective in life and service**, nor **(b)** will not be able to **resist the slide into heresy and bad doctrine.**

And without this fullness of the Spirit, **(c)** neither will we be able to understand and adopt that **supernatural outlook**, which is part of a truly **biblical outlook.**

This supernatural outlook includes a proper understanding of **Bible prophecy, spiritual warfare, and revelation** that expresses itself in our daily life (dreams, impressions, prophetic words).

So, we have to **affirm our Pentecostal roots** and orientation. As a church, we must continue to orient people towards seeking the Baptism with the Holy Spirit and understanding the distinctives of the supernatural life and outlook.

We need to clarify and define what it means to be a Spirit-filled believer, and how to attain the fullness of the Spirit and live a Spirit-filled life.

7) Finally, we need to gain **a proper, biblical understanding** of what it is to be **a socially committed, socially responsible congregation.**

In the last few decades, the issue of social justice and human rights has entered into the vocabulary and consciousness of the modern Church.

I think this is a proper concern, and our church has been in the forefront of this concern since we first came to Boston.

But it must be remembered that social justice is not something that is new to the Church of Christ. Christianity has been involved in the issue of social justice since the first century (See **Acts 6**, for example).

Some make it sound as if this is something new for us, that we need to be instructed in and initiated into.

I would say that what is new is the **exaggerated emphasis** placed on it, and what is sometimes an **unbiblical interpretation of it**.

- 1) Homosexual activism has become confused with simple human rights.
- 2) Animosity toward our nation's history and identity has become confused with appropriate criticism of it.
- 3) The desire to speak and relate to the culture has led many to seek to tone down the call to righteousness and holiness in the Scriptures.
- 4) Compassion toward the weak and the disadvantaged has often turned into paternalism and a refusal to call them into accountability when necessary.
- 5) Appropriate criticism of authority has often turned into suspicion of and resistance to authority.

There is a biblical way of engaging in social justice issues, and this needs to be validated and insisted upon. But there is a way of addressing these issues that is worldly and secular that the Church must avoid at all costs.

Finding the proper balance between the two is crucial, and requires a lot of spiritual strength. And this is why we need a proper biblical foundation and the fullness of the Holy Spirit.