Crossroads International Church (11 January 2015) Dr. Rick Griffith

Title

Valley Baptist Fellowship (27 Sep 2020) Single Message

NLT 40 Minutes

**How to Deal with Secularism**

***2 Timothy 3***

**Topic:** Truth

**Subject:** How should you deal with secularism?

**Complement:** Replace lies with truth.

**Purpose:** The listeners will reject heretics but model themselves after God’s servants and Word.

**Meditation:** God of Truth

**Reading:** 2 Timothy 3

**Song:** “Lord, Make Me Like You”

# Introduction

### Interest: A man seeks crystal ball advice [read]. “B.C” gives a negative view of the future!

Cartoon

### Interest: As a Christian, should you be *optimistic* about the future?

Optimistic

#### One could say that Christians ought to be the *most* positive people on the planet.

Open Door

#### After all, who else has the assurance of sins forgiven and a heavenly home? Who else has a Guide right now who knows everything, loves us unconditionally, and can do anything? Doesn’t it seem that believers ought to be the most confident people about the future?

Eye

### Need: What about you? Are you an optimist? Shouldn’t you be?

The Future is Ours.

#### Singapore is now in its 50th year, having grown from a sleepy fishing village to a major player on the global scene.

Future Singapore

#### The economy is looking up—employment is full, property prices are stable or rising.

Green Buildings

#### Singapore marches forward toward floating farms just outside Marina Bay.

Farms   
(2 slides)

#### Even looking at eternal things, the percentage of Christians in Singapore continues to rise, as does the number of churches—growing even faster than the general population increase. Shouldn’t Christians be encouraged?

Finger

Hands & World

#### As a Christian, do you have optimism about the future?

• You shouldn’t.

#### You shouldn’t.

### Background: The Bible says that the worst days are ahead prior to Christ’s return. It is going to get worse. In fact, it started getting worse in the first century. How’s that?

Man Plug Ears

#### Heresies Abounded: We may suppose that it takes a long time for heresies to develop, but the New Testament teaches otherwise. Within a generation of Christ’s life, many false systems developed. Paul writes in the AD 60s just prior to his beheading that many had fallen into the snare of deceptive teaching.

Overview Timeline

#### He had already written six missionary epistles, four prison epistles, and two pastoral epistles. Today we will see the very last letter he wrote in AD 67-68.

#### Persecution Increased: Three years before Paul composed his final letter of 2 Timothy, Rome had burned (AD 64). Since Nero blamed the Christians, it became very dangerous to be a Christian, and especially to be a leader or be associated with one. As a result, many of Paul's co-workers took a much lower profile, and some even fell away (including everyone in Asia, 1:15; Demas, 4:10; Alexander, 4:14). No one even defended Paul before the emperor when he was on trial for his life (4:16). No doubt the timid Timothy was tempted to minister less aggressively as well (1:7-8).

1st v. 2nd   
(3 slides)

Prison   
(26 slides)

#### Therefore, Paul wrote 2 Timothy to remind him of the need to faithfully continue to preach the Word in the face of hardship (4:2) and false teachers (3:6-9; 4:3-4).

Faithful  
(5 slides)

### Present Context

#### Singapore may have seen church growth, but it is only a microcosm of the world as a whole. Even here, the increase of so-called “free thinkers” who claim no religion continues to increase. Christians are afraid to share their faith in the marketplace and are going underground in many ways, fearing they might lose their job.

Pie Chart

#### The Bible says that godless people in general—and especially heretical leaders—will increase in the future as the world becomes secularized. So, in that light…

“No God.”

### Subject: How should you deal with secularism? How should believers respond to the increasing godlessness of our age?

• Subject

### Preview: Paul gives *two ways* we should respond to secularism in 2 Timothy 3.

• 2 Tim 3   
2 ways

(What is the first way Paul says to deal with secularism? He says to…)

# I. Avoid godless teachers (3:1-9).

MP

[Reject any teaching out of line with God’s Word.]

## Reject godless teachers who pretend to be godly (3:1-5).

1

### We are promised difficulty (3:1).

#### Paul was experiencing great trials when he wrote this.

##### Many were falling away just before Paul's death, so he carefully chose his words in perhaps his last statements to Timothy in order to assure that Timothy himself would remain true to the faith until death.

Apostasy

##### Paul did this end by exhorting him to persevere in present hardships with godly character (2 Tim. 1–2). This included several examples of faithfulness (1:3-18) as well as what perseverance looks like in his list of the characteristics of a faithful minister (2:1-26).

#### When did the “last days” begin and are we in the “last days” today?

1

##### This period began in the first century. Paul noted in 1 Timothy 3:1 that apostasy would characterize the “last days,” and Jude 18 applies this to Jude’s own time in the first century.

##### These “last days” then continue up to the present time and until Christ’s return.

Megaphone

### Life will be tough because the godless deceive others (3:2-5a).

#### Paul lists 19 characteristics of secular people who actually do not appear so secular, as they have a religious nature about them. It is a very sobering list.

19 Traits

#### Verses 2-5 give 19 sad traits of people in general—but they influence others as leaders.

#### This is followed by the characteristics of religious leaders in verses 6-9.

#### Beginning in verses 6-7, “Paul focused on the specific situation in Ephesus. It was from the increasingly large group in society who displayed the preceding characteristics that the false teachers had emerged to plague the church” (BKC).

No handshake

6-7

Danger

(What should we do with such people? Should we confront them? Should we debate them? No. Paul says to…)

### Avoid godless leaders (3:5b).

Run right

#### The advice to us today is often to engage with false teachers. However, Paul’s meaning here is to “purposely to avoid associating with someone, turn away from, avoid” (BDAG).

#### But how could Timothy avoid godless people when they were all around him (5b)? “No doubt Paul had in mind here Timothy’s official associations, since he had already instructed Timothy to be kind to everyone (cf. 2 Tim. 2:24)” (BKC).

(But why should we avoid associations with such heretical leaders? It is because…)

## Heretics are doomed despite their popularity (3:6-9).

### Gullible women loved the latest heresy (3:6-7).

#### One can become a more popular leader by teaching the latest crazy idea. People who have too much time on their hands often believe such heretics. These followers have little work to do and do not invest in the lives of others. Such were certain idle, vulnerable women in Ephesus.

#### Their counterpart today includes people with the time to waste many hours each day on the Internet. If they needed to work for a living or had the heart to help others, such time would not be available. Therefore, their time is wasted with the latest fad, protest, or riot. How else could the sensual and titillating websites receive millions of hits?

(Why is it a waste of time listening to heretics?)

### Godless teachers are doomed due to their depraved minds that reject truth (3:8-9).

8-9

#### “The reference to Jannes and Jambres and their opposition to Moses draws not on the Old Testament but on a widespread Jewish legend about two of Pharaoh’s magicians who competed against Moses and lost (cf. Ex. 7:11; 9:11). The comparison between the false teachers and the Egyptians, and implicitly therefore Timothy and Moses, must have encouraged the young minister” (BKC).

Trash

#### Our values are revealed by what we consider trash. God desires for us today to invest our energies in efforts that will last.

(How *else* can we deal with heretics besides avoiding them? What *are* those efforts that will last? Paul says, “But you…” in verse 10 to give us what to do instead of following godless teachers. We can deal with secularism when we…)

MPI

# II. Accept truth (3:10-17).

MP

[Feed yourself reality from God’s servants and God’s Word.]

## Follow God’s servants (3:10-13).

Servants

### Follow Paul’s example in suffering (3:10-11).

10-11

#### We often say, “Don’t follow me. Follow Christ.” That sounds humble, but people need to see contemporary examples of Jesus.

#### Paul said to follow Christ, but he also encouraged his readers to follow him. “Follow me, as I follow Christ” (Eph. 5:1).

### Expect to suffer for godliness like Paul did (3:12).

Chains

#### “In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (NIV).

12-13

12

#### This verse seems so incredible to us that we strain at a gnat to explain it away. “Surely that look they gave me is a form of persecution!” we rationalize.

#### More likely, we are fooling ourselves into thinking that we are really living a godly life.

#### We need not look too far to find examples of the godly facing persecution. In fact, in 2014 we heard of examples of even Christian children in Iraq who refused to deny Christ and were literally crucified and beheaded as a result.

Children

#### Perhaps it is time to realize that this verse really isn’t as perplexing as it seems. More perplexing is our ability to explain it away.

### Expect evil deceivers to flourish (3:13).

13

#### Here is why we need godly examples: the ungodly ones are sure to increase.

#### The very deceptive part is that when a person is deceived, he doesn’t even know it. That is why he is deceived! Are you?

Truth not lies

(How can we accept truth instead of lies? Godly examples can help, but there must be an absolute standard, so Paul also says to…)

Servants

## Follow God’s Word (3:14-17).

Word

### Stay true to God’s truth that you learned (3:14-15a).

14-15a

#### We must *remain*, *abide, or stay* (BDAG) faithful to the truth (3:14a).

#### Paul gives two reasons we must keep the truth (3:14b-15a).

##### Our teachers are trustworthy (3:14a).

###### Timothy first learned from his believing mother and grandmother (cf. 2 Tim. 1:5; Acts 16:1).

###### Paul later referred to him as his “son” in the faith (1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2).

(But how can teachers be trustworthy?)

##### They are trustworthy because they taught us the Bible (3:15a).

###### Survey any Christian gathering and you will find that most trusted Christ before age 18.

###### We cannot overemphasize how vital it is to train children in God’s Word.

(But why is teaching the Bible so important?)

### Continue in God’s Word as it blesses you in many ways (3:15b-17).

Bible Blessings

#### Scripture *gives us wisdom* to accept Christ (3:15b).

Wisdom  
15b

##### True wisdom focuses on what’s most important.

##### Since the Scripture is genuine wisdom, it helps us trust in the only source of salvation—Christ Jesus.

Inspired  
16a

#### Scripture *comes from God’s* own “mouth” (3:16a).

##### The Greek word for “inspired” literally means “God-breathed.”

breathed  
16a

##### True, God used people, but his Spirit spoke through them so the Scriptures are without error.

2 Tim. 3:16-17

Original autos

#### Scripture *teaches* us truth (3:16b).

Teaching

##### Being inerrant, the Bible then teaches only truth.

##### This truth shows us the right path to follow.

#### Scripture *rebukes* us when we sin (3:16c).

• Rebukes

##### We often leave the right path but don’t know it.

##### God’s Word tells us where we have gone wrong.

#### Scripture *corrects* us by showing the right path (3:16d).

• Corrects

##### People need not only to know they are lost.

##### They need the Word to show them the way back.

#### Scripture *trains* us how to live pure lives (3:16e).

• Training

##### Righteous living doesn’t just happen automatically.

##### However, the more exposure to God’s Word, the more it purifies us.

#### Scripture *equips us* to do every good work (3:17).

Major Theme 3

##### To do a job well, we need the right tools. The Bible doesn’t just make us “adequate” in a limited sense. The Greek word here is “fully qualified” or “complete, capable, proficient in the sense of being able to meet all demands” (BDAG).

##### The result of all these benefits is that we have the tools to do any good deed.

(So we live in a world that is increasingly secular. We are told lies like all the world’s religions are the same. Many seek to combine them all as if there is no real truth. So how should you deal with this kind of secularism—a kind that often portrays itself as having a form of godliness without God?)

Sec.

(4 slides)

# Conclusion

### Replace lies with truth (Main Idea). Don’t get sucked into secular thinking—but instead rely upon godly values, truth (restated).

MI

### But *how* can you learn truth instead of lies?

#### Avoid godless teachers (3:1-9).

MPI

#### Accept truth (3:10-17).

MPII

### What specifically does it look like to replace lies with truth?

Chained Bible

#### Watch your input—your reading, news, friends, movies, TV, and especially the Internet.

GIGO   
boy

##### We often teach this to children.

##### But GIGO applies to adults too.

Feed computer

##### Do these sources build your faith or tear it down?

Head

#### Get mentored by godly people (2 Tim. 2:2).

2 Tim 2:2

##### Each of us should be like Timothy to learn from someone more mature than us, and also be a “Paul” to someone less mature to help that person grow in Christ.

How?

Diagram

##### How can you mentor and get mentored? Life Transformation Groups are 2-3 people meeting weekly for accountability.

###### An LTG has 2-3 persons committed to growing spiritually. They meet in a home, restaurant, church, business, or wherever they can have a 60-minute accountability session each week.

LTG   
1-2-3

###### No LTG should be larger than 3 people. Once a member invites a 4th person and it is shown that this 4th person will be committed to the LTG concept, the group of 4 multiplies into 2 groups of 2 persons. The additional members can be believers or unbelievers, as long as they are committed to confession, Bible reading, and prayer.

LTG   
2 gens.

###### Ideally, the church is then composed of many LTG groups at different stages, growing to multiply more groups so that accountability remains intact in a small group for each person.

LTG   
multiplies

##### Dallas Seminary sees learning as a lifelong process, so the seminary offers free online courses in books such as Romans and Revelation. Sign up for one of them this week!

DTS Courses

#### Read God’s Word so you can heed God’s Word.

Read the Bible

##### Your pastor cannot possibly teach you in one hour each week enough to combat the world’s influence the other 167 hours!

##### Each January I remind those attending Crossroads International Church to commit to daily Bible reading.

##### We all give priority to eat our physical food. Wouldn't it make sense to show even more attention to our regular, daily spiritual diet?

##### I suggest that you make it manageable—even one verse per day, if needed—and have someone hold you accountable.

#### Prayer

Prayer

# Preliminary Questions

**Verses Questions**

# Context: What did the author record just prior to this passage?

### Many were falling away just before Paul's death, he carefully chose his words in perhaps his last statements to Timothy in order to assure that Timothy himself would remain true to the faith until death. Paul did this end by exhorting him to persevere in present hardships with godly character (2 Tim. 1–2). This included several examples of faithfulness (1:3-18) as well as what perseverance looks like in his list of the characteristics of a faithful minister (2:1-26).

### Paul says that the future will even be more difficult (2 Tim. 3–4). Timothy will especially have to fight apostasy with faithful preaching of the Word of God (3:10–4:5).

# Purpose: Why is this passage in the Bible?

### We tend to listen to what people—not God—says.

### What we listen to determines what we follow, so Paul reminds us to heed what God tells us in order to handle a world that is increasingly hostile to God.

# Background: What historical context helps us understand this passage?

### We may suppose that it takes a long time for heresies to develop, but the New Testament teaches otherwise. Within a generation of Christ’s life, many false systems developed. Paul writes in the AD 60s just prior to his beheading that many had fallen away.

### Three years before Paul composed 2 Timothy, Rome had burned (AD 64). Since Nero blamed the Christians, it had become very dangerous to be a Christian, and especially to be a leader or associated with one. As a result, many of Paul's co-workers sought a much lower profile, and some even fell away (everyone in Asia, 1:15; Demas, 4:10; Alexander, 4:14). No one even defended Paul before the Emperor when he was on trial for his life (4:16). No doubt the timid Timothy was tempted to minister less aggressively as well (1:7-8). Therefore, Paul wrote this epistle to remind him of the need to faithfully continue to preach the Word in the face of hardship (4:2) and false teachers (3:6-9; 4:3-4).

# Questions

### When did the “last days” begin and are we in the “last days” today (1)?

#### This period began in the first century.

#### It continues up to the present time until Christ’s return.

### What kind of people will reject the truth (2-9)?

#### Verses 2-5 give 19 sad traits of people in general.

#### This is followed by the characteristics of religious leaders in verses 6-9.

#### In verses 6-7, “Paul focused on the specific situation in Ephesus. It was from the increasingly large group in society who displayed the preceding characteristics that the false teachers had emerged to plague the church” (BKC).

### How could Timothy avoid godless people when they were all around him (5b)?

#### “No doubt Paul had in mind here Timothy’s official associations, since he had already instructed Timothy to be kind to everyone (cf. 2 Tim. 2:24)” (BKC).

#### The idea here is to “purposely to avoid associating with someone, turn away from, avoid” (BAGD).

# Tentative Subject/Complement Statements

Text

# Possible Illustrations

### Christians used to be known as the “the people of the Book” but I wonder if such could be said anymore.

### Examples of Apostate teaching today:

#### *Noah* movie 2014

#### *Exodus: Gods and Kings* movie currently out

#### Theistic evolution

#### Adam and Eve not considered historical by “evangelicals”

#### Death before the fall taught now by many “evangelicals”

#### Oprah Winfrey

#### Joyce Meyer

#### Rob Bell: “There is no hell”

#### Joel Osteen: Word of Faith deception, won’t mention sin

##### “No creed by Christ! No book but the Bible!” http://www.lakesidechristian.com/Messages/All-Messages/2001-Messages/The-Christian-Church-Our-Identity/The-Creed-All-Can-Accept

##### <http://www.forgottenword.org/osteen.html>

##### <http://www.thebiblicalworldview.org/is-joel-osteen-a-false-prophet/>

##### <http://www.av1611.org/osteen.html>

# Possible Applications

### Text

**II. (Chs. 3–4) Paul exhorts Timothy to persevere in future tribulation and furnishes his own positive attitude towards death to encourage Timothy to faithfully preach the Word despite apostasy.**

A. (3:1-9) Paul warns of a future time when people will appear godly but exemplify the traits of the enemy to enable Timothy to face it intelligently.

B. (3:10–4:5) The apostle exhorts his younger apostolic delegate to oppose the future false teaching by faithfully preaching the inspired Word of God and fulfilling the other duties of his ministry: enduring hardship, rebuking, encouraging, and evangelizing.

C. (4:6-18) Paul expresses hope in God despite his approaching death and betrayals by his friends as a model to Timothy of trust in God despite future testing.

D. (4:19-22) Paul's closing greetings, request for Timothy's visit before his execution, and benediction reveal a man not conquered by death, but victorious in it.

**How to Deal with Secularism**

***2 Timothy 3***

**Exegetical Outline (Steps 2-3)**

# *Exegetical Idea*: The way Timothy should protect himself and his people from deceptive heretics was to reject them but accept God’s servants and Word.

# I. The way Timothy should protect himself and his people from deceptive heretics was to *avoid heretics as doomed* (3:1-9).

## *Avoid* godless teachers who pretend to be godly (3:1-5).

### The last days will be extremely difficult (3:1).

### The reason life will be so tough is because people will be self-centered but deceive others that they are righteous (3:2-5a).

### The response Timothy should have to godless leaders is to avoid them (3:5b).

## R*ecognize heretics are doomed* despite their popularity (3:6-9).

### Their followers were gullible women embracing the latest heresy (3:6-7).

### Their depraved minds will oppose the truth but they are doomed like Jannes and Jambres who opposed Moses (3:8-9).

# II. The way Timothy should protect himself and his people from deceptive heretics was to *accept God’s servants and Word* (3:10-17).

## Follow God’s *servants* (3:10-13).

### Follow Paul’s example in suffering (3:10-11).

### Expect to suffer for godliness like Paul did (3:12).

### Expect evil deceivers to flourish (3:13).

## Follow God’s *Word* (3:14-17).

### He should stay true to God’s truth that he learned (3:14-15a).

### The reason he should continue in the Word is because it blesses us in many ways (3:15b-17).

#### Scripture *gives us wisdom* to accept Christ (3:15b).

#### Scripture *comes from God’s* own “mouth” (3:16a).

#### Scripture *teaches* us truth (3:16b).

#### Scripture *rebukes* us when we sin (3:16c).

#### Scripture *corrects* us by showing the right path (3:16d).

#### Scripture *trains* us how to live pure lives (3:16e).

#### Scripture *equips us* to do every good work (3:17).

**Purpose or Desired Listener Response (Step 4)**

The listeners will reject heretics but model themselves after God’s servants and Word.

**Homiletical Outline** (Cyclical inductive form)

# Introduction

### Interest: Should you be optimistic about the future?

### Need: Are you an optimist?

### Background: The Bible says that the worst days are ahead prior to Christ’s return.

### Subject: How should you deal with secularism?

### Preview: In his final letter that we possess, the Apostle Paul provides *two ways* we should respond to secularism.

### Text: Paul wrote his last letter to Timothy, which included admonitions in 2 Timothy 3 regarding false teachers.

# I. Avoid godless teachers (3:1-9).

## Reject godless teachers who pretend to be godly (3:1-5).

### We are promised difficulty (3:1).

### Life will be tough because the godless deceive others (3:2-5a).

### Avoid godless leaders (3:5b).

## Heretics are doomed despite their popularity (3:6-9).

### Gullible women loved the latest heresy (3:6-7).

### Godless teachers are doomed due to their depraved minds that reject truth like Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses (3:8-9).

# II. Accept truth (3:10-17).

## Follow God’s servants (3:10-13).

### Follow Paul’s example in suffering (3:10-11).

### Expect to suffer for godliness like Paul did (3:12).

### Expect evil deceivers to flourish (3:13).

## Follow God’s Word (3:14-17).

### Stay true to God’s truth that you learned (3:14-15a).

### Continue in God’s Word as it blesses you in many ways (3:15b-17).

#### Scripture *gives us wisdom* to accept Christ (3:15b).

#### Scripture *comes from God’s* own “mouth” (3:16a).

#### Scripture *teaches* us truth (3:16b).

#### Scripture *rebukes* us when we sin (3:16c).

#### Scripture *corrects* us by showing the right path (3:16d).

#### Scripture *trains* us how to live pure lives (3:16e).

#### Scripture *equips us* to do every good work (3:17).

(So how should you deal with secularism?)

# Conclusion

### Replace lies with truth (Main Idea).

### How can you learn truth instead of lies?

#### Avoid godless teachers (3:1-9).

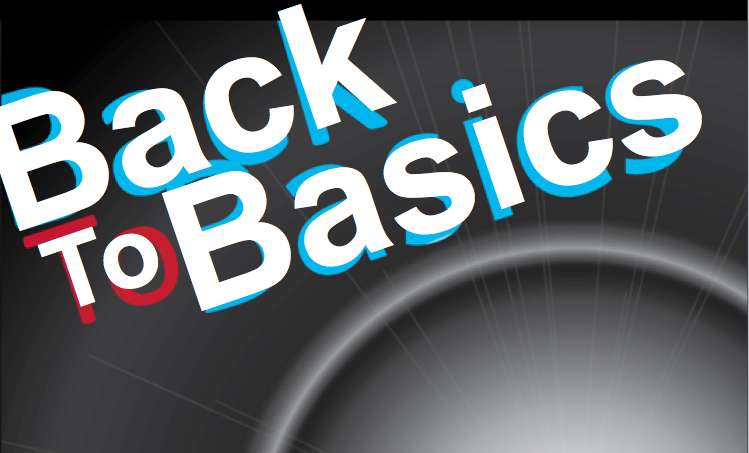
#### Accept truth (3:10-17).

### What does replacing lies with truth look like specifically?

#### Watch your input—reading, news, friends, movies, TV, and especially the Internet.

#### Get mentored by godly people.

#### Read God’s Word so you can heed God’s Word.



**Rick Griffith**

11 January 2015

Message 1 of 2

**How to Deal with Secularism**

***2 Timothy 3***

# Introduction

### Should you be optimistic about the future?

### The Bible says that the worst days are ahead prior to Christ’s return.

### How should you deal with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?

# I. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ godless teachers (3:1-9).

## Reject godless teachers who pretend to be godly (3:1-5).

### We are promised difficulty (3:1).

### Life will be tough because the godless deceive others (3:2-5a).

### Avoid godless leaders (3:5b).

## Heretics are doomed despite their popularity (3:6-9).

### Gullible women loved the latest heresy (3:6-7).

### Godless teachers are doomed due to their depraved minds that reject truth like Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses (3:8-9).

# II. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ truth (3:10-17).

## Follow God’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (3:10-13).

### Follow Paul’s example in suffering (3:10-11).

### Expect to suffer for godliness like Paul did (3:12).

### Expect evil deceivers to flourish (3:13).

## Follow God’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (3:14-17).

### Stay true to God’s truth that you learned (3:14-15a).

### Continue in God’s Word as it blesses you in many ways (3:15b-17).

#### Scripture *gives us wisdom* to accept Christ (3:15b).

#### Scripture *comes from God’s* own “mouth” (3:16a).

#### Scripture *teaches* us truth (3:16b).

#### Scripture *rebukes* us when we sin (3:16c).

#### Scripture *corrects* us by showing the right path (3:16d).

#### Scripture *trains* us how to live pure lives (3:16e).

#### Scripture *equips us* to do every good work (3:17).

(So how should you deal with secularism?)

# Conclusion

### Replace \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Main Idea).

### What specifically does it look like to replace lies with truth?

#### Watch your input—reading, news, friends, movies, TV, and the Internet.

#### Get mentored by godly people.

#### Read God’s Word so you can heed God’s Word.

**Thought Questions**

1. Read 2 Timothy 3 aloud. Contrast each group in the last days in terms of their traits and commands for them:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Unbelievers** | **Believers** |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |

1. Whose example in your life should you be following and how?

Text

1. How do you let God’s Word impact your life?

Text