



Outward Group Discussion Guide

October 25, 2026

SUMMARY

Drawing from 2 Timothy 3:1-9, this sermon challenges the common assumption that Paul's warning about the moral decline of the last days is directed at the outside world. Instead, the pastor argues that Paul is addressing dangers within the church itself — people who maintain an outward appearance of godliness while inwardly denying its power. The "last days" refers not to a distant future event but to the entire era between Christ's first and second coming, meaning these warnings apply to every generation of believers. The sermon's central tension is framed around two bookends in Paul's list: being a "lover of self" versus being a "lover of God," with every vice on the list falling in the space between those two postures. The pastor calls the congregation to honest self-examination, arguing that attempts to eliminate sin through willpower alone will fail. Only a genuine, growing love for God — what 19th-century pastor Thomas Chalmers called "the expulsive power of a new affection" — can displace the love of self that produces destruction. The sermon closes with an invitation to seek God for who he is, not merely for what he provides.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Paul's list of vices in 2 Timothy 3 was written around 60 AD, yet it feels strikingly relevant today -- what does it

mean for your faith that Scripture written nearly 2,000 years ago so accurately describes the human condition?

2. The sermon challenges the common assumption that Paul's warning is directed at people outside the church, arguing instead that 'the call is coming from inside the house' -- how does that reframing change the way you read and apply this passage?
3. Paul describes people who have 'the appearance of godliness but deny its power' -- in what subtle ways might someone maintain the outward appearance of faith while inwardly resisting the transforming work of God?
4. The sermon draws a connection between the two bookends of Paul's list -- 'lovers of self' and 'lovers of God' -- and suggests that everything in between flows from misplaced love; where in your own life do you see self-love crowding out your love for God?
5. Jesus confronted the crowd after the feeding of the 5,000 by pointing out they were following him for bread rather than for who he truly is -- what is the 'bread' in your own life that might be motivating your pursuit of God more than God himself?
6. Thomas Chalmers argued that the best way to expel an impure desire is not willpower but replacing it with a purer love -- how have you experienced the difference

between trying to stop a sinful habit through discipline versus having it displaced by a deeper love for God?

7. The sermon points out that Rob Bell continued asking questions for years without arriving at truth, illustrating Paul's warning about those who are 'always learning and never able to arrive at the knowledge of the truth' -- what safeguards can a believer put in place to ensure that intellectual exploration leads toward truth rather than away from it?
8. Jannes and Jambres could imitate the miracles of Moses for a time but were ultimately exposed -- what does this historical example teach us about the difference between counterfeit spiritual power and genuine, God-given power?
9. The sermon references Philippians 2:12, which describes working out our salvation with fear and trembling, and suggests that the conviction we feel when reading Paul's list is a sign of spiritual life -- how do you personally hold together the assurance of salvation with a healthy, ongoing fear of drifting away from God?
10. Matthew 6:33 promises that seeking God's kingdom first results in all other needs being met -- what would it practically look like in your daily life to reorder your priorities so that knowing and loving God is genuinely the first pursuit rather than a means to other ends?