**Useful for the Master**

**INTRODUCTION:**

1. Read 2 Timothy 2:20-21.
2. We like to feel useful. Which would you rather hear when asking if you can help?
   1. “No, I’m sorry, I don’t think there’s anything you can do.”
   2. “Sure, I could use your help with…”
3. When applying for a job:
   1. “We have reviewed your application and we could sure use someone like you."
4. But in particular, we want to be useful for the Master.
   1. Music to the elders’ ears: “Put me to work. I want to help in every way I can.”

**BODY:**

1. To be useful for the Master…
   1. We must be willing to endure hardship, in all its various forms (1-13).
      1. We can tell Paul bracing Timothy for something in v. 1.
      2. “Endure hardship as a good SOLDIER of Jesus Christ” (v. 3).
         1. And the other two examples he gives—the athlete and the farmer—they face their share of difficulties and hardships, too.
      3. These can include persecution, brethren who turn away, people who won’t listen, etc.
         1. Persecution (3:12); brethren who turn away (1:15); people who won’t listen (4:3-4).
      4. We can’t be very useful if we go AWOL when things get tough.
         1. Remember how the Titanic was advertised: “The unsinkable ship.” But it did, on April 15, 1912. Don’t be like the Titanic.
      5. Notice the **encouragement** to persevere given in 2: 8-13.
   2. We must develop a clear knowledge of the truth, and be able to handle it properly (14-18).
      1. The **harm** we can do if we don’t:
         1. 2:14, 23. We can spend too much time on things which have no basis in truth. May try to answer questions which have no answer.
         2. 2:16-18.
      2. The **good** we can do (2:15, 21; 3:16-17).
         1. Teach and encourage fellow-Christians, help them grow.
         2. Restore fellow-Christians who have gone astray.
         3. Convict the lost, show them the way of salvation.
         4. Develop more teachers, influence future generations (2:2).
         5. The tremendous help we can be to our children.
   3. We must **flee** sin, and **pursue** righteousness (19-23).
      1. Read 2:19-22.
      2. What is typically done with “vessels of honor”? Lamps, vases, paintings, etc.? We put them on display.
         1. God wants to put us on display, to bring glory and honor to His name, and so we better present the right image, or to be more precise, we better present **His image**.
      3. We can’t be like those described in 3:1-5.
   4. We must have the right disposition, temperament (read 2:24-26).
      1. Humble, gentle, patient, genuinely concerned for the salvation of others—sound like someone we know?
      2. “A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench”   
         (Isaiah 42:3).
      3. “Shall come with a **strong hand**…He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who with young” (Isa. 40:10-11).
         1. Don’t forget about the “strong hand.” Those whom we may gently, patiently lead eventually have to take responsibility—develop their own faith, their own zeal, their own commitment. Galatians 6:2, 5.
         2. We see Jesus doing this very thing in His teaching—leading people to see responsibility for their own actions.