



Key References: -

2 Timothy 4:3–4 (ESV)

³For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

2 Corinthians 4:1–6 (ESV)

Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. ²But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. ³And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Mark's pressures on today's church: *to update many traditional and historical biblical teachings; to erase gender indicators in scripture; to have a happy and non-threatening message; to make church just fun and easy; to develop branding and market a church like a business; to turn Christianity into just another religion of private experience; to reject the idea of absolute and externally sourced truth; to buy into a personality cult of one individual; to make numerical attendance the only measure of success; and to over emphasize non-church growth methods in orders to grow.*

1 – Pressure to compromise

Mark shared the difficulty he had as a used car salesman. **Have you ever experienced conflicts between your faith and your occupation?**

Read 2 Timothy 4:3-4. **How can you be sure that you are not at a church that just tells you what your ears are itching for? Why do people find "teachers to suit their own passions" instead of just pursuing their passions by themselves?**

The church is always under pressure to conform to these people. **What pressures are on today's church?**

2 – Staying true to the gospel

Read 2 Corinthians 4:1-2. **What kinds of false-ministry is Paul warning against in verse 2? Explain why they do not "lose heart" in verse 1.**

What does it mean to tamper with God's word? Is watering down the word of God the same as tampering with it?

We all seek affirmation. **How do you protect yourself only seeking an easier watered down gospel?**

How is a non-watered down gospel more attractive?

3 – Opposition

Read 2 Corinthians 4:3-4. **Who is "the god of this world" in verse 4? How has he blinded the minds of unbelievers?**

Can you think of a particular time when someone opposed your faith?

Since we would naturally show compassion to someone who is physically blind; **what then should be our reaction to those who oppose us and the church?**

4 – All about Jesus

Read 2 Corinthians 4:5-6. **What did Mark mean by "Christian personality-cults" and how does verse 5 speak to that?**

How would you explain the promise which is given to us in verse 6? What are the effects of this light in shining in our hearts?