



[2 Timothy 2:16-18](#)

(16) Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. (17) Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, (18) who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some.

New International Version

The metaphor changes from cutting a road (verse 15) to shooting an arrow at a target. The word of truth, [the gospel](#), is the target. If we shoot an arrow at a target, one of three things will happen: 1) the arrow will hit the bull's-eye; 2) it will go slightly off, left or right, top or bottom, still hitting somewhere within the target area; or 3) it will miss the target completely.

Some Bibles translate verse 18 as "who have swerved" (Revised Standard Version), "wandered away" (New International Version), or "erred" (King James Version) from the truth. None of these translations is complete in capturing the metaphor. When an archer shoots an arrow, it goes straight, but not necessarily straight at the target! If we watch someone else shoot an arrow, where are our eyes pointing? Do they not follow the arrow to the target? That is the point. The arrow is the teaching that the teacher gives, and no matter how straight he gives it, if he is not aiming directly at the bull's-eye and hitting it, his students' eyes will not be on the right goal!

The weight of responsibility, then, is heavy on the minister. Not only is he to give plain and clear instruction, but he is also to give instruction that is right on target so his listeners do not get distracted by false doctrine. A minister

can be perfectly sincere, but if he points his teaching toward the wrong goal, he will miss the target. Fortunately, our [God](#) is faithful and makes every effort to turn us toward the right goal.

These metaphors and illustrations show how important doctrine and the right gospel are. Doctrine forms belief, and belief determines action and character. Minimizing the future aspects of the gospel, for instance, alters our vision of where our lives are headed. The future aspects of the gospel cannot be demoted in priority to second or third place without seriously compromising our Christian lives since it removes the right goal and deflects people away from the [Kingdom of God](#). When people are deflected from the right goal, the teaching of the gospel changes, and God's creative process begins to wind down and may even stop entirely.

God is concerned about doctrine because it determines what a person is now and will become in the future. As he lives it, it becomes more ingrained in his life and will eventually become indelibly stamped on his character. Then God has a choice, either to give him immortality or consign him to the Lake of Fire. Regardless of how straight we pursue our objectives in life, if we are aimed at the wrong goal, we cannot produce the kind of life—the character—that God wants in His Kingdom. Correct doctrine is eternally vital!

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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