



1717 BIBLE STUDIES

"Your Word Is Truth" (John 17:17)

OVERVIEW

Study: 2 Timothy Theme: Serve Christ

Overview: During his final imprisonment in Rome and shortly before his execution, Paul writes to his young apprentice, Timothy. Paul encourages Timothy in his ministry and warns him about the importance of sound doctrine and standing firm in the faith. Paul goes on to tell Timothy to "Preach the Word" amid the approach of difficult times, assuring him that his faithfulness will be rewarded. Finally, Paul asks Timothy to visit him and to bring his cloak, scrolls, and parchments to him.

HOW TO USE

Each week has a **lesson aim**, **lesson text**, and **supplemental text**.



Tabs indicate the week of each lesson.

Each week features three sections: **Study**, **Application**, and **Discovery**.



Use the **Discovery** questions to study, discuss, and apply the Scripture passages in a group or class.

INTRODUCTION

Author

The apostle Paul identified himself as the author of 2 Timothy in the first verse of the first chapter of this letter. Acceptance of Paul's authorship is widely acknowledged by Bible scholars. A few modern authors deny Paul's authorship of 2 Timothy, but there's little basis for these denials.

Audience

Paul's letter is written specifically to Timothy, his "dear son" in the faith (1:2; 2:1). Timothy was Paul's young associate, travel companion, and fellow servant to the church. In the final verse of the letter, as with the final verse of his first letter to Timothy, Paul wishes grace to "you all" (he uses a plural form of "you"). This suggests that Paul meant for the letter to be read publicly.

Date

2 Timothy is likely to have been Paul's final letter. It was probably written between AD 64 and 67, shortly before his martyrdom in Rome around AD 68.

Setting

Tradition tells us that Paul was released from his first Roman imprisonment, participated in a fourth missionary journey, and was reimprisoned in Rome a few years later. Although Scripture does not directly confirm this traditional narrative, Paul refers to himself as a prisoner (1:8, 16; 2:9) in this epistle and urgently requests that Timothy come to visit him (4:9).

The tone of the letter leads the reader to believe that Paul is aware of his approaching martyrdom (4:6) and is concerned about the approaching difficulties that will confront both Timothy and the church. He tells Timothy to retain the "sound teaching" he has heard from Paul (1:13) and not to be "ashamed" of the Lord or of Paul (1:8). He also warns Timothy that "terrible times" are approaching (3:1), but Timothy must be "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2:1) and continue "reminding God's people" of the truth (2:14). The epistle closes with Paul's personal remarks and greetings.

Theme

The theme of 2 Timothy revolves around Paul's words in 2 Timothy 1:8, where he writes, "So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner." Paul's call is for believers to remain committed to the truth in all circumstances and faithful to the Lord amid persecution and suffering.

Why Study 2 Timothy?

As one of Paul's pastoral letters (along with 1 Timothy and Titus), 2 Timothy is an epistle in which the aging apostle encourages both Timothy and all Christians to persevere amid troubling times, to avoid useless controversies, to hold fast to sound doctrine, and to fulfill the ministries to which they've been called. This letter also provides an example of unwavering commitment to Christ as Paul endures trials and confronts his imminent passing from this earthly life.

STUDY CONTENT

WEEK 1: 2 Timothy 1:8-12; 2:3-10; 4:14-15

WEEK 2: 2 Timothy 2:14-26; 3:1-9

WEEK 3: 2 Timothy 1:13-14; 2:1-2; 3:10-17

WEEK 4: 2 Timothy 2:11-13; 4:6-8, 16-18

WEEK ONE

LESSON AIM: **Expect and endure the cost of serving Christ.**

STUDY: 2 Timothy

THEME: Serve Christ

LESSON TEXT: 2 Timothy 1:8-12; 2:3-10; 4:14-15

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: Mark 10:21-23; Luke 9:57-62; 2 Timothy 1:15; 4:9-10

STUDY

THE COST

BY MARK SCOTT

All things of significance cost something. A football player trains hard to win the Super Bowl. A medical student endures a grueling internship to become a doctor. A lawyer studies day and night to pass the bar exam.

Serving Christ also costs something—in fact, it costs everything (Luke 14:25-33). Otherwise we are left with “cheap grace” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*). The “wanna-be” disciples (Matthew 8:18-22; Luke 9:57-62) were not willing to pay this price. In Paul’s “minister’s manual” (2 Timothy), he told Timothy the cost of serving Christ was steep but should be expected and endured.

Suffering for the Gospel—Paul and Timothy

2 Timothy 1:8-12

Shortly before his death, Paul wrote this, his final Epistle, to encourage Timothy. After reminding Timothy of his personal connection with him (2 Timothy 1:3-4) and reminding Timothy of the younger man’s maternal influence (1:5-6), Paul called Timothy away from timidity to courage.

This courage would show up in not being *ashamed of the testimony about the Lord Jesus or of Paul as his prisoner*. These ideas of “shame” and “suffering” bookend this paragraph (vv. 8 and 12). Shame was very well understood in the ancient world. It was the social currency of the day. It is easy to understand how Paul’s opponents could make life hard on Timothy by reminding him that his spiritual father (i.e., Paul) was always in prison.

As soon as Paul mentioned the word *gospel*, he felt compelled to give a short excursus on it. This gospel rescued us and *called us to a holy life*. This gospel was given not because of *anything we have done* but due to God’s own *purpose and grace*. This gospel was in the mind of God long before time began. But this gospel took place in time and space *through the appearing* (epiphany) *of our Savior, Christ Jesus*. This gospel *destroyed* (rendered inactive) *death* and brought life to its immortal standing. This gospel gave definition to Paul’s work. He was a *herald* (preacher; one who spoke the message of the king). He was an *apostle* (one specifically “sent out,” 1 Corinthians 15:8-10; Galatians 1:11-17; Ephesians 3:7-10). He was a *teacher* (one who gave formal instruction).

This gospel caused suffering in an upside-down world. But Paul’s encouraging testimony to Timothy was that he did not care. After all, he knew in whom he had believed. Paul was *convinced* (fully persuaded) that God could *guard* (post a soldier at the door) what Paul had *entrusted* (handed over; committed) to God *until that day*

(i.e., most likely the day of judgment). The cost of suffering for the gospel was high, but the price was worth it.

Suffering for the Gospel—Metaphors and the Master

2 Timothy 2:3-10; 4:14-15

Throughout chapter 2, Paul used several metaphors—*son, soldier, athlete, farmer, worker, and servant*—to encourage Timothy’s faithfulness. Alongside three of these metaphors Paul placed the Master himself. Jesus became the supreme example of suffering for the gospel. Paul seemed confident Timothy would understand these metaphors if he would just *reflect* (discern or come to understand) on them (v. 7).

Paul had great insight into Roman soldiers because he spent lots of time with them (Acts 24:27; 28:16, 30-31; Philippians 1:12-14). He even knew the parts of their armor (Ephesians 6:14-17). But in this text, Paul referenced their rigor and single-minded pursuit of their job. A soldier could not get derailed (*entangled* means “interwoven” or “implicated”) by *civilian* (the daily things of life) *affairs*. His one passion was to *please* (“fit” or “be adapted” or “inclined to”) *his commanding officer* (the one who enlisted him).

The other two metaphors receive one verse each. The *athlete* had to compete according to the rules to win the *victor’s crown* (wreath). (The Athenian and Ephesian games had rather strict rules of training.) The *farmer* should be the first one to taste the corn on the cob since he worked so hard to grow it (1 Timothy 5:17-18).

But beyond any metaphor was the Master himself. Jesus was the gospel for which Paul suffered. Paul called Timothy to *remember* him. This meant to not just think back to him but to bring the reality of Jesus’ suffering into the present tense. Humanly speaking, Jesus was the Son of David. But divinely speaking, Jesus was risen from the dead as the Son of God (Romans 1:3-4).

Rome could chain Paul, but they could not chain *God’s word*. He was willing to suffer if the church would be saved. An example not worthy of imitation was *Alexander*. He was a *metalworker*, but he made trouble for Paul. Instead of advancing the gospel through suffering, Alexander hindered the gospel through opposition. He refused to count the cost.

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APPLICATION

WE'RE ALL IN HOSPICE

BY DAVID FAUST

"Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of it." —Helen Keller

It was my last visit with my friend Jim. We both knew he was on the verge of death after a long battle with cancer. Trying to offer comfort, I opened my Bible to John 21, where Jesus asked Simon Peter three times, "Do you love me?" I reminded Jim how Peter reaffirmed his love for Jesus, and each time, Jesus responded by saying in essence, "Then if you love me, feed my sheep. Take care of my people."

Jim knew how to feed God's sheep. He loved Jesus Christ. By his own account, Jim once was a cocky know-it-all, but the Lord shaped him into a man of humility and discernment. As a young man, Jim said he was enamored with personal power and comfort, but the Lord turned him into the servant-leader I knew—a friendly, fatherly figure who found joy in greeting worshippers at the church door on Sunday mornings and running the sound system at Bible study on Wednesday nights. Because of his love for Christ, Jim nurtured God's sheep.

Here's a tip: If you want to learn how to deal with suffering, listen to sufferers—especially the ones with strong faith. As Rick Atchley says, when people have the Spirit of God, "suffering does not define them, but it does refine them." The author Edward Judson observed, "Suffering and success go together. If you are succeeding without suffering, it is because others before you have suffered; if you are suffering without succeeding, it is that others after you may succeed."

A Choice We Make Every Day

At Jim's funeral, a dozen of his grandchildren stood on the stage paying tribute to him. One of the grandsons, a young man in his late teens named Tyler Trent, faced

a health crisis of his own. A student at Purdue University, Tyler was a passionate football fan who frequently attended games decked out in team colors. His enthusiastic support for Purdue and his battle with bone cancer (first diagnosed when he was 15 years old) made national news when he predicted the underdog Boilermakers' stunning 49-20 victory over highly ranked Ohio State on a memorable October afternoon.

ESPN, CBS, and ABC featured Tyler's inspiring story, and he leveraged the publicity as a witnessing opportunity, testifying repeatedly about his faith in Christ. He was named the football team's honorary captain. He raised millions of dollars for cancer research, received Disney's Wide World of Sports Spirit Award, and co-authored a book about his life called *The Upset* before he died at age 20 on January 1, 2019.

Shortly before his death, Tyler authored a column for the *IndyStar* newspaper (December 5, 2018). He wrote: "Though I am in hospice care and have to wake up every morning knowing that the day might be my last, I still have a choice to make: to make that day the best it can be. . . . Yet, isn't that a choice we all have every day? After all, nobody knows the amount of days we have left. . . . We are all in hospice to a certain degree. . . . Why can't we make every day count like it's the last?"

Personal Challenge:

Do something to comfort and learn from someone who is suffering. Visit a hospital patient, write an encouraging note to a shut-in, or phone a person who deals with physical or emotional pain.

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DISCOVERY

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What new challenge did you face last week?
2. In what way did you serve others this past week that utilized a spiritual gift from God?

Ask two people to read aloud **2 Timothy 1:8-12, 2:3-10, and 4:14-15**, one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask a third person to briefly summarize the passage.

3. What are the main themes of these passages? (*Hint: look for repeating words*)
4. Let's dig more deeply into these passages.
 - How does Paul say we should react to the suffering we may face?
 - How does Paul describe his own suffering?
 - Paul provided a quick synopsis of the gospel message (1:9-10). What words or phrases are most striking to you in these two verses?
 - What do Paul's three illustrations (2:3-7) teach you about living as a Christ follower?
5. What do you learn from these passages about God's grace and his response to our suffering?
6. What do you learn about yourself?
7. You receive a call to serve with these words: "Join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God." How do you respond?
8. Based on our study and discussion, complete this sentence: "This week, I will . . ."
9. What challenge do you anticipate this week?

For Next Week: Over the next week, read and reflect on **2 Timothy 2:14-26, and 3:1-9**. You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study.

WEEK TWO

LESSON AIM: **Discern how to deal with people as you serve Christ.**

STUDY: 2 Timothy

THEME: Serve Christ

LESSON TEXT: 2 Timothy 2:14-26; 3:1-9

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: Acts 20:17-35; Romans 12:6-19; 14:1-8; 2 Timothy 4:1-5

STUDY

HOW TO BY MARK SCOTT

The “purpose” of the Bible is larger than just functioning as a “how-to” manual for getting along with folks. But one “fruit” of the story of God to redeem the universe through Christ is learning how to deal with people. One person said, “The more I see of people, the more I love my dog.” Jesus called us to love people, but people can drive you crazy. Paul gave Timothy some profound advice about how to stay true to the gospel and still deal with people.

Gently Instruct Them

2 Timothy 2:14-26

Every minister needs to remember Paul’s admonition to *gently instruct opponents* (those who are ill-disposed). Ministers should strive to never snap or “lose it” . . . to “keep their cool” and not “blow their stack.” Here is the rub—ministers often encounter opponents within the church. This section of the text deals with *God’s people* (from the “elect” of 2 Timothy 2:10). Yes, sometimes even false teachers are “in” the church. The section that follows—2 Timothy 3:1-9—deals with the outsiders.

Timothy’s main weapons against his opponents were to continue to teach God’s Word and sound warnings about false interpretations of Scripture, avoid getting derailed by ridiculous and unedifying word games, stay correct with doctrine, live a holy life, kill his enemies with kindness, and lead people away from the devil’s schemes.

There is little substitute for continuing to *remind* and “warn” people. Timothy must call his people back to the gospel and prepare them for anything that would distract from it. One of the enemy’s greatest tricks is to get us to argue about theology. Timothy was warned against quarreling at least three times in this section (vv. 14, 16, 23). Even though Patrick Henry said Alexander Campbell was an outstanding debater, Campbell questioned how much debates accomplished. They tend to be *of no value, ruin those who listen, cause people to become more and more ungodly, and produce quarrels*.

However, there are occasions to enter debate, but mostly just when the very heart of the gospel is threatened. Paul called out two people, *Hymenaeus and Philetus*, for their spiritualizing of the resurrection. While conversion to Christ is a type of resurrection (John 5:24), our bodily resurrection has not happened yet (1 Corinthians 15:35-58). To believe otherwise is to shipwreck faith (1 Timothy 1:19-20) and *destroy* it. God knows the real leaders from the counterfeit ones (Numbers 16:5; Nahum 1:7; Isaiah 26:13).

In contrast to his opponents, Timothy was to think of himself as a noble (honorable) vessel—something on the order of *gold and silver*. Instead of being trapped in word games, Timothy was to be *useful* and *prepared* for good works. Fleeing his youthful passions and pursuing (as in hunting down) Christian virtues, he was to be kind, capable of teaching others, and gently lead people to the privilege of repentance (Acts 5:31; 11:18).

Walk Away from Them

2 Timothy 3:1-9

It takes the wisdom of Solomon to know when not to get trapped into arguments and when to stand toe-to-toe with an opponent. But it is not cowardice at times to avoid certain people (Proverbs 26:4; Matthew 7:6; Acts 13:51). Some people, including Christians, are gifted at draining others. Having marked out Timothy’s opponents in the church in the previous section, Paul turned to opponents outside of the church in this section.

Since Pentecost, believers have been living in the *last days* (Acts 2:16-17). These days, which lead up to the return of Christ, are filled with *terrible times*. How bad are these terrible times? They are bad to the 18th power. Paul’s vice list contains 18 words, and half of those words begin with the first letter in the Greek alphabet, “alpha” (which when attached to the front of the word makes it negative). The devil always deals in the negative. Maybe the keys to this vice catalog are the first and last items—*lovers of themselves and lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God*. When people are consumed with those, Hell shows up on earth. People who give themselves to these things are to be avoided (turned away from or shunned).

If they are not avoided, they can *worm their way* (gain entrance) into the most *gullible* (foolish or immature). In this case some of the women in Ephesus were the targets. These women, for whatever reason, were weighed down with *sins* and *evil desires*. They were not successful in arriving at the truth. They were being influenced by teachers who were similar to the fake magicians of Moses’ day (*Jannes and Jambres*, Exodus 7:11; 9:11). Time would prove them for what they were. As harsh as it sounds to a Christian, sometimes it is best to just walk away.

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APPLICATION

DON'T GET SLOPPY

BY DAVID FAUST

An NFL Hall of Fame player passed along a tip he learned from a coach: "Always arrive a few minutes early for practice." Punctuality itself wasn't the main point. The coach advised, "Be disciplined off the field, and you will perform better on the field."

Why do soldiers in boot camp make their beds every morning? Why do parents ask their children to brush their teeth twice a day? Why does the book of Proverbs advise us to avoid laziness and develop self-control? Why did Paul tell Timothy to "be diligent" in his ministry (1 Timothy 4:15)? Little things matter.

Nothing to Prove

A word of caution is needed, though. In the pursuit of excellence, we shouldn't slip into legalism. The Pharisees focused on the *wrong* little things. Religious performance is a dangerous trap. Our goal shouldn't be to impress others or try to earn points with God. If you and I dive into the Pacific Ocean off the California coast, you might swim two miles while I swim only two yards, but neither of us can swim all the way to Hawaii. Likewise, we're all sinners who can't make it to Heaven on our own. It's foolish if we try to outdo each other in some sort of spiritual competition.

But properly understood, God's grace is an incredible motivator. We don't just *have to* serve God; we *get to*. "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). God's lavish kindness inspires us to serve him with all the excellence we can muster. We aren't saved by works, but we are "created in Christ Jesus to do good works" (Ephesians 2:10). We have nothing to prove, but our gracious Father deserves the best we can offer.

Pursuing Excellence

Elton Trueblood pointed out, "Holy shoddy is still shoddy." We shouldn't grow complacent and settle for shoddiness. God is honored when we pursue excellence. "God's solid foundation stands firm" (2 Timothy 2:19),

but sloppy habits are spiritual termites that nibble away at our effectiveness and weaken our witness. That's why Paul warned Timothy to guard against three ministry hazards.

Sloppy Talk. Don't waste time on quarrels and pointless debates (v. 14). "Avoid godless chatter" (v. 16). "Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments" (v. 23). These safeguards apply to ordinary conversation, to preaching and teaching, and to engagement in social media.

Sloppy Work. "Present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (v. 15). We should see our work as an act of worship. Without shame we can pray, "Lord, I won't get everything right today, but because I love you, I'll give my best effort to glorify your name."

Sloppy Doctrine. Faulty teaching spreads "like gangrene" (v. 17), bringing deadly numbness to the body of Christ. We can't control what others believe and do, and some are "always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7); but by focusing on clear biblical truth, we can steer away from ideas that confuse and distract.

The hymnwriter challenged us:

Give of your best to the Master;
Give of the strength of your youth;
Throw your soul's fresh, glowing ardor
Into the battle for truth.

Personal Challenge:

Have you grown complacent or lazy in some area of your life or ministry? What will you do to improve the quality of your service to God?

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DISCOVERY

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What challenge did you face last week?
2. In what way was God's power evident in or through your life over the past week?

Ask two people to read aloud **2 Timothy 2:14-26, and 3:1-9**, one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask a third person to briefly summarize the passage.

3. Which of these warnings and instructions most stands out to you?
4. Let's dig more deeply into these passages.
 - Since Paul had known Timothy a long time, perhaps about 15 years, what do these passages tell you about Timothy?
 - What can you infer about the people Timothy was ministering to from these passages?
 - Compare the different ways Timothy was called to respond to people (2:14, 25 versus 3:5b). What differences between the people and/or the circumstances explain those different ways of responding?
 - How would you complete this sentence using these passages? To succeed as a Christian leader, don't focus on ___; instead, focus on ___.
5. What do you learn about God from these passages?
6. What do you learn about human nature?
7. Pick one specific instruction from these passages that you sense you need to focus on (e.g., don't quarrel about words, avoid godless chatter, flee the evil desires of youth, have nothing to do with foolish and stupid arguments. Pause and encourage everyone to pick one thing.) Which instruction did you choose, and why?
8. Using the instructions in these passages, how can Christ followers be better representatives of Christ . . . (a) in the workplace, (b) in this class/small group, (c) on social media?
9. Based on our study and discussion, complete the sentence: "I will . . ."
10. What new opportunities do you expect this week?

For Next Week: Read and reflect on **2 Timothy 1:13-14, 2:1-2, and 3:10-17**. You can also read next week's supplemental texts and the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study.

WEEK THREE

LESSON AIM: **Take up the responsibilities from others of serving Christ.**

STUDY: 2 Timothy

THEME: Serve Christ

LESSON TEXT: 2 Timothy 1:13-14; 2:1-2; 3:10-17

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: Acts 15:37-16:5; 1 Corinthians 4:17; Philippians 2:19-23; 2 Timothy 1:1-7; 4:11-13, 19-22

STUDY

YOU'RE NEXT

BY MARK SCOTT

Hans Finzel said, "There is no success without a successor" (*The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make*). Wise Christian leaders are always on the lookout for and intentionally training the next generation of leaders. It is similar to the task of parenting children; church leaders always should be striving to work themselves out of a job. It is not enough to disciple people. Christian leaders must disciple people in such a way that those new disciples are equipped to disciple others.

What Timothy Heard

2 Timothy 1:13-14; 2:1-2

After offering thanks for Timothy and challenging his son in the faith not to be ashamed, Paul shared a reminder of his teaching. The Bible has great respect for ears. The theology of "hearing" matters. *Hearing*, in Scripture, means to heed and obey. The word *heard* in 1:13 and 2:2 reminds one of the call to worship for Israel (Deuteronomy 6:4).

Timothy heard a *pattern of sound* (healthy) *teaching*. The content of that teaching would be in the substance of the Pastoral Epistles and the rest of the New Testament. What Timothy heard he was to *keep*, and he was to keep it with the *faith and love in Christ*.

Timothy had been given a *deposit* (the gift within the gospel). His job was to *guard* it (as in a sentry guarding a prison cell) *with the help of the Holy Spirit*. The job of an elder is threefold: feed, lead, and guard. Why was this important? Because people like Phygelus and Hermonigenes are always on the loose (2 Timothy 1:15-18).

Timothy heard the very words of his mentor in Christ. Paul called Timothy to be *strong* (vigorous like Samson and Hezekiah in the Old Testament; also used in Ephesians 6:10) and *entrust* to (place before) *reliable* (faithful) *people who will be qualified* (sufficient) *to teach others*. Wilford Lown said, "This verse [2 Timothy 2:2] was Paul's great commission."

Whom Timothy Followed

2 Timothy 3:10-15a

Timothy stood in contrast to the people described in 2 Timothy 3:1-9. (In fact, Paul often used the phrase, "But you . . ." when he wanted to show this contrast; e.g., 3:10, 14.) Timothy did not follow the ways of the world described in the previous vice list. He followed (knew *all about*) two profound influences in his life. One influence

was Paul himself. Paul reminded Timothy of his words and deeds, five of his virtues, and his trials. Timothy could never say, "I never knew ministry would be this tough." He had witnessed too many *persecutions* and *sufferings* not to understand the significance of the statement, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22, *New American Standard Bible*; cf. Acts 13:50-51; 14:5-6, 21-22). Paul had *endured* these, and the Lord *rescued* him from them.

Verses 12-13 could have been enclosed in parentheses. Essentially, Timothy and all others who want to live a *godly life in Christ Jesus* will experience persecution. That's because of *evildoers* (evil people) and *imposters* (a pharmaceutical term meaning to enchant with drugs). These people go from *bad to worse*. They *deceive* others and are *being deceived* themselves.

The second profound influence on Timothy's life was a maternal influence (1:5). Paul told Timothy to *continue* (remain) in what he had learned. While much of that came from Paul, it also came—during Timothy's *infancy*—from his mother and grandmother. It is never too early to begin training a preacher, and many a preacher has been trained first on his mother's knee.

What Timothy Knew

2 Timothy 3:15b-17

Timothy's knowledge of Scripture is truly what made him a good successor of Paul. Two expressions are used to describe "written revelation." *Holy Scriptures* are "sacred writings" (sacred grammar). These can make one *wise for salvation*. *Scripture* (3:16) is where we get our English word *graphics*. It refers to something written down. Clearly these are references to the text of the Bible. They certainly refer to the Old Testament but, due to the use of *all*, could also refer to the parts of the New Testament that had been written by this time

Scripture finds its origin in God (*God-breathed*), and it is *useful* (profitable or advantageous) for building us up and tearing us up (Jeremiah 1:10). The result of this usefulness is so that the *servant* (man) *of God may be thoroughly equipped* (set straight) for the work of the church in the world. Who will succeed you?

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APPLICATION

FROM WHOM YOU LEARNED IT

BY DAVID FAUST

Someone said that a diploma doesn't prove you got an education; it means you had the opportunity to get an education. It's good to go to high school or college, but it's better to actually learn something along the way.

I have diplomas on my office wall, but my ordination certificate hangs above the diplomas, because ministry means more to me than academic achievements. The witnesses who signed my ordination certificate stir fond memories. Their signatures are fading, but their influence never fades. Several of the signers, including my father, grandfather, and father-in-law, already have joined the great cloud of witnesses in Heaven. I picture them cheering me on when I write or preach. I would never want to disappoint them or let them down.

Timely Advice

Imagine how Timothy must have felt when he remembered how the apostle Paul and a group of elders laid their hands on him (1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6). Paul's exhortations in 2 Timothy 3 contain timely advice for all of us.

"Continue in what you have learned" (2 Timothy 3:14). Stay grounded. Choose faithfulness over flashiness. Perseverance matters more than popularity. Don't forsake valid principles you learned in the past because today's trendsetters consider them unfashionable. Don't embrace fads simply because they're new.

"Continue in what you . . . have become convinced of" (v. 14). Convictions should override convenience. It's not enough to parrot the teachings of respected parents, preachers, or professors. What do you yourself believe? What convictions will you never compromise?

"All Scripture is God-breathed" (v. 16). Do you hold Scripture in high regard? Do you recognize God's voice and respect his authority? Once you understand God's will, do you yield and obey?

"The Holy Scriptures . . . are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (v. 15). Do you stay focused on Christ and remember that salvation through faith in him is the central message of both the Old and New Testaments? Do you use Scripture to win arguments or to gain wisdom? To make points or to make disciples? To look smart or to love well?

"All Scripture . . . is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (v. 16). God gave us the Bible for practical use, not for mere theological speculation. Do you put the Word into action and help others apply it, too?

Feeling Tired?

Why should Timothy continue as a faithful minister of the gospel? Paul told him, "because you know those from whom you learned it" (v. 14). Timothy had learned a lot from Paul and from other godly leaders, including his grandma and mom, Lois and Eunice (2 Timothy 1:5).

When you feel weary and you're tempted to give up—when you wonder whether preaching the gospel is worth the aggravation—think about "those from whom you learned it." Let their examples cheer you on. "Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith" (Hebrews 13:7).

And remember: Others look to you as their example, drawing strength from your teaching and your faithfulness. You are putting an imprint on them. In their hearts, your signature hangs on the wall, inspiring them to serve the Lord.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE:

Who is your "Timothy"? What men or women are you intentionally developing as servant-leaders for Christ? What will you do this week to encourage them in their ministry and their walk with the Lord?

DISCOVERY

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What's the biggest challenge you faced last week?
2. In what way did you represent Christ well over the past week . . . in your workplace, in this class/small group, or on social media?

Ask two people to read aloud **2 Timothy 1:13-14; 2:1-2, and 3:10-17**, one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask a third person to briefly summarize these verses.

3. If you were writing a "how-to" book based on these passages, what would the title be?
4. Let's dig more deeply into these passages.
 - What do the main verbs in these passages—keep, guard, entrust, teach, continue—reveal to you about the things Timothy had learned from Paul and others?
 - How would you describe the relational (and intergenerational) aspect of passing on the Christian faith?
 - What roles had God played in Timothy's spiritual and leadership development?
 - How is learning impacted by the words we hear as well as the examples of godliness we see?
5. What do you learn about God from these passages?
6. What do you learn about yourself and your own spiritual growth pathway?
7. Who is one of the main people in your life who has influenced you in a positive way for Christ? Tell us how this person shared Christ with you in words and by example.
8. With whom will you share your faith in and love for Christ this week?
9. Based on our study and discussion, complete the sentence: "I will . . ."
10. What challenges will you be facing this week?

For Next Week: Read and reflect on **2 Timothy 2:11-13, and 4:6-8, 16-18**. You can also read next week's supplemental texts and the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study.

WEEK FOUR

LESSON AIM: **Give thanks that God faithfully helps you to serve Christ.**

STUDY: 2 Timothy

THEME: Serve Christ

LESSON TEXT: 2 Timothy 2:11-13; 4:6-8, 16-18

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: 1 Corinthians 1:8-9; 10:13; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; 2 Timothy 1:16-18

GOD IS FAITHFUL

BY MARK SCOTT

The United States Marine Corps was formed before the Declaration of Independence. Their origin goes back to November 10, 1775. In a few days they will be 245 years old. The Marines are actually a department of the United States Navy. Their motto is *semper fidelis*, which means, “always faithful.” That is what God is too. We should thank God for being so faithful, because his faithfulness inspires our service to him.

Faithful Formula

2 Timothy 2:11-13

This lesson concludes our study of 2 Timothy, Paul’s last will and testament, written shortly before Paul was martyred—likely by beheading—near Rome. Our text began with the fifth and final “faithful saying” of the Pastoral Epistles. Was this something Paul created or adapted? Was it like an ancient hymn of sorts? Was it a baptismal formula? Scholars debate its origin and use. But the content is not in question—i.e., God is faithful. By implication then, we should be faithful as well.

The faithful formula deals with our union with Christ, or reigning with Christ, and our possible apostasy from Christ. The death that is mentioned may well be the spiritual death portrayed in baptism (Romans 6:1-4; Colossians 2:12; 3:3). When we believe in Christ and are baptized, we pass from death to life (John 5:24). In this world are many tribulations (Acts 14:22). So believers who are attempting to be faithful to a faithful God will have to *endure* (abide under) suffering. But they should not despair since those same people will *reign* with Christ both now (Ephesians 2:6) and into the future (1 Corinthians 6:3; Revelation 5:10; 21:4).

There is one thing God cannot be: unfaithful. His nature is the very definition of faithfulness (Deuteronomy 7:9; Psalm 25:10; 31:5; 33:4; Isaiah 25:1; 49:7; Jeremiah 3:2; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:3), and cannot be changed. If believers disown (deny or give up on) God, then God will be forced to *disown* them. But he cannot be unfaithful to himself since he is the epitome of faithfulness.

Faithful Rescue

2 Timothy 4:16-18

Paul wrote this Epistle in the shadow of his own death. There would be no physical or earthly rescue from that. But, previous to that entrance into glory, the Lord had rescued Paul many times (Acts 14:19-20; 2 Corinthians 11:23-29), including many times in court (Acts 21–26). He referred to

one such time as the Epistle ends. He referenced his *first defense* (preliminary hearing that would lead to an ultimate trial). Even though others *deserted* (left behind) Paul, *the Lord stood by his side and strengthened him*. But God did not do that solely for Paul’s sake. He did it so that the gospel that Paul preached to the Gentiles would go forth. Paul held no animosity against those who did not stand with him. His actions mirrored those of Jesus and Stephen, in that Paul did not wish them ill (Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60).

Paul served the Lord faithfully because the Lord’s record of faithfulness was without question. Paul had been *delivered from the lion’s mouth* (likely a reference to the emperor Nero). Paul was confident that if God wanted to deliver him, the Lord would do so again. But Paul also was ready to face the possibility that God might give him the ultimate rescue and bring him *safely to his heavenly kingdom*. Paul burst out in praise for God who had the power to rescue him.

Faithful Finish

2 Timothy 4:6-8

Few words are as emotional as these. The tears drip from Paul’s pen. These words have inspired believers for more than 2,000 years. Drawing upon the imagery of the drink offerings of the Old Testament, military and nautical terminology, and athletics, Paul gave his sign-off and probably penned his own epitaph.

A drink offering was always entirely used up (Numbers 28:4-7; Philippians 2:17). None was saved for a future occasion. The word *departure* came from military and nautical realms and referred to soldiers breaking camp or a ship departing port for the open seas. Paul was accustomed to using athletic imagery (1 Corinthians 9:24-27) and employed it here. The boxing ring and track and field became illustrations of winning the contest. To these images Paul added the clear claim, *I have kept the faith*.

Paul’s confidence in the victory was based in the faithfulness of God. That confidence made him sure of *the crown of righteousness* (it could be the crown which *is* the righteousness or the crown/reward that *comes from* God’s righteousness). Paul was not only confident of his crown of righteousness, he was also confident of ours (*but also to all who have longed for his appearing*).

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APPLICATION

TRIMMING AROUND THE EDGES

BY DAVID FAUST

I learned a lot of practical lessons on the farm where I grew up. Dad was good at fixing things. I wasn't. He didn't have a college degree, but he deserved an honorary doctorate in the school of hard knocks. He knew how to weld metal, mend fences, install electrical wiring, fix leaky water pipes, help a cow give birth, and grow a flourishing garden. He knew his Bible well. Neighbors and church members respected his common sense and frequently sought his advice.

My parents assigned chores to my brothers and me. Some tasks we did every morning before school, while others waited till evening. We fed hogs and calves, hoed weeds in the garden, gathered eggs in the chicken house, filled mangers with hay, and herded the cows into the barn so Dad could milk them. I drove a tractor long before I sat behind the steering wheel of a car. I still remember how proud I felt when Dad decided I was old enough to mow the grass like my older brothers did, walking back and forth across the yard behind our noisy old push mower. One time I hit a big rock, ruining the mower blade. Dad was good at fixing things; I was good at breaking them.

Often before I mowed, Dad would trim around the edges of the lawn, clipping the weeds along the fence rows and mowing the hard parts around the trees and flower beds. Looking back, I realize he wanted to make sure everything looked neat and manicured when we finished the job. And by taking care of the harder parts himself, Dad made the lawn mowing a little easier for me and my brothers. He did that kind of thing a lot.

How many times has my heavenly Father done the same for me? I complain about my difficulties, but looking at those situations a different way, might my tasks be even harder if God hadn't gone ahead and prepared

the way? Because he has a vision for how things should look in the end, is it actually the Father who does the harder tasks, chopping down weeds and clearing out underbrush, removing the obstacles I'm not strong enough to lift?

Under the Law of Moses, at harvest time farmers were supposed to leave some grain, olives, and grapes "for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow" (Deuteronomy 24:19-21) and leave some sheaves and fruit along the edges of their fields for the less fortunate to gather and consume (Leviticus 23:22). These laws provided the poor with food while also giving them the dignity of participating in the work. The farmers benefited, too, by practicing generosity rather than greed and sharing their harvest with others in need. Similarly, God's providence and human responsibility intertwine in ways that transcend our understanding. Faithful and wise, God does what only he can do, but he gives us the dignity of choice, the responsibility of obedience, and the privilege of participating in his work.

My adult son lives in a 110-year-old house in the inner-city, and his little home is surrounded by a modest-sized yard. We worked together in his lawn the other day, mowing grass and raking leaves. I told him, "I'll trim around the edges." Somehow it seemed like the right thing to do.

Personal Challenge:

Think about a time when God protected you, taught you a lesson, or solved a problem for you. Thank him for it. Then identify a way this week you can assist someone else who could use a helping hand.

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DISCOVERY

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What big challenge did you face last week?
2. With whom did you share your faith in and love for Christ since we last met?

Ask two people to read aloud **2 Timothy 2:11-13, and 4:6-8, 16-18**, one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask a third person to briefly summarize these verses.

3. What would you add to how the passages were summarized?
 - How would you characterize Paul's objective for writing this?
4. Let's dig more deeply into this passage.
 - How would you characterize the conditional (if-then) statements in 2 Timothy 2:11-13?
 - What were Paul's life circumstances before and as he wrote this letter?
 - What was Paul's mind-set in this stage of his life?
 - What did Paul believe about God?
 - How would you describe Paul's faithfulness to and trust in God?
5. What does this passage teach you about humanity . . . with God as opposed to separated from him?
6. What do you learn about God from these passages?
7. What does it look like in practice for you (or how would you like for it to look) to keep the faith each day for the rest of your life?
8. One external function of Paul's faith was that he proclaimed God's message of good news, especially to the Gentiles, as God gave him strength and protected him. This week, how will you live by that same faith, so that through you "the message might be fully proclaimed"?
9. Based on our study and discussion, complete the sentence: "I will . . ."
10. What challenges will you face this week?

For Next Week: This week's lesson bring this unit of study to a conclusion. Look for additional "**1717: Your Word Is Truth**" studies, for use with your Sunday School classes, small groups, or personal studies, at *ChristianStandard.com*.