

Studies in 2 Timothy

Participants Guide



*And the things you have heard me say in the
presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men
who will also be qualified to teach others.*

2 Timothy 2:2

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2 Timothy

Introduction

Paul's second epistle to Timothy is probably the last letter he wrote. He is aged and in prison as he writes.

Unlike the fairly pleasant imprisonment he experienced at the end of Acts, this time he is incarcerated in a "dismal underground dungeon with a hole in the ceiling for light and air."¹ He is in chains (1:16; 2:9) and suffering deeply from loneliness (4:9-13). He expects to be executed shortly (4:6-8). These realities make this one of Paul's most deeply moving and human letters.

As difficult as things are for Paul, his mind remains focused on the spread of the gospel and the glory of God. Knowing how quickly our own thoughts turn inward when we are suffering, one cannot help but be amazed by Paul and attracted to his character. His life and thoughts are dominated by his love for God. In particular, his concern is for the future of the church. "His own apostolic labors are over... But now he must make provision for the faith after he has gone, and especially for its transmission (uncontaminated, unalloyed) to future generations. So he sends Timothy this most solemn charge. He is to preserve what he has received, at whatever cost, and to hand it on to faithful men who in their turn will be able to teach others also (2:2)."²

It is easy to see why a study of this letter is so relevant for those in leadership. We want to impart leadership qualities to those who are "passionate for God and compassionate toward people" so that, through their leadership, others may develop those same characteristics and perhaps become leaders also. Of course, none of us is as passionate or compassionate as we would like to be. But by studying this very personal letter, our hope is that Paul's words, which embody those attributes, will penetrate our hearts and make us more like him in our passion for God and compassion for others.

2 Timothy

The charge to guard the Gospel

Study 1 | 2 Timothy 1:1-18

1. Name one person who has influenced your life significantly. In what way did this person impact you?

READ 2 Timothy 1:1-18

2. How does Paul identify himself at the beginning of this letter? Why is such self-knowledge important? How did his understanding of his role affect the way he lived?
3. How has your self-understanding affected the way you live and the choices you make?
4. Looking at this first chapter, what observations can you make about Timothy and Paul? How would you describe their relationship? How can we pursue relationships similar to theirs in the church?

5. What is the gospel message according to verses 9 and 10? What issues in our lives does it address? Which aspect of the message do you think is most easily misunderstood or most regularly forgotten?
6. What metaphors does Paul use to describe the gospel Timothy is to guard? What do they tell us about the gospel?
7. What does it mean to “guard” the gospel? Why is it important, and how does one do so? Who ultimately guards the gospel? Why is it important to understand this?

8. Paul brings up the issue of shame on four occasions in this chapter (vv. 8, 12, 16). What are the occasions and causes for shame? Why does Paul give so much attention to this topic?

¹ William Hendriksen, *The Epistles to Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1957), p. 234.

² John R. W. Stott, *Guard the Gospel: The Message of 2 Timothy* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1973), p. 13.

2 Timothy

The charge to suffer for the Gospel

Study 2 | 2 Timothy 2:1-13

1. Tell about an activity, skill, or experience you take delight in passing on to others.

READ 2 Timothy 2:1-13

2. What does it mean to “be strong in the grace that is in Jesus Christ” (v. 1)? How does a person go about being strong in that way? How can you tell that you are successful?
3. As Paul talks about the gospel being passed on to others, how many generations does he mention? Why is this “chain of transmission” so important?
4. What qualities should be evident in those involved in the “chain of transmission”?

5. **Paul uses three metaphors to describe the Christian life we have been called to: soldier, athlete, and farmer. What does each metaphor tell us about how to live as followers of Jesus?**
6. **Why, in this context, does Paul tell Timothy to “remember Jesus Christ” (v. 8)?**
7. **What principles does Paul seem to want Timothy to draw from the example of his own life in verses 9-10? How have you found these principles to be true in your life?**
8. **What is the point of the “trustworthy saying” in verses 11-13? What does it communicate and how is it meant to motivate us?**

2 Timothy

The charge to develop character in keeping with the Gospel

Study 3 | 2 Timothy 2:14-26

1. What character trait do you particularly admire when you see it in someone's life? How is this character trait expressed in the life of someone you know?

READ 2 Timothy 2:14-26

2. What character quality is Paul urging Timothy to develop in verses 14-19? Why is this quality so important? What happens when it is absent?

3. What does this character quality look like in a person's life?

4. In the analogy Paul uses in verses 20-21, what is the house, who is the master, and what are the noble and ignoble vessels?

5. **What character quality is Paul calling Timothy to develop with this illustration (vv. 20-22)? Why is this quality so important? What happens when it is absent?**
6. **How are we to treat those whom God has placed in our ministry care?**
7. **How will understanding Satan's role in human behavior and belief affect the way we treat others?**
8. **Which of the character qualities mentioned in this passage are you most convicted to work on? Why?**

2 Timothy

The charge to continue in the Gospel

Study 4 | 2 Timothy 3:1-17

1. Which environments make it hardest for you to act on your convictions and do the right thing? What is it about the environment that makes it so hard?

READ 2 Timothy 3:1-17

2. What period is Paul referring to when he speaks of “the last days”?
3. In the catalog of behaviors that will characterize “the last days,” which ones particularly strike you? Do any of the behaviors mentioned give you new insight into human wickedness? Are there any that you would not have initially included on a list of human evil? Which of these behaviors are most prevalent in our society?
4. How does the possibility of “a form of godliness” without the “power of godliness” warn and convict you? How does one prevent such a disastrous combination?

5. **What marks of Paul's life set him apart from such people? Why does Paul draw Timothy's attention to these qualities in his life?**
6. **In verse 14 Timothy is told to "continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of." What does Paul mean and why does he consider it important to exhort Timothy this way?**
7. **What does Paul say about the source of the Scriptures (v. 16)? Why is that so important?**
8. **Use your own words to explain the purpose of the Scriptures. Give a recent example of how God's Word has operated in your life.**

2 Timothy

The charge to preach the Gospel

Study 5 | 2 Timothy 4:1-22

1. Have you ever had to tell someone something you were pretty sure he didn't want to hear? What was the situation and what enabled you to do it?

READ 2 Timothy 4:1-22

2. What ought to motivate a person to "preach the Word," according to this passage?
3. To what degree do you think the instructions given to Timothy apply to all Christians? What leads you to that conclusion?
4. What ought to characterize our preaching, according to this passage? In what manner should our preaching be done? In particular, what does it mean to preach the Word "in season and out of season"? What will our lives look like if we are doing this?

- 7. What does it mean to “long for Christ’s appearing”? Why does Paul assume this will characterize all Christians?**

8. If in your heart you really did “long for Christ's appearing,” how would it change your life? What qualities would it produce in you? To what degree do you see such characteristics in your life now?
9. What is Paul revealing about himself in verses 9-18? What does this teach us about our own humanity and about admitting our own needs and weaknesses?