2 Timothy: Finish the Race

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Introduction

Why read this book?

The last words of a dying person often have a significant impact on others. In a sense, 2 Timothy is like that. It’s advice from someone who knows he’s come to the end of life. Paul, imprisoned in Rome for the second time, realized he would not be released. Facing death as a martyr, he wrote carefully and deliberately to the heart of the gospel. His “dying words,” are words for us to live by.

Who wrote this book?

Paul, the apostle.

When was it written?

Probably A.D. 66 to 67, while Paul was held in a Roman prison.

Why was it written?

Many of Paul’s supporters, perhaps sensing the hopelessness of his situation, had abandoned him in prison. Time hung heavy for Paul who was suffering both physically and emotionally. His difficult circumstance, concern for the churches he’d begun and, not least of all, his love for Timothy, spurred him to write these words.

What to look for in 2 Timothy:

Look for pithy statements, Paul’s attempts to pull together the wisdom of a lifetime of service to God. Watch particularly for the ways he challenged Timothy to a more effective ministry. The nuggets contained in this book were forged in the crucible of life-threatening experiences, but they point to the hope that belongs, to all of us in Christ.

—From the Quest Study Bible (Zondervan)
How to use this resource for a group study

This Bible study can be used for an individual or a group. If you intend to lead a group study, follow these simple suggestions.

1. Make enough copies of the Participant’s Guide for everyone in the group. If you would like your group to have more information, feel free to copy the leader’s guide for them instead.

2. Don’t feel that you have to use all the material in the study. Almost all of our studies have more information than you can get through in one session, so feel free to pick and choose the teaching information and questions that will meet the needs of your group. Use the teaching content of the study in any of these ways: for your own background and information; to read aloud (or summarize) to the group; for the group to read silently.

3. Make sure your group agrees to complete confidentiality. This is essential to getting people to open up.

4. When working through the questions, be willing to make yourself vulnerable. It’s important for your group to know that others share their experiences. Make honesty and openness a priority in your group.

5. Begin and end the session in prayer.
As Paul writes this personal letter to Timothy, he wants to encourage him to continue on in the Christian life, even when it gets tough. Paul’s words have extra power, since he, himself, is in prison, awaiting his execution.

Scripture: 2 Timothy 1:1–7
Based On: The sermon series “The Gospel Community,” by Brad Reardon

What is your foundation for life when most everything comes against you?
Part 1 Identify the Issue

**Note to Leader:** Provide each person with the Participant’s Guide, included at the end of this study.

**[Q]** Tell us briefly about the worst thing you’ve ever suffered through.

**[Q]** What gave you the courage to get through that difficulty?

When the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, he was in his 60s and his body bore the marks of much suffering. He was in a cold, damp dungeon in Rome, in about the year a.d. 67. He had been following Christ some 30 years. Read 2 Corinthians 11:24–28 to find out the kinds of things he’d been going through.

Paul suffered great discouragement. He knew the day was coming when professing Christians would not endure sound doctrine, but instead would find teachers to tickle their ears, turning from the truth to myths (2 Timothy 4:3–4). One historian wrote that it seemed Christianity trembled on the verge of annihilation.

**[Q]** On a whiteboard or poster board, list the things Paul had to be discouraged about according to the following verses: 2 Timothy 1:15; 2:17–18; 4:10, 11, 13–14, 16, 21.

**Optional Activity:**

**Purpose:** To encourage our own hearts as Paul encouraged Timothy.

**Activity:** Instead of giving in to despair, Paul focused on encouraging Timothy. Ask four of your most dramatic readers to read each of the following verses aloud, with feeling, one after the other in quick succession: 2 Timothy 1:14; 2:3; 3:14; 4:2. When finished, encourage the group to write each of these verses on a 3x5 card this week and post them in prominent places around their home.

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

**Teaching Point One: The promise of life comes to us in Christ Jesus.**

Read 2 Timothy 1:1–2.

God is the Promiser. The offer of life is as real as God himself—even when sitting in a cell and awaiting execution in a cold, damp place.
[Q] What is the promise of life in Christ Jesus?

**Leader’s Note:** *It is the gospel—the good news that Jesus came to earth to die on the cross for the sins of men. He died the death that we deserved, and God judged him as though he were a guilty sinner. He was buried and then arose from the dead to show that death has been defeated. He now promises eternal life to all who will trust in him as Lord and Savior.*

[Q] If you have come to Christ in faith, you have found the three things mentioned in verse 2: grace, mercy, and peace. How would you define each of those?

**Leader’s Note:** *The word grace refers to a gift which is given to you that you cannot earn and don’t deserve. You don’t pay for a gift, otherwise it is no longer a gift. And you can’t pay for grace, either. It is unearned and undeserved. Mercy is the negative side of grace. If grace is being given a gift that you don’t deserve, mercy is not being given the punishment that you do deserve. Imagine that a police officer pulls you over for a traffic violation. Mercy is when he doesn’t give you the ticket that you deserve. Grace is when he invites you over to his house for a steak dinner. God has shown both grace and mercy to us. As a result, we have peace. The world today sees very little in the way of peace. You have only to turn on your television set and you see both wars and rumors of wars. The Jews used to visualize the turbulence of the world as they would a stormy sea with waves crashing into one another.*

[Q] Paul mentions in verse 1 that he is an apostle by the will of God. How do you determine if you are in God’s will?

**Teaching Point Two: By God working in us, we can be involved in his work.**

Paul mentions God three times in the first three verses. The promise is as reliable and secure as God is faithful. He also recalls people as part of the work of God. Read 2 Timothy 1:16–17; 4:10–13, 19–21.

Jim Elliot’s description of a missionary band fits us all: “a bunch of nobodies trying to exalt Somebody.” God uses people—simple people, but people who will do his will.

[Q] Share a time when you know God used you in someone else’s life. Include what put you in that person’s path at just the right time.

[Q] What about a time you had the privilege of seeing someone put their faith in Christ? Did you feel prepared for that happening? Explain the circumstances.
Optional Activity:

Purpose: To help us identify those who have impacted us for Christ and to consider who we might impact.

Activity: Break into groups of three or four. Read 2 Timothy 1:5. Share with the others in your group who has been a Eunice or Lois in your life. Then share who you would like to be a Eunice or Lois to. Paul said he constantly remembered Timothy in his prayers, night and day. That might be a good way to start being a Eunice or Lois in someone’s life. Pray together that God will further your opportunities to influence that person for Christ.

Teaching Point Three: God empowers a sincere faith response.

Read 2 Timothy 1:5–7.

This is real faith. The opposite would be a hypocritical faith. Sincere here means more than admiring. Timothy was more than an admirer of Christ. He was a follower. Admirers have a tendency toward infatuation. Christ did not ask for admirers. He was well acquainted with those who would believe but not believe. Their belief is a thin, shallow thing—a faith that feels good when the going is good, but dissipates like fog on a hot, sunny day—a faith that appears and then recedes when there is hardship.

In verse 6, Paul encourages Timothy to fan into flame the gift of God. The fire may be burning low in Timothy. Why?

• He had frequent physical ailments—1 Timothy 5:23
• He was naturally timid—1 Corinthians 16:10
• He was relatively young—1 Timothy 4:12; 2 Timothy 2:22
• He had determined opposition—2 Timothy 2:14–19, 23
• The church was being heavily persecuted—1 Timothy 4:6 (??)

Paul even approaches Timothy sensitively. He says, “I remind you …” He was telling Timothy: Your flame needs some heat. You need to get off the slow burn to some white heat. The times are serious, the church is in need, you need to fire up.
If Paul wrote verse 6 to you, what would he be telling you to fan the flame of in your life?

What about verse 7? What would you need power and love for at this point in your life?

Fear is defeated by the indwelling Spirit of God. Everyone does not have the same gifts, but everyone has the Spirit of God. He says we don't have a spirit of defeat but a spirit of power. This is practical and foundational. Fear comes to us so easily. We fear what others will think, we fear taking risks, we fear making a stand, we fear what the future will bring, we fear that if we are brave someone will think us too bold or too arrogant. Fear, anxiety, shaking, and trembling do not come from God. We do not have a God of fear.

Jesus said something that practically forbade fear. Read John 14:27.

Our foundation means no fear. No one can shake this foundation. Somewhere and sometime this truth must break through for each of us. God is more powerful than the enemy. He wins. This must come through in your existential moments. God wins, the enemy loses, and we shall not live in fear. That is the Spirit in each of us. This power is released as we trust Christ and obey. Even though we feel weak, we become strong. We can shake with fear and still trust and obey.

### Part 3 Apply Your Findings

**Action Point:** Of the things mentioned in this study, what do you most need God’s help and strength for?

- Grace, mercy, and peace
- Ability to follow God’s will
- Faithfulness to share Christ with others
- Overcoming fear
- Living a life of sound judgment, discipline, and self-control

Share your answer with the group and pray for each other concerning your answers.

—Study by Brad Reardon, with JoHannah Reardon
As Paul writes this personal letter to Timothy, he wants to encourage him to continue on in the Christian life, even when it gets tough. Paul’s words have extra power, since he, himself, is in prison, awaiting his execution.

Scripture: 2 Timothy 1:1–7

Based On: The sermon series “The Gospel Community,” by Brad Reardon
Part 1 Identify the Issue

When the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, he was in his 60s and his body bore the marks of much suffering. He was in a cold, damp dungeon in Rome, in about the year A.D. 67. He had been following Christ some 30 years. Read 2 Corinthians 11:24–28 to find out the kinds of things he'd been going through.

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Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

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Teaching Point Two: By God working in us, we can be involved in his work.

Teaching Point Three: God empowers a sincere faith response.

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We need to unashamedly protect the gospel.

In this last letter that Paul is to write, he makes clear what is most important in his life and what he hopes is most important in Timothy's life—that the gospel is powerful, life-changing, and worth guarding with all of our energy.

Scripture: 2 Timothy 1:8–18

Based On: The sermon series “A Gospel Community,” by Brad Reardon
Part 1 Identify the Issue

Note to Leader: Provide each person with the Participant’s Guide, included at the end of this study.

If you had to describe Jesus’ mission in a few sentences, what would you say?

The greatness of God is most clearly displayed in his Son. And the glory of the gospel is only made evident in God’s Son. That’s why Jesus’ question to his disciples in Matthew 16 is so important: “Who do you say that I am?”

The question is doubly crucial in our day, because no one is as popular in the U.S. as Jesus—and not every Jesus is the real Jesus.

• There’s Republican Jesus—who is against tax increases and activist judges, for family values and owning firearms.
• There’s Democrat Jesus—who is against Wall Street and Wal-Mart, for reducing our carbon footprint and printing money.
• There’s Therapist Jesus—who helps us cope with life’s problems, heals our past, tells us how valuable we are and not to be so hard on ourselves.
• There’s Starbucks Jesus—who drinks fair-trade coffee, loves spiritual conversations, drives a hybrid, and goes to film festivals.
• There’s Open-minded Jesus—who loves everyone all the time no matter what (except for people who are not as open-minded as you).
• There’s Touchdown Jesus—who helps Christian athletes run faster and jump higher than non-Christians and determines the outcomes of Super Bowls.
• There’s Martyr Jesus—a good man who died a cruel death so we can feel sorry for him.
• There’s Gentle Jesus—who was meek and mild, with high cheek bones and flowing hair, and walks around barefoot, wearing a sash (while looking very German).
• There’s Hippie Jesus—who teaches everyone to give peace a chance, imagines a world without religion, and helps us remember that “all you need is love.”
• There’s Yuppie Jesus—who encourages us to reach our full potential, reach for the stars, and buy a boat.
• There’s Spirituality Jesus—who hates religion, churches, pastors, priests, and doctrine, and would rather have people out in nature, finding “the god within” while listening to ambiguously spiritual music.
• There’s Platitude Jesus—good for Christmas specials, greeting cards, and bad sermons, inspiring people to believe in themselves.

• There’s Revolutionary Jesus—who teaches us to rebel against the status quo, stick it to the man, and blame things on “the system.”

• There’s Guru Jesus—a wise, inspirational teacher who believes in you and helps you find your center.

• There’s Boyfriend Jesus—who wraps his arms around you as you sing about his intoxicating love.

• There’s Good Example Jesus—who shows you how to help people, change the planet, and become a better you.

[Q] Of all the different types of “Jesus” mentioned, which one do you tend to lean toward most, and why?

And then there’s Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God. Not just another prophet. Not just another rabbi. Not just another wonder worker. He was the one they had been waiting for: the Son of David and Abraham’s chosen seed; the one to deliver us from captivity; the goal of the Mosaic law; Yahweh in the flesh; the one to establish God’s reign and rule; the one to heal the sick, give sight to the blind and freedom to the prisoners, and proclaim Good News to the poor; the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world.

This Jesus was the Creator come to earth, and the beginning of a New Creation. He embodied the covenant, fulfilled the commandments, and reversed the curse. This Jesus is the Christ that God spoke of to the Serpent; the Christ prefigured for Noah in the flood; the Christ promised to Abraham; the Christ prophesied through Balaam before the Moabites; the Christ guaranteed to Moses before he died; the Christ promised to David when he was king; the Christ revealed to Isaiah as a Suffering Servant; the Christ predicted by the prophets and prepared for by John the Baptist.

This Christ is not a reflection of the current mood or the projection of our own desires. He is our Lord and God. He is the Father’s Son, Savior of the world, and substitute for our sins—more loving, more holy, and more wonderfully terrifying than we ever thought possible.¹

¹ Kevin DeYoung, “Who Do You Say That I Am?” from his DeYoung, Restless, and Reformed blog (posted 6-10-09).
Part 2  Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: Don’t be ashamed of telling others the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Duane Litfin, former president of Wheaton College, said it well: “The Christ we serve today is fall-flat-on-your-face glorious.”

When timid Timothy felt the pressure, he knew it was about Christ and his glory, not just about him. Read 2 Timothy 1:8–18.

[Q] Are you ever ashamed of the gospel? Why or why not?

[Q] What about the way the gospel is presented? Explain.

Luis Palau says, “My family and team have gone to over 60 countries declaring the glory of God. When I first went to the Muslim-, Hindu-, and Buddhist-majority nations, I trembled to do the right thing for the glory of God. I talked to a Hindu guru years ago, and he said, ‘Luis, don’t ever use the Western style of arguing, trying to show your religion is better than my religion or your Savior is superior. Just simply tell who Jesus is. Tell of his character. Tell what he’s like. Let people do the comparing for themselves.’ That was great advice.”

Read 2 Corinthians 3:12–18.

[Q] Share about the time that the “veil” was taken from your heart.

[Q] If you’ve ever seen the “veil” taken from someone else’s heart, someone you prayed for or shared with, tell us about that.

[Q] Look again at 2 Timothy 1:8. What kind of camaraderie is Paul calling for in this verse?

[Q] When we come to Christ, what are we saved from?

Leader’s Note: Some things that may be mentioned: the dark power of sin; the judgment that falls upon sin; a life without purpose; shame; the coming wrath (1 Thess. 1:10); death’s sting (1 Cor. 15:55); and we are saved for all eternity.

[Q] Read Hebrews 2:1–4. What makes this salvation so great?

[Q] How can our faith help guard the glory of Christ in salvation?

[Q] Read Matthew 7:14. How is the gate “narrow and difficult” if salvation is free?
Teaching Point Two: Don’t be ashamed of gladly guarding the gospel.

[Q] What does it mean to guard the gospel?

In 1745, David Brainerd was a 27-year-old missionary to American natives near a village called Crossweeksung, where he regularly taught 130 Native Americans. He had tuberculosis and would die within two years of writing this:

It is necessary, in the first place, to teach them that God is from everlasting, and so distinguished from all creatures; though it is very difficult to communicate anything of that nature to them, they having no terms in their language to signify an eternity a parte ante (that is, eternity past). The divine all-sufficiency must also necessarily be mentioned, in order to prevent their imagining that God was unhappy while alone, before the formation of his creatures.

God acts out of his own pleasure. He is not an unhappy God trying to find happiness because of unmet needs. He is not a God acting randomly. He is not a God who has a need that we need to meet. He wants us to be enamored with his greatness, self-sufficiency, goodness, and love.

Read Isaiah 46:9–10.

God is pleased with his gospel. He is not acting in the gospel because he is between a rock and a hard place. He is not pushed into a corner or constrained somehow in ways he does not want to be. He is acting in his pleasure, love, and wisdom.

[Q] Read Ephesians 1:3–6. How does this passage further our understanding of how the gospel pleases God?

Do not succumb to the culturally connected who want to compromise Jesus. They may have complaints and trouble with the church, but are their complaints worse than Paul’s? Is our culture so much more incompatible with God’s message than Paul’s culture was? You are called to guard the gospel.

[Q] A common, modern-day thought is that the gospel is about working justice and peace in the world. Do you think that’s true? Why or why not?

Leader’s Note: If you do a study of the word gospel, you’ll find it primarily denotes the verbal proclamation of what Jesus did and how individuals can get right with God (Timothy Keller, Gospel Forms). The statement “the gospel is about working justice and peace in the world” can obscure the holiness of God and the ungodliness of men. God is interested in peace and justice and wants us to join him in his ultimate remaking of the world. But we need to define terms in accordance with the Bible.
[Q] What would it mean for our salvation or forgiveness of sin if Christ has not been raised? How would we obtain them?

[Q] Why is it not enough to hope in Christ just for this life?

[Q] What does Paul mean that if the Resurrection did not occur, “we are to be pitied more than all men”?

[Q] If Christ is indeed raised, what kind of salvation do we have? How does that truth motivate you?

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

Action Point: The gospel tells us to repent and believe.

- **Repent:** You admit that you live in your own way and make your way an idol, so you worship the wrong things. You repent of having a center in life other than God. You turn to God as your center.

- **Believe:** Trust Christ and what he has done instead of your own efforts. Don’t rely on yourself to become acceptable to God, but rely on Christ. He forgives and accomplishes all you need to be right with God.

Take a few moments of silence to contemplate whether you need to repent and/or believe. Close in prayer together for each other and for those you need to tell this good news to.

—Study by Brad Reardon, with JoHannah Reardon
Guard the Gospel

We need to unashamedly protect the gospel.

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Guard the Gospel

Participant’s Guide

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Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: Don’t be ashamed of telling others the gospel of Jesus Christ

Teaching Point Two: Don’t be ashamed of gladly guarding the gospel.

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Take a few moments of silence to contemplate whether you need to repent and/or believe. Close in prayer together for each other and for those you need to tell this good news to.

—Study by Brad Reardon, with JoHannah Reardon
We need to be strong in grace to fulfill our mission.

Paul is very practical as he points to a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer to help us grasp how we should live the Christian life. But he also lets us know that it can’t be done without God’s grace.

Scripture: 2 Timothy 2:1–7
Based On: The sermon series “A Gospel Community,” by Brad Reardon
Part 1 Identify the Issue

**Note to Leader:** Provide each person with the Participant’s Guide, included at the end of this study.

This is what Christian musician Todd Agnew had to say about a defining moment in his life that helped him understand God’s grace:

“When I was a few days old, I was given up for adoption—my parents just left me at the hospital. So I was a kid who would eventually end up going to some orphanage—not a whole lot of hope or future for me there. But a couple came in and said: We love you. Not because of anything you’ve done or earned, but we want you to be a part of our family.

“That was a huge defining moment for me for two reasons. For one, I’m no longer that baby who was born there—that hopeless person without a future or a family. I am an Agnew. I’m a result of that family, I resemble them; their input into my life is who I am. My parents are godly, amazing people, and their choice of taking me into their family defined and formed who I am.

“As I grew up, it was easy for me to understand adoption into the body of Christ because I know what it means to not have anything to offer—not to be able to deserve that and to be adopted because I’m loved.”

**[Q]** If you’ve been adopted, or know someone well who has been adopted, what can you add to what Todd Agnew shared?

**[Q]** What does it mean to you to be adopted into God’s family? How does this knowledge help you in your Christian walk?

**[Q]** Todd Agnew experienced grace. How would you define *grace*?

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

*Teaching Point One: Let Jesus Christ strengthen you in his grace.*

Read 2 Timothy 2:1.

*Grace* is used in primarily two ways in Scripture:
1. **Forgiveness:** Justification by faith and adoption into the family—the undeserved, unmerited grace that grants you forgiveness, adoption, and intimacy with God.

2. **Power:** The undeserved, unmerited grace that empowers you.

Romans 5:2 talks about the “grace in which we now stand.” In other words, grace grants us assistance to live. We stand in grace, undeservingly forgiven and undeservingly empowered to serve. My strength is insufficient and, in fact, inconsequential. God in grace forgives me and God in grace empowers me.

Timothy loves God and his gospel; still, he will need help. He will have the wind in his face as he ministers in Ephesus. He will need to be strong.

Paul is basically saying: Timothy you are part of the greatest movement of history, of all time. This is a God thing. It is supernatural in its origin and power. Staking our life on this means we will need to be strong in grace.

By grace we participate in what God is doing. We come to Christ and his cross and believingly repent, enter into new life under Christ’s sovereign reign, and then the fun really begins. We have the privilege of seeing his kingdom reign in our lives as we participate in building bridges so that others can see Jesus’ kingdom too. Read Acts 20:24.

**[Q]** How did God’s grace help Paul to view his life?

**[Q]** What is the “race” he is talking about in this verse?

**[Q]** Paul’s task was bringing the gospel to the Gentiles. What task do you feel God has entrusted to you?

**[Q]** Read Hebrews 4:16. How would this help you in completing that task? Name practical ways.

**Teaching Point Two: We need to keep going back to the truth of the gospel and God’s grace.**

The enemy will be relentless in attacking the basic truth of the gospel. Acts 15 tells us some men came down from Judea and were teaching, “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.” It says that Paul and Barnabas had a “sharp dispute and debate with them” (15:2). This means that they went head to head and toe to toe. It means they went 15 rounds and the match wasn’t over—everyone was bloody but still standing. And it was not resolved.
So what did they do? The church sent Paul and Barnabas and others up to the Jerusalem counsel (Acts 15). Paul said, in essence: “We can’t add stuff God hasn’t added. We all will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus.” The council concurred, which is why the church doesn’t insist on circumcision today.

You have to be strong in God’s grace and his gospel. Someone is always trying to add something. The human heart is bent on doing something to earn grace and form a foundation for pride.

Read 2 Timothy 2:2.

[Q] Paul told Timothy to entrust what he’d heard to faithful people who will teach others. In other words, he needed to guard the gospel. What do you think that means? What exactly needs to be guarded?

**Leader’s Note:** Know what you believe about Christ and his cross. Because we believe in Christ, we believe in his church and insist upon the absolute authority of his book. There is no religion anywhere with anything like God the Son dying in our place for our sin. This speaks volumes of the greatness, holiness, and love of God. It is stumbled over because it also speaks loudly of our complete inability to do anything about our sinful state. We can do nothing to earn anything from God. “I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). Lose the power of the Cross and you have lost the unique glory of Jesus. You lose the Cross and God’s grace becomes weak and insipid.

[Q] Can you think of some ways that the gospel is commonly subverted today—ways a false gospel is taught?

[Q] Read Romans 5:6–11. What can you learn about the gospel from this passage?

[Q] Read 1 Peter 5:5b–6. Why must we have this attitude as we guard the gospel? What does this attitude look like in practical terms?

**Teaching Point Three: Learn from a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer.**

Augustine prayed, “Lord, command what you will, but give what you command.” In other words: Lord, tell me to do anything you want me to do, but then enable me, by your grace and supply, to do the things you have called me to do.

You don’t make yourself powerful and strong. You put yourself in the position to receive power from Christ, because he has all the grace you need.
Read the three examples in 2 Timothy 2:3–7. Explain how each of these demonstrates a picture of the Christian life.

How do we reconcile the hard work that each of these examples represents and the grace that God gives us to complete the tasks he has given us?

Optional Activity:

Purpose: To help us grasp how God’s grace and strength help us in our missions in life.

Activity: Break into groups of three or four. Assign each group one of the following Scriptures: 2 Corinthians 6:4–10; 2 Corinthians 12:9–10; Galatians 2:20–21. After reading the passage, ask each person in the group to share an example of when God’s grace has sustained them even in the midst of hardship.

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

Action Point: On your own this week, look up these three passages: 2 Corinthians 6:4–10; 2 Corinthians 12:9–10; Galatians 2:20–21. Contemplate how you can apply these truths to your life. If you would like, share your thoughts with someone in the group and pray for each other in this regard.

—Study by Brad Reardon, with JoHannah Reardon
Stand Strong in Grace

We need to be strong in grace to fulfill our mission.

Paul is very practical as he points to a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer to help us grasp how we should live the Christian life. But he also lets us know that it can’t be done without God’s grace.

Scripture: 2 Timothy 2:1–7

Based On: The sermon series “A Gospel Community,” by Brad Reardon
Part 1 Identify the Issue

This is what Christian musician Todd Agnew had to say about a defining moment in his life that helped him understand God’s grace:

“When I was a few days old, I was given up for adoption—my parents just left me at the hospital. So I was a kid who would eventually end up going to some orphanage—not a whole lot of hope or future for me there. But a couple came in and said: We love you. Not because of anything you’ve done or earned, but we want you to be a part of our family.

“That was a huge defining moment for me for two reasons. For one, I’m no longer that baby who was born there—that hopeless person without a future or a family. I am an Agnew. I’m a result of that family, I resemble them; their input into my life is who I am. My parents are godly, amazing people, and their choice of taking me into their family defined and formed who I am.

“As I grew up, it was easy for me to understand adoption into the body of Christ because I know what it means to not have anything to offer—not to be able to deserve that and to be adopted because I’m loved.”

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: Let Jesus Christ strengthen you in his grace.

Teaching Point Two: We need to keep going back to the truth of the gospel and God’s grace.

Teaching Point Three: Learn from a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer.

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

Action Point: On your own this week, look up these three passages: 2 Corinthians 6:4–10; 2 Corinthians 12:9–10; Galatians 2:20–21. Contemplate how you can apply these truths to your life. If you would like, share your thoughts with someone in the group and pray for each other in this regard.

—Study by Brad Reardon, with JoHannah Reardon
Most of us don’t like to think about suffering, but Paul makes a case for it in this passage. He reminds us that Jesus and his gospel are worth suffering for, and that giving our lives for this purpose has great value.

Scripture: 2 Timothy 2:8–13

Based On: The sermon series “A Gospel Community,” by Brad Reardon
Be Willing to Suffer

Leader’s Guide

Part 1 Identify the Issue

Note to Leader: Provide each person with the Participant’s Guide, included at the end of this study.

Early in the 20th century, an ad in a London newspaper read: “Men wanted for hazardous journey: small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, and constant danger. Safe return doubtful. Honor and recognition in case of success.” It was signed by the famous Arctic explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton, and thousands of men responded. They thought adventure and potential honor were worth the suffering, at least before they left.

[Q] What would you be willing to suffer for in life, and why?

This letter to Timothy says there is something worth suffering for. Read 2 Timothy 1:11–12.

[Q] In 2 Timothy 2:3, Paul asked Timothy to endure hardship. What enabled Paul and Timothy to be able to suffer with the right attitude—without feeling that their suffering was earning them brownie points or acceptance with God?

Romans 5:2 talks about the “grace in which we now stand.” We stand in grace, undeservingly forgiven and undeservingly empowered to serve by grace. If we are going to walk with Christ, if we are going to participate in his purposes and what he is passionate about, we must not think it’s by our own might or strength. My strength is insufficient and, in fact, inconsequential. It is God in grace forgiving me and God in grace empowering me.

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: Suffer remembering Jesus Christ.

[Q] Read 2 Timothy 2:8. How does remembering that Jesus Christ was descended from David and raised from the dead give us the ability to suffer or endure hardship?

The power of Jesus’ resurrection reminds us of his indestructible life and victory over death. Its relevance increases when, like Paul, you are in a prison waiting to be beheaded. Jesus Christ, resurrected, is the basis for Paul’s hope. Paul, Timothy, and the church can have an outlook that goes beyond honorable suffering or stoic resolve in suffering and death. There is a vision of victory in suffering, because Jesus wins.

[Q] Read Hebrews 12:3. What further encouragement do you find in this verse?
We live in a culture that likes stories, understands cause and effect, and finds relationships appealing. All these things go along with Christianity—until you get to truth claims. Paul makes an absolute truth claim: Remember Jesus Christ, the Savior and Messiah, who in a certain time and place died on a cross and rose from the dead. That is a truth claim.

**[Q]** When have you found it difficult to stick to this truth claim when talking with someone? How might it cause you suffering to do so?

When we speak of suffering, we speak from a conviction that Jesus is worthy. There is someone so central to life, so valuable, so indestructible, so powerful, so intimately treasured that suffering makes sense.

This is very personal for Paul, Timothy, and all of us. Jesus Christ is valued above all things. He is more than a Savior. He is my Savior. He is more than a Messiah. He is my Messiah. He has done more than conquer death. He has conquered my death. He is more than a promise. He is my promise. He is more than the gospel. He is my gospel—my good news, my treasure.

**Optional Activity:**

**Purpose:** To help us understand how worthy Jesus is of our allegiance.

**Activity:** Read Psalm 110, which is a prophecy of Christ. Using a whiteboard or poster board, list all the ways this psalm shows how Jesus is worthy of our allegiance. Then ask the group what this might mean in their everyday life.

**Teaching Point Two: Suffer because the Word of God is powerful.**

Paul adds, while rising above his imprisonment, “God’s word is not chained.”

Read 2 Timothy 2:9.

Paul has what he told us we need. That is to “keep being strengthened by the grace in Christ Jesus.” He is being treated like a criminal, unjustly. Few people have done as much good as Paul. His earthly reward included martyrdom. Paul does not play the part of the victim who can’t see past his pain. He celebrates that the Word of God is not imprisoned like he is. The Word of God is active. The Word of God is moving in the empire, empowered by the Spirit to change human hearts. Paul knows persecution won’t stop the Word of God. He was a persecutor. He was terrorizing the church. And now he sits in a prison, the best church planter of his day. But the Word of God is not imprisoned.

The Word of God is being written in prison; the writer is imprisoned, but the Word is moving powerfully to shake lives and bring faith and repentance.
Be Willing to Suffer

[Q] Read Psalm 1 and note the ways it reflects how Paul was living.

We have confidence: a certainty that God, his Word, his promises, his gospel are not chained by circumstances. Our worst circumstances cannot stop God. So we endure the circumstances and have confidence in God.

Puritan theologian Thomas Watson had this to say about the Bible’s staying power:

We may know the Scripture to be the Word of God by its miraculous preservation in all ages. The holy Scriptures are the richest jewel that Christ has left us; and the church of God has so kept these public records of heaven, that they have not been lost. The Word of God has never wanted [lacked] enemies to oppose, and, if possible, to extirpate it … but God has preserved this blessed Book inviolable to this day. The Devil and his agents have been blowing at the Scripture light, but could never blow it out; a clear sign that it was lighted from heaven.

Teaching Point Three: Suffer so others will come to Christ.

Chinese Christian leader Brother Zhong tells this story:

I was attending a training course for my house church network’s council members and youth leaders. The Public Security Bureau (PSB) raided us the first day. All the leaders were arrested.

The prison authorities shaved our heads and interrogated us. We were warned that the hardened inmates would beat us. So with much trepidation, another brother and I entered our cell.

We were greeted by the sight of sixteen other inmates, lined up in two rows, and thumping their fists. My heart beat rapidly as I sent prayers up to God.

The leader of the gang asked, “Why are you here?”

“Because we are Christians,” I replied.

“You don’t beat people up?”

“No,” I assured him.

“Do you sing?”
“Yes,” I answered.

The leader ordered me to sing a song. I wept as I sang. The Holy Spirit moved in our midst, and by the time I finished singing, every prisoner was also in tears. To my shock, the gang leader then asked to hear the gospel.

After that, my cellmates hungered to hear the gospel every day. One Sunday, we held a worship service. The prison guard demanded to know who was behind it. He threatened to punish everyone if no one spoke up. I stood up and confessed.

I was forced to remove my clothes and stand at an inclined angle to the wall. The gang leader couldn’t bear it anymore. He asked to be punished with me. All the others volunteered to do the same. The infuriated guard stormed out. I was moved by my cellmates’ act. One of them, who had been there for three years, became a believer that day.¹

[Q] Most of us have not had to suffer for the gospel to this extent, but if you have ever suffered for the gospel, tell us about it. This can include giving up something or making a stand when it could have cost you something.

[Q] Read 2 Timothy 2:10. Then read Matthew 24:2 and Acts 18:9–11—how do these verses help you understand verse 10?

Teaching Point Four: Suffer because God’s certain promises are for you.

[Q] Read 2 Timothy 2:11–13. Connect verse 11 with verse 12b. Now read Matthew 10:31–33 and compare these two passages. What do you think they are saying?

Leader’s Note: If we hold fast to identify with Christ’s death for us we will live with him forever in heaven, but if we deny Christ then he will deny us in heaven. Judas may be an example of this.

[Q] Connect verse 12a with verse 13. What do you think this means?

Leader’s Note: If we endure our trials and hardships now, we will be rewarded in heaven by reigning with him. And if we stumble in faith during hardship, he is still faithful to his promise to us in salvation, for he cannot deny himself. Peter may be an example of this.

[Q] When have you found God’s promises a comfort when you’ve gone through difficulties?

Part 3  Apply Your Findings

Action Point: Close by singing the hymn “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.” You can find the words online at http://www.hymnsite.com/lyrics/umh110.sht. Print off the words for the group. If you are not comfortable singing it, ask someone to read the lyrics aloud while the rest of you follow along.

—Study by Brad Reardon, with JoHannah Reardon
Most of us don’t like to think about suffering, but Paul makes a case for it in this passage. He reminds us that Jesus and his gospel are worth suffering for, and that giving our lives for this purpose has great value.

Scripture: 2 Timothy 2:8–13
Based On: The sermon series “A Gospel Community,” by Brad Reardon
Part 1 Identify the Issue

Early in the 20th century, an ad in a London newspaper read: “Men wanted for hazardous journey: small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, and constant danger. Safe return doubtful. Honor and recognition in case of success.” It was signed by the famous Arctic explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton, and thousands of men responded. They thought adventure and potential honor were worth the suffering, at least before they left.

Romans 5:2 talks about the “grace in which we now stand.” We stand in grace, undeserving forgiveness and undeserving empowerment to serve by grace. If we are going to walk with Christ, if we are going to participate in his purposes and what he is passionate about, we must not think it’s by our own might or strength. My strength is insufficient and, in fact, inconsequential. It is God in grace forgiving me and God in grace empowering me.

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: Suffer remembering Jesus Christ.

Teaching Point Two: Suffer because the Word of God is powerful.

Teaching Point Three: Suffer so others will come to Christ.

Teaching Point Four: Suffer because God’s certain promises are for you.

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

Action Point: Close by singing the hymn “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.”

—Study by Brad Reardon, with JoHannah Reardon
Rarely does anyone outside of Christian circles speak of purity these days, but Paul says we should be pure. What does that mean and why is it important? And how does it lead to fruitfulness in our lives?

Scripture: 2 Timothy 2:14–26
Based On: The sermon series “A Gospel Community,” by Brad Reardon
2 Timothy: Finish the Race

Be Pure and Fruitful

Leader’s Guide

Part 1 Identify the Issue

**Note to Leader: Provide each person with the Participant’s Guide, included at the end of this study.**

**[Q]** Tell us about a time that you had to prepare to do something: take a trip, start a job, get married, start a ministry, etc. What did you have to do to prepare? Was it worth the work? Why or why not?

Read 2 Timothy 2:14–26, which talks about how we need to be useful and honorable vessels to serve God.

**[Q]** How would you sum up this passage?

**[Q]** Does this passage encourage or discourage you? Explain.

Optional Activity:

**Purpose:** To help us determine ways we feel we are failing in our Christian life.

**Activity:** Using a whiteboard or poster board, record answers to the following question: In what area of your life do you find it difficult to live up to biblical standards? (Ask the group to call out answers randomly.) When finished, discuss why those things might be difficult to master.

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

**Teaching Point One: To be honorable and useful, get the gospel right!**

The gospel is incredible. We have a new relationship with God that gives us power, direction, purpose, clear and absolute commands, freedom, love, and joy. Still, you can fall off the horse, so to speak, in two directions. One is to become legalistic by adding to the gospel. Another is to become relativistic, embracing what they term *antinomianism* (*anti* means against and *nomos* means law). So antinomianism means against the law—against God’s moral law—which leads to relativism that says the most important thing is freedom: God loves us and we’re free, so do whatever. The apostles encountered both.

**[Q]** Look again at 2 Timothy 2:15–17 and at 1 John 1:6. What do these two passages have to say about this?
Which of these do you lean toward: legalism or relativism? Why?

If we make the gospel only about an angry God who demands and is never satisfied, or only about a lenient God who never commands anything, that’s not the gospel. God becomes some kind of insipid mush or frustrated angry being. The gospel tells me God is holier than I can imagine, and will never look at my best efforts and be satisfied. And he is more kind, compassionate, and gracious than any relativistic conception of him. He is God, and he has a gospel that satisfies all his absolute, holy, righteous standards. And he loves at a price that is almost inconceivable, setting the highest standard of love anyone could imagine.

As we dig into the gospel of God throughout our lives, it changes us. Give an example of how the gospel has changed you.

We have to get the gospel right. I am in such need that I can't will or reason myself to God. It won't work. I am so incapable of getting myself to God that he must take the initiative. I am in such a desperate place that Jesus had to come and die for me. And he did it because I am so loved. This changes everything.

How do you balance your sense of unworthiness before God and your sense of being loved beyond anything you can imagine?

We do not get legalism or relativism from the gospel. We saw in the last study how Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem to say: We are all coming to God the same way, through grace in Jesus Christ. You can't add anything.

And John says: Look, you can't just live any way you want. When you come to Christ, you follow him.

The gospel brings new freedom to live a humbly dependent life filled with power and joy. This gospel-centered life is full. Study well to dig into it, and protect the good deposit you have in Christ.

Teaching Point Two: The gospel-centered person chooses to be pure and fruitful.

J. I. Packer says in Rediscovering Holiness: “We are all invalids in God’s hospital. In moral and spiritual terms we are all sick and damaged, diseased and deformed, scarred and sore, lame and lopsided, to a far, far greater extent than we realize.”

The gospel is enjoyed by those who are in the most need. Complacency and pride blind us to our need and the power of the gospel. We are prone to be blind to our desperate condition.
We are capable of very pointed delusions about the nature of God: what he is like, his ways, his character, his plan and purposes. People have looked at Jesus and come away with a Jesus-centered legalism. Others have come away with a Jesus-centered lawlessness, a Jesus-centered socialism, or a Jesus-centered capitalism. You can come up with almost anything you have a predisposition towards.

[Q] What kind of Jesus-centered gospel do you have a predisposition towards?

[Q] How can you recognize that predisposition and guard against warping the gospel?

[Q] Look again at 2 Timothy 2:22. What are the youthful passions mentioned here?

*Leader’s Note:* This would include sexual temptation, rashness, temper, or perhaps wanting a name for yourself. See also 1 Corinthians 6:18; 10:14; 1 Timothy 6:10–11.

[Q] Read 1 John 1:7–9. What does this tell us about how we can cleanse ourselves and take responsibility for our actions?

[Q] What does 1 Corinthians 1:30 add about how we are to become an honorable vessel?

Something spectacular has happened in Christ. You are set apart for his glory and are a child of God. You have been adopted into the family and you are a holy one. You are sanctified in the sense of salvation.

[Q] If that’s so, why do we still fail to be all we want to be in Christ?

*Leader’s Note:* This is progressive sanctification. It involves growing, maturing, and becoming more like Christ.

[Q] What does 2 Corinthians 7:1 tell us about this?

You are responsible to make choices to be fit for the Master’s purpose. The Greek word for master in 2 Timothy 2 is *depotos*. It is an absolute kind of word. It is uncompromising. This is the Master and you want to be useful because you have chosen him as master.

[Q] What does it mean to be “prepared to do any good work” (v. 21)?

*Leader’s Note:* Ready implies being available and willing. The honorable, cleansed vessel is saying “use me.”

[Q] Explain how verses 22–26 tell us what this looks like. Can you give examples of how we might do these things in everyday life?

People who are Christ’s, who are standing and living in the power of God’s grace, run from evil and toward righteousness, faith, love, and peace. They are promoting faith, love, peace, and righteousness.
[Q] This is a life of faith. How can I make it a habit to go toward the circumstances of life that require faith? Give practical examples.

**Leader’s Note:** *I will be wary of always choosing the easy way. For example, I will pursue giving my money by faith. I will pursue speaking out when it’s not easy. I will love sacrificially beyond my normal capacity. We are well-loved, and so we love.*

[Q] What kind of foolish arguments are you tempted to get caught up in (v. 23)?

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**Part 3 Apply Your Findings**

We are to be so filled with the gospel, so thankful for the gospel, so glad for Christ that we can think, read, study, and live to help others come to faith and repentance. Think about how you can learn to live in such a way as to help others repent (v. 25).

**Action Point:** Ask the group to pray for one area of your life that you would like to be more in line with biblical standards, so you will be an honorable and useful vessel.

—*Study by Brad Reardon, with JoHannah Reardon*
Be Pure and Fruitful

Get the gospel right to become a useful and honorable vessel.

Rarely does anyone outside of Christian circles speak of purity these days, but Paul says we should be pure. What does that mean and why is it important? And how does it lead to fruitfulness in our lives?

Scripture: 2 Timothy 2:14–26
Based On: The sermon series “A Gospel Community,” by Brad Reardon
Part 1 Identify the Issue

Read 2 Timothy 2:14–26, which talks about how we need to be useful and honorable vessels to serve God.

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: To be honorable and useful, get the gospel right!

Teaching Point Two: The gospel-centered person chooses to be pure and fruitful.

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

We are to be so filled with the gospel, so thankful for the gospel, so glad for Christ that we can think, read, study, and live to help others come to faith and repentance. Think about how you can learn to live in such a way as to help others repent (v. 25).

Action Point: Ask the group to pray for one area of your life that you would like to be more in line with biblical standards, so you will be an honorable and useful vessel.

—Study by Brad Reardon, with JoHannah Reardon
Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:1–9
Based On: The sermon series “The Gospel Community,” by Brad Reardon

Watch out for those who have the appearance of godliness, but deny its power.

Our ability to live holy lives that please God has a whole lot to do with what we believe to be true about God and the gospel.
Part 1 Identify the Issue

Note to Leader: Provide each person with the Participant’s Guide, included at the end of this study.

[Q] Did you have any form of religion before you became a Christian (even if it was being a nominal Christian)? If so, tell us what your religion involved in your mind.

[Q] Have you had any encounters with false or empty religion? If so, tell us about it.

John Newton describes empty religion thus: “Self-righteousness can feed upon doctrines, as well as upon works; and a man may have the heart of a Pharisee, while his head is stored with orthodox notions of the unworthiness of the creature and the riches of free grace.”

He really describes two kinds of empty religion: one that has the facts right and another that has the works right, but in both the heart is missing.

The apostle Paul speaks of empty religion in this way: “having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power” (ESV).

Avoid empty religion, the appearance without the reality.

Optional Activity:

Purpose: To help us think further about who God is and what his truth is.

Activity: Read 2 Timothy 3:1–9; 1 Timothy 4:1–5; and 2 Peter 3:3–4. On a whiteboard or poster board, make two columns. Label one Similarities and the other Differences. Ask the group to call out the similarities in these passages as you write them down. Then ask them to call out the differences. When finished, ask the group to sum up what they learned through this exercise.

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: Live holy lives.

[Q] What is holiness, and how would you describe someone who lives a holy life?

[Q] What are some false caricatures of people who live holy lives?

[Q] How can you live holy in your everyday life?
Christians enjoy the God-pleasing and sin-forgiving gospel. We want to honor and guard this gospel, so we take responsibility, by God’s grace, to cleanse our lives. We value it dearly, affirm its holy truth, and live it by his strength.

[Q] Explain what you think this statement means: Religion is outside-in; the gospel is inside-out.


Teaching Point Two: Our misplaced love thwarts our attempts to live holy lives.

Love (or a form of the word) is used five times in the first four verses of 2 Timothy 3. We’ll discuss each kind of love.

1. Self-love: One of the reigning clichés of the day is that you must first learn to love yourself, and then you can love others. The formula goes: love yourself, then love your neighbor. But this becomes unrelenting self-indulgence.

C. S. Lewis said in Mere Christianity, “To love and admire anything outside yourself is to take one step away from utter spiritual ruin; though we shall not be well so long as we love and admire anything more than we love and admire God.”

The Bible tells us to step outside ourselves and love. The gospel leads us from being self-absorbed to being God-absorbed.

[Q] What is the balance between self-acceptance and self-love—when do we cross the line from one to the other?

2. Love of money: The money dragon always wants more. We have to constantly weed the greed out.

[Q] What is your weak area concerning money?

3. Love of pleasure: In John Piper’s Desiring God, he points out that we are built for desire. Our heart is a desire factory. The issue is, will we desire the right thing? We have one place to fulfill our deepest desire—God. So he tells us for our own good to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, and strength.” This will bring you the most pleasure and God the most glory.

[Q] Give an example of how you have found pleasure in God.
4. **Not loving good:** To love good, you must respond like Isaiah: “Woe to me! … I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips …” (Isaiah 6:5). It begins with grieving over our own sinfulness. We don’t grieve by wallowing in sin; we grieve by repenting. God restores us in repentance, as pictured by the coal that was pressed to Isaiah’s lips (Isaiah 6:6–7).

**[Q]** What is the difference between grieving by wallowing in our sin and grieving by repenting?

D. A. Carson says, “People do not drift toward holiness. Apart from grace-driven effort, people do not gravitate toward godliness, prayer, obedience to Scripture, faith, and delight in the Lord. We drift toward compromise and call it tolerance; we drift toward disobedience and call it freedom; we drift toward superstition and call it faith. We cherish the indiscipline of lost self-control and call it relaxation; we slouch toward prayerlessness and delude ourselves into thinking we have escaped legalism; we slide toward godlessness and convince ourselves we have been liberated.”

5. **Love of God:** Nothing on the earth can satisfy our hearts. Only God can.

**[Q]** Read Psalm 16:2; 27:4; 63:1–2; and 73:25–26. What do these tell us about what it means to love God?

**Teaching Point Three: Guard against falling for a false gospel.**

There will always be someone around who propagates the appearance of godliness without the power. How does that happen? Paul shows us in 2 Timothy 3:6–8.

**[Q]** Can you give an example of how someone bearing a false gospel will use felt needs to get into the house (3:6)?

**[Q]** Can you give an example of how someone bearing a false gospel will entice with “learning” (3:7)?

For many, knowledge means power. Many false teachers over the centuries have claimed that they’ve discovered new perspectives. Sometimes they claim to have some kind of secret knowledge. In our time, this often comes through a TV screen.

**[Q]** Can you give an example of how someone bearing a false gospel might even claim miracles, as Jannes and Jambres did with Moses (3:8)?

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1 D. A. Carson, quoted in “Reflections,” Christianity Today (7-31-00).
A short, practical strategy for stopping the counterfeits: Understand that some teachers will present false gospels. If the gospel life and mission is to circle the globe, then we will see this perpetrated. Do not be fooled. Avoid such people. When you see the gospel take second place in someone’s message, walk away.

The good news is that the gospel will prevail and empty religion will lose (3:9).

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

Action Points:

• Our goal is to let God change and remake us into the holy image of his Son. We are to challenge empty, hypocritical religion with a gospel-filled, gospel-oriented, God-centered, outward-focused life. To do this, we need to trust Christ to forgive our real guilt and lead us in his holy way. If anything is stopping you from doing this, ask for prayer now.

• On your own this week, make note of the times you hear a false gospel proclaimed. Jot them down and share them with the group next week.

—Study by Brad Reardon, with JoHannah Reardon
Challenge Empty Religion

Our ability to live holy lives that please God has a whole lot to do with what we believe to be true about God and the gospel.

Watch out for those who have the appearance of godliness, but deny its power.

Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:1–9

Based On: The sermon series “The Gospel Community,” by Brad Reardon
**Part 1 Identify the Issue**

John Newton describes empty religion thus: “Self-righteousness can feed upon doctrines, as well as upon works; and a man may have the heart of a Pharisee, while his head is stored with orthodox notions of the unworthiness of the creature and the riches of free grace.”

He really describes two kinds of empty religion: one that has the facts right and another that has the works right, but in both the heart is missing.

The apostle Paul speaks of empty religion in this way: “having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power” (ESV).

Avoid empty religion, the appearance without the reality.

**Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles**

**Teaching Point One: Live holy lives.**

**Teaching Point Two: Our misplaced love thwarts our attempts to live holy lives.**

**Teaching Point Three: Guard against falling for a false gospel.**

**Part 3 Apply Your Findings**

**Action Points:**

• Our goal is to let God change and remake us into the holy image of his Son. We are to challenge empty, hypocritical religion with a gospel-filled, gospel-oriented, God-centered, outward-focused life. To do this, we need to trust Christ to forgive our real guilt and lead us in his holy way. If anything is stopping you from doing this, ask for prayer now.

• On your own this week, make note of the times you hear a false gospel proclaimed. Jot them down and share them with the group next week.

—Study by Brad Reardon, with JoHannah Reardon
Faithfulness in our faith is impossible without a commitment to the truth of Scripture. How strong are your convictions when other’s opinions conflict with yours?

Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:10–17

Based On: The sermon series “The Gospel Community,” by Brad Reardon
Part 1 Identify the Issue

Note to Leader: Provide each person with the Participant’s Guide, included at the end of this study.

[Q] If someone told you to “continue in what you have learned” regarding your faith, what would you continue?

Read 2 Timothy 3:10–17.

Verse 14 is about being centered in Christ and continuing in that journey. While others are going from bad to worse, and still others are imposters, deceived and being deceived, you continue. But what is it that you are to continue (abide, remain) in? “Continue in the things you have learned.” Verse 15 reinforces this.

[Q] What two reasons do you see in this passage for Timothy to “continue”?

Leader’s Note: One has to do with the quality of those who taught him the Scriptures. The other has to do with the good effect of the Scriptures.

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: Faithfulness comes through godly people transferring the teachings of sacred Scripture.

You don’t become faithful in a vacuum. You do this with people—quality people (v. 15).

[Q] Read Acts 16:1; 2 Timothy 1:5; and 2 Timothy 3:10. Who were the quality people in Timothy’s life?

Qualities to look for in the life of someone who is teaching you faithfulness are spiritual trajectory, faith, and being Spirit-filled.

[Q] Who were (are) the spiritual “quality people” in your life? What have you learned from them?

[Q] Read Acts 20:24 and Philippians 2:17. How would you sum up these qualities in Paul’s life?

Most people realize that faith is a part of everyday life. It takes faith to drive through an intersection, believing others will stop when they should. It takes faith to eat in a restaurant
or open a can of food. It’s faith when we deposit money in the bank, sign a contract, or get married. Paul is speaking of a faith that has God as its object. Faith is only as good as what it trusts in. If you trust Christ, you receive what Christ can do.

[Q] Read Acts 1:8; and Ephesians 3:16 and 5:18. What do you think it means to be filled and empowered by the Holy Spirit?

*Leader’s Note:* It’s personally empowering (Acts 1:8). In difficult times, we all need patience, love, and perseverance. No one can do this for long on their own. It is an impossible transformation unless it is powered by God. It involves personal indwelling (Eph. 3:16) and is personally consuming (Eph. 5:18). The Holy Spirit influences the decisions we make. He gives us boldness and courage to do God’s will. He helps us respond in the right way to situations we face. The Spirit has an influence like the influence of alcohol (only good).

**Teaching Point Two: Faithfulness comes through being saturated with the sacred writings.**

[Q] Look again at 2 Timothy 3:16–17. Considering this passage, what do you think it means to be saturated with the sacred writings?

[Q] Why does the Bible have power that other books and writings do not?

*Leader’s Note:* The basic answer is that it is inspired. It will “equip for every good work” and has the power to change one’s life. See 2 Peter 1:21.

[Q] What does it mean that “all Scripture is God-breathed”?

*Leader’s Note:* Paul is stating the fundamental truth about the source of all Scripture. Scripture comes from God. The word for “God-breathed” is not used anywhere else in the Bible. However, the literal meaning of the word brings to mind the creation of man, back in Genesis 2:7, when it says that “the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.”

2 Peter 1:21 says, “For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

First, no prophecy or divine message was ever given by an act of human will. It is always the product of God’s will.

Second, a prophecy or divine message came as the messenger was “carried along by the Holy Spirit.”
Be Faithful

Leader’s Guide

[Q] What insight does 1 Corinthians 2:11–13 give you into this subject?

Leader’s Note: In this passage, Paul says that the Spirit of God conveys to the inspired messenger the thoughts of God. Inspiration is when the Spirit of God conveys God’s thoughts by selecting the appropriate spiritual words that best express those thoughts, and places them in the mind of a human messenger.


Part 3 Apply Your Findings

Having strong convictions means you hold these truths even when the bullets are flying. The truths worth being saturated in are Bible truths. But it is possible to memorize the whole book and still not get it. We have to apply it and stand for it as Martin Luther did. We must say, even under intense pressure to yield, “Here I stand!”

Optional Activity:

Show the clip from the movie Luther where Martin Luther says, “Here I stand.”

Action Point: Ask yourself: Am I developing convictions that lead to faithfulness? If not, what do I need to do? How do I need to connect with others to do this?

—Study by Brad Reardon, with JoHannah Reardon
Be Faithful

Continue in what you’ve learned from the sacred writings.

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Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:10–17

Based On: The sermon series “The Gospel Community,” by Brad Reardon
Part 1 Identify the Issue

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Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

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—Study by Brad Reardon, with JoHannah Reardon
Proclaim and Listen Well

Scripture: 2 Timothy 4:1–5
Based On: The sermon series “The Gospel Community,” by Brad Reardon

It’s very easy to get sidetracked from the truth.

We have to speak out when we can, but we also need to listen to make sure we’ve got the message right.
Part 1 Identify the Issue

Note to Leader: Provide each person with the Participant’s Guide, included at the end of this study.

[Q] Tell us of a time when you stood for your faith, even though it was uncomfortable or difficult. How did you feel when you did that?

Karl Barth was preaching on John 3:16 in Nazi Germany in the 1930s. He pointed out to the congregation that God’s love included the Jews, and if that’s true, one should not participate in mistreating people that God cared about. There were people who actually walked out and denounced him. When questioned why he preached what he did, he simply said, “It’s in the text.”

[Q] Name some others you know of—currently or historically—who proclaimed the gospel even when it was uncomfortable or dangerous.

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: Proclaim the gospel well.

Read 2 Timothy 4:1—5. Consider the nature of the gospel according to verses 1–2. This, the last chapter the apostle Paul ever writes, starts off with all guns blazing. He says: I charge you with all the weight of the eternal God and his glory to preach the word. This is urgent.

Verse 1 gives us the basis for the gospel. This charge originates with the “presence of God and Jesus Christ” and applies to us all. This basis includes the whole promise of the present and future reign of Jesus.

[Q] What effect does verse 1 have on your motivation to proclaim the gospel?

[Q] What difference does it make that God is going to judge us (v. 1)?

[Q] What do you think it means to preach the word in season and out of season (v. 2)?

[Q] Verse 2 says “preach” the gospel. Do most of us preach? What’s the difference between preaching and telling?

Leader’s Note: This is essentially being a herald. It can include teaching, but it’s not exactly the same. Preaching is more in line with
being a herald of the glory of God. It is: Hear ye, hear ye—here is the glory of God, the love of God, the greatness of God, the way to God! It’s a kind of verbal exclamation mark. The gospel should be preached! This isn’t the kind of preaching that is only for Sunday morning, but the kind that anyone can do.

[Q] Verse 2 says “correct, rebuke and encourage” in the NIV. What do each of those mean?

Leader’s Note: Correct—Show through rational argument. The word was used in a legal sense for giving the case for right or wrong. Rebuke—Show the moral need for repentance. Encourage—Show them encouragement. Help lift them up.

[Q] Then he says something that seems like it doesn’t go with the urgency of his previous words: Proclaim this great gospel with great patience and careful instruction. Why are these needed when proclaiming the gospel? Give examples.

Leader’s Note: Whenever you see a truth and it becomes a threshold for you, you want everyone to see it and have the same sense of urgency. But it doesn’t work that way. People need to get it on their own, as revealed by the Holy Spirit in his time and way.

[Q] What makes preaching the gospel difficult according to verses 3–5?

[Q] How can we deal with that difficulty and keep it in perspective?

Leader’s Note: First, we know God’s sovereign promise to establish his kingdom is a guaranteed success. Second, Jesus Christ invites us to join in his kingdom rule and participate in its expansion.

Optional Activity:

Purpose: To help us see the importance and value of Jesus’ kingdom.

Activity: Divide the group into 3–4 smaller groups and provide them with a poster board, old magazines, scissors, glue, and markers. Give each group one of the following verses: Matthew 4:17; Luke 4:43; John 3:3; Acts 1:3. Ask each group to create a poster proclaiming the value of Jesus’ kingdom using the verse they are assigned. When finished, ask each group to share their poster.
Teaching Point Two: Listen well given the easiness of turning from the truth.

In 2 Timothy 4:3, the word “sound” is related to our word for “hygienic.” The result of sound teaching is healthy followers of Christ. But to get that teaching and to be healthy Christians, we must stay grounded in sound doctrine. How can we do that—what does that look like?

[Q] What light does Hebrews 5:11–14 shed on this tendency to not be grounded in sound doctrine?


[Q] What does having “itching ears” mean, according to 2 Timothy 4:3–4?

[Q] Read Luke 8:15. What does it mean to hear with a “noble and good heart”?

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

**Action Point:** Break into pairs. Ask your partner what they most struggle with in proclaiming the gospel. Feel free to mention someone with whom you would like to share the gospel. Pray for each other concerning these things.

—Study by Brad Reardon, with JoHannah Reardon
Proclaim and Listen Well

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—Study by Brad Reardon, with JoHannah Reardon
Finish Well

Scripture: 2 Timothy 4:6–8

Based On: The sermon series “The Gospel Community,” by Brad Reardon

Christians have the wind of the world, the flesh, and the devil against them.

To finish well, we need to be caught up in God’s grace, focus on key spiritual areas, and keep our eye on the prize.
Part 1 Identify the Issue

Note to Leader: Provide each person with the Participant’s Guide, included at the end of this study.

[Q] Tell us about a Christian who you feel finished well in life. What do you think characterized their life and helped them finish well?

[Q] What would you like to be said about your life at the end?

[Q] What are you doing now to help that happen?

Optional Activity:

Purpose: To help us think about how we want our lives to be remembered.

Activity: Provide each person in the group pen and paper. Ask them to write one sentence or phrase that they would like to appear on their tombstone. As each person shares, ask them why they chose that statement.

Christians have the wind of the world, the flesh, and the devil against them. Yet they still can finish well. In the Mamertine Prison in Rome, we see the genuine article. This prison was a damp hole in the ground that the prisoner reached by a rope or ladder. There was a constant stench of no restrooms, no running water, no furniture, no cloak to stay warm. Paul's friends on the outside were experiencing persecution and the allure of false teaching, while he sat on the floor of this horrid, filthy place and wrote to the church at Ephesus and to Timothy. He had labored for 30 or so years. He had established relatively small churches, scattered here and there in major cities. There were no relatives trying to see him, few friends, no interviews with the Associated Press, no lucrative book deals. Yet we don't read of a self-absorbed man resenting his circumstances. We see a person who knew what he was about. We see a clear expectation. We see what Eugene Peterson calls “a long obedience in the same direction.”

[Q] Read 2 Timothy 4:6–8. What stands out to you in this passage?

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: Finishing well means being caught up with grace.

Read Acts 20:17–38.

[Q] Name the ways that those involved in this account were caught up with grace.
Verse 19 talks about radical humility. Why is humility such a basic and essential quality if we want to understand grace?

Verse 21 talks about telling others to repent. The gospel-oriented life is a bridge-building life. We should be building bridges in our neighborhoods, with work associates, and with family members—everywhere we go, everywhere we are. A gospel-oriented person is a bridge builder. Bridge builders discover ways to be kind and to help others know what it is to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Who do you currently most want to hear the gospel? Name some practical ways you can build a bridge to that person.

In a gospel-oriented life, we are growing and enjoying the depth of the gospel in our own lives. We are not outgrowing the gospel. We are reveling in the gospel because it means the glory of God and greater gladness in our hearts. It means fulfilling our hearts’ longing to worship in spirit and in truth. It means life now with God and immortality with Christ forever.

What strikes you about Paul’s attitude in verse 24?

Grace is acceptance without resentment, forgiveness without condemnation, and pardon without probation. This is a platform for life. It is the grace-satisfied life. It is the grace-infused life. This is the only explanation we have for the apostle Paul. How does he live and love this way? It isn’t in his own power.

Teaching Point Two: Finishing well means doing well in key spiritual areas.

Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:7, “I have fought the good fight.” This tells us there is a fight that is good, that is worth fighting.

You can attend church regularly and still not fight the good fight. There is a fight—in fact a war—going on. There is the clash of two kingdoms.

Read Ephesians 6:12. What does this tell you about this war, and how does that change our part in it?

Read 2 Corinthians 4:4. Why do we often fail to recognize this war, and what can we do about that?

Paul also said, “I have finished the race” (4:7). The Christian life is a fight, but it’s a fight that is won by being at peace with God and continuing in the race.

Paul said, “I have kept the faith” (4:7). Read 2 Timothy 1:14. What does this tell you about what Paul meant by keeping the faith?
Teaching Point Three: Finishing well means keeping your eye on the prize.

Read 2 Timothy 4:8 again.

[Q] Does the thought of meeting God in judgment bring you dread or joy? Explain.

[Q] What is the prize we are to keep our eye on?

**Leader’s Note:** Our prize is meeting the Lord. This relationship which is born out of sheer, utter, complete grace is culminated by being face to face with Jesus. Even as we call him righteous and just, there is a sense of grace and confidence. Jesus already did the dying for you, so your death means immortality and reward. His death means his righteousness is given to you, so God declares you forgiven and as righteous as Christ. A future day brings perspective to the present.

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Part 3 Apply Your Findings

Christ died for you that you might live. You draw close to God and him to you. You live well and finish well. This gift of life is completed when you meet him. We live in view of that day. A day when there is no more loss, no more hardship, no more suffering, no more enemy to restrain us, no more depression, no more sickness, no more prisons, no more heresies. And we stand before the Lord. If this does not move one to live life with Christ and for his glory, something is wrong. Paul is condemned by man, imprisoned, and about to be killed. Still, he does not focus on the injustice as much as he sees his reward with Christ. This is perspective for we who hope to finish well.

**Action Point:** Make a list of what you would like to be true of you at the end of your life. Share one thing from that list for the group to pray for.

—Study by Brad Reardon, with JoHannah Reardon
Finish Well

Participant’s Guide

Scripture: 2 Timothy 4:6–8
Based On: The sermon series “The Gospel Community,” by Brad Reardon

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To finish well, we need to be caught up in God’s grace, focus on key spiritual areas, and keep our eye on the prize.
Part 1 Identify the Issue

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Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: Proclaim the gospel well.

Teaching Point Two: Finishing well means doing well in key spiritual areas.

Teaching Point Three: Finishing well means keeping your eye on the prize.

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Christ died for you that you might live. You draw close to God and him to you. You live well and finish well. This gift of life is completed when you meet him. We live in view of that day. A day when there is no more loss, no more hardship, no more suffering, no more enemy to restrain us, no more depression, no more sickness, no more prisons, no more heresies. And we stand before the Lord. If this does not move one to live life with Christ and for his glory, something is wrong. Paul is condemned by man, imprisoned, and about to be killed. Still, he does not focus on the injustice as much as he sees his reward with Christ. This is perspective for we who hope to finish well.

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Faithful in Life’s Winter

We want to face the end of our lives as ones who bring great glory to God and know great gladness of heart.

With the Lord’s strength, the help of others who love him, and our own commitment to continue to learn, we can face life’s winter faithfully.

Scripture: 2 Timothy 4:9–22

Based On: The sermon series “The Gospel Community,” by Brad Reardon
Part 1 Identify the Issue

Note to Leader: Provide each person with the Participant’s Guide, included at the end of this study.

[Q] When you think about the end of your life, are you frightened? Explain.
[Q] Is there anything that excites you about the end of your life? If so, what?

“Life’s winter” is a metaphor for our faithfulness to the end. In the last study, we talked about finishing well. This theme extends through all of chapter 4. We see how important the whole body is to being a gospel community. Paul names people—some positively, others negatively—as he writes his final words of Scripture. We need to pay close attention, not in a melodramatic way, but in sober longing to know how to have this God-centered experience in life.

Paul says, “Do your best to get here before winter.” He faces finishing well; he faces the challenge of faithfulness to the end. We want to see what it is to face life’s winter as ones who bring great glory to God and know great gladness of heart.

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: The Lord is personally with us in life’s winter.

Jesus promises in Hebrews 13:5, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” He stands with us. In Matthew 28:20, Jesus told the apostles, “I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

This is a case where a preposition can be important to us. He is “by” me. He is very close. Jesus says he goes to prepare a place for us so we can be “with” him (John 14). Again, these little prepositions are being used by God concerning his relationship with you. He will be “by” you or “with” you and wants you with him. Jesus is personally with us.

Read 2 Timothy 4:9–18.

[Q] What stands out to you in this passage?
[Q] What are Paul’s weaknesses in this passage?
[Q] What are his strengths in this passage?
The question is not whether or not Paul will die—he just hasn’t been put to death yet. He fully expects to die. Our lives are in God’s hands, and no one who is evil or does evil can take away our assurance that Christ rules in us and will bring us safely home. This is a wonderful statement from one who fully expects to be executed.

**[Q]** Read how this works in Hebrews 11:32–38. What perspective does this passage give you?

**Leader’s Note:** In the middle of verse 35, we go from those who escape to those who go through the suffering. In both cases Christ has not deserted them. He will always be with us, and will ultimately bring us into his presence. Facing life’s winter, we know God is with us. The winter of faithfulness could be harsh, but it is nonetheless a time of fellowship with God.

**[Q]** 2 Timothy 4:18 also says, “To him be glory for ever and ever.” Why did Paul say that—what perspective did it give him in his circumstances?

**Leader’s Note:** Facing life’s winter with Christ means centering all on God’s glory. This is the essence of life with God. One of the things we see in Paul, Timothy, and the church is that we have a different center when we live with Christ. We find meaning when we see that the greatest splendor is God himself. Preparing for life’s winter means living all of life centered on what my life was created for—God. This makes no sense until we realize that the greatest splendors are outside of ourselves.

**Teaching Point Two: We face life’s winter as a committed gospel community.**

**[Q]** According to 2 Timothy 4:10, what happened to Demas? (Read Philemon 24 and Colossians 4:14 to see what part Demas played originally.)

**[Q]** What does it mean that Demas “loved this world”?

**Leader’s Note:** It may have simply meant that he valued personal safety over his commitment to Christ. It usually isn’t a dramatic choice. Nonetheless, it is equally disqualifying. Loving the world is deadly to commitment.

Malcolm Muggeridge wrote, “We dream of power and security and develop ways of annihilating ourselves, we dream of money and accumulate worthless mounds of paper, we dream of carnal indulgence and find ourselves caught up with trending erotomania.”

**[Q]** How are you most tempted to love the present world?

**[Q]** What happened to Alexander (v. 14)?
**Leader’s Note:** The phrase “the Lord will repay him for what he has done” is not a curse. It’s simply a firm statement that to oppose the gospel is to oppose God. And you certainly do not want to do that! Stating the facts about Alexander is part of the way Paul guards the gospel. To guard the treasure, the “good deposit,” is to watch out for false teachers and others who would do harm.

**[Q]** What does Paul say about Mark (v. 11)?

**[Q]** What do you know about Paul and Mark’s relationship?

This is of incredible importance! Mark accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. It was a tough one, in which they pioneered the establishment of new churches. They faced hardship, turmoil, and anger. The Jews were hostile and the Gentiles mean and angry. Mark left. Later Barnabas wanted to bring Mark again, and Paul said “no way.” So Barnabas split off and worked with Mark—and it bore fruit. Paul now knows Mark personally and loves him. What a statement! “He is helpful to me in my ministry.” The one I could not see as faithful really is. Mark stumbled, but somewhere he regained his footing and was now a man of the gospel. Paul had changed and Mark had changed, and they reconciled. He is useful to Paul for ministry—the very thing he had failed at before. In the end, Paul wants Mark and trusts him.

**[Q]** What perspective does this give us on our own relationships?

Priscilla and Aquila are mentioned a number of times in the New Testament. We first meet them in Corinth with Paul, and they work in the same trade (Acts 18). When Paul moves to Ephesus, they go with him (Acts 18:18). Later, when Paul writes the Book of Romans, Priscilla and Aquila are living in Rome. We find them again in Corinth (they may have left Rome because of persecution), and they have a church in their home (1 Cor. 16:19). A gospel community is filled with such people.

We see Onesiphorus in 2 Timothy 1:16. When he came to Rome, he found Paul in prison and refreshed him. Paul says, “greet the family for me.” These are dear people. They are not famous to the world, and not really even to the church. But they are the soldiers, the athletes, the faithful—the kind of persistent, kind, loving, faithful disciples we all want to be. Onesiphorus sees Paul in need and helps him.

**[Q]** Read 2 Timothy 2:3–6. How are the people Paul is now mentioning reflected in this passage?

**[Q]** What’s the difference between an admirer of Jesus and a follower of Jesus?
Teaching Point Three: We continue to study and learn in life’s winter.

Paul asked Timothy to come before winter, and to bring books and parchments so Paul could keep studying. Charles Spurgeon preached a sermon on Paul asking for his parchments and books. He said of Paul, “He is inspired, and yet he wants books! He has been preaching at least for thirty years, and yet he wants books! He had seen the Lord, and yet he wants books! He had had a wider experience than most men, and yet he wants books! He had written the major part of the New Testament, and yet he wants books!” (Spurgeon’s Expository Encyclopedia).

We don’t know what these books contained, although some think that the parchments, which were more valuable than ordinary papyrus scrolls, were probably his copies of the Old Testament. But his words are amazing, in that he has just acknowledged that he is facing imminent execution, yet he wants Timothy to bring his books!

[Q] Read 2 Timothy 2:15. What do you think this verse means?

Optional Activity:

**Purpose:** To think about the power of books.

**Activity:** As a group, brainstorm the best books you’ve ever read. As you suggest a book, give a brief explanation of why it was so powerful for you. What did it teach you about God?

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

The gospel has cost Paul everything, yet he remains confident.

2 Timothy 1:14 says, “Guard the gospel.”

2 Timothy 2:3 says, “Suffer for the gospel.”

2 Timothy 3:14 says, “Continue in the gospel.”

2 Timothy 4:2 says, “Proclaim the gospel.”

By grace we participate in what God is doing. We come to Christ and his Cross and believingly repent, enter into new life under Christ’s sovereign reign, and then the fun really begins. We have the privilege of seeing his kingdom reign in our own lives, and we get to participate in building bridges so others can see Jesus’ kingdom too.
This really is the grace-infused life. That makes us a gospel-oriented people.

Facing imminent death, present suffering, and problems outside and inside the church, Paul still had hope. He was confident that death meant reward (4:8). They might remove his head in death, but Christ will crown it in victory.

That is how you face life’s winter!

**Action Point:** Discuss what the biggest takeaway has been for you from this study on 2 Timothy. What do you most want to apply?

—Study by Brad Reardon, with JoHannah Reardon
Faithful in Life’s Winter

With the Lord’s strength, the help of others who love him, and our own commitment to continue to learn, we can face life’s winter faithfully.

Scripture: 2 Timothy 4:9–22
Based On: The sermon series “The Gospel Community,” by Brad Reardon
Part 1 Identify the Issue

“Life’s winter” is a metaphor for our faithfulness to the end. In the last study, we talked about finishing well. This theme extends through all of chapter 4. We see how important the whole body is to being a gospel community. Paul names people—some positively, others negatively—as he writes his final words of Scripture. We need to pay close attention, not in a melodramatic way, but in sober longing to know how to have this God-centered experience in life.

Paul says, “Do your best to get here before winter.” He faces finishing well; he faces the challenge of faithfulness to the end. We want to see what it is to face life’s winter as ones who bring great glory to God and know great gladness of heart.

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: The Lord is personally with us in life’s winter.

Teaching Point Two: We face life’s winter as a committed gospel community.

Teaching Point Three: We continue to study and learn in life’s winter.

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

The gospel has cost Paul everything, yet he remains confident.

2 Timothy 1:14 says, “Guard the gospel.”

2 Timothy 2:3 says, “Suffer for the gospel.”

2 Timothy 3:14 says, “Continue in the gospel.”

2 Timothy 4:2 says, “Proclaim the gospel.”
By grace we participate in what God is doing. We come to Christ and his Cross and believingly repent, enter into new life under Christ’s sovereign reign, and then the fun really begins. We have the privilege of seeing his kingdom reign in our own lives, and we get to participate in building bridges so others can see Jesus’ kingdom too.

This really is the grace-infused life. That makes us a gospel-oriented people.

Facing imminent death, present suffering, and problems outside and inside the church, Paul still had hope. He was confident that death meant reward (4:8). They might remove his head in death, but Christ will crown it in victory.

That is how you face life’s winter!

**Action Point:** Discuss what the biggest takeaway has been for you from this study on 2 Timothy. What do you most want to apply?

—Study by Brad Reardon, with JoHannah Reardon
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