



# GUARDING THE GOSPEL

AN EIGHT WEEK  
GRACE CHURCH  
SERIES

# How to use this book

Learning the meaning of a Bible passage is not enough to grow and mature us in faith. Christian maturity is much more than acquiring biblical information. We need to use this knowledge to compel us to be more and more like Christ in our love and actions towards God and others. This is a hard task, but a rewarding one. Therefore, we need the help of other Christians to help us in our spiritual journey. We need someone more mature to teach us, someone trustworthy to correct us, someone gentle to encourage us and someone reliable to keep us accountable. That is why we have designed this study to be used, either through your one-on-one discipleship, or as a small group study. This book is a tool to help you journey in your walk with someone else as you study and apply the Word of God in your life.

We hope that this study will stimulate a lot of ‘interaction’ with the Bible, with your current thoughts and attitudes, and the practicality of living it out in your own life.

The study contains four main components:

- The first section helps ‘break the ice’ and introduces the lesson through the sharing of personal thoughts on particular topics and experiences.
- The longest section is a thorough study of the passage. The aim is to examine the meaning of the passage for its original audience by examining the author’s choice of words, sentence construction and argument throughout the whole letter.
- The “implication” section is a very important part of the study, so make sure there is ample time to go through it, as this helps in learning the relevance of the lesson by discussing how the passage applies to our own time and situation.
- And lastly, we believe that our hard work of learning will not achieve the change that we need unless God works behind the scenes. So make sure that there is time to pray for one another.

# Introduction

2 Timothy is obviously a letter addressed to Timothy, Paul's trusted fellow-worker in the Gospel (Romans 16:21), and whom Paul identifies as his spiritual son (2 Tim. 1:2). Timothy had been Paul's faithful missionary companion. He had travelled with him throughout most of the Apostle Paul's second and third missionary journeys and had been sent as a trusted apostolic delegate to the church in Thessalonika (1 Thess. 3). At some point Paul decided to leave Timothy behind in Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3-4) and commissioned him to oversee the newly planted church (1 Tim. 1:3) before being re-arrested and imprisoned.

We can safely assume that the Apostle Paul wrote the letter while suffering as a prisoner in chains somewhere in Rome (2 Tim. 1:8) from where he awaited his inevitable martyrdom (2 Tim. 4:6). Paul had earlier written him another letter (1 Timothy) regarding the nature and practice of the church, addressing matters such as ministerial offices, widows and public worship. But in 2 Timothy, Paul focuses on the personal ministry of Timothy himself more than bringing order to the church. Paul knew that his own apostolic labors were over. "I have finished the race" (2 Tim. 4:7), he wrote. So now he must prepare Timothy as the next faithful steward of the Gospel, because Paul knew the danger that lurked ahead.

It was during this time, when the Roman Empire, led by Emperor Nero, was actively trying to destroy the Christian faith. The culture was also saturated with pagan worship and practices. But worst of all was the number of Gospel heretics and apostates. So Paul reminded Timothy that the precious Gospel was now committed to him, and that it was Timothy's turn to assume responsibility for it, to preach and teach it, to defend it against attack and against distortion, and to ensure its accurate transmission to the generations to come. So Paul sent Timothy the solemn charge to guard the Gospel that he had received (2 Tim. 1:14), at whatever cost, and to hand it on to faithful men who, in their turn, would be able to teach others also (2 Tim. 2:2).

The church of our day still needs to heed the message of this second letter of Paul to Timothy because the adversaries of the Gospel are still as strong as they were during Paul's time; whether it is a government imposing laws against Christian teachings, the culture's degrading morality, or the influence of individuals or churches altering or compromising the message of the Gospel. A generation of 'Timothys' is needed, one which will guard the sacred deposit of the Gospel; a generation determined to proclaim it and prepared to suffer for it; and one which will pass it on pure and uncorrupted to the next generation, which in due course will rise up to follow them.

### **Book's overall message and tone**

2 Timothy is not a very long letter. It would be good to have a quick read of the entire letter in order to get a general understanding of its flow and main message. It will also be helpful to personally go through the questions below prior to starting the group study and discussion.

### **Read 2 Timothy**

1. What could you say about Paul's situation and mood while writing this letter?
2. Why do you think Paul wrote the letter?
3. What are some repeated words and phrases you find in 2 Timothy?
4. Do any verses stand out to you? Is there a particular verse that you think captures the overall message of the letter?
5. If you were Timothy, how would you feel receiving this letter?

## Prayer

- Give thanks for the Apostle Paul and for Christians like him, whose work and witness have ensured the proper transmission of the Gospel.
- Ask God to help you to “guard the good deposit” of the Gospel in everything you do.
- Ask God to help you and your group to understand His Word as you read and study 2 Timothy.

# Study #1

## **Guarding the Precious Gospel**

### *2 Timothy 1:1-18*

In this first study Paul explains to Timothy what is so good about the Gospel and what he should do about it.

#### **Discuss**

1. If your house were on fire, what item would you go back for and risk your life for in order to save it? Why?
  
2. Aside from a house and a vehicle, what would be the most expensive item that you have purchased in your life?

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We would protect our family; we would safeguard our home; we would insure our car; and we would install anti-virus on our computer. When we value something dearly we would go to extreme lengths and great risk in order to protect it. In this first study we will discover that Paul's main reason for writing to Timothy was to charge him to ensure that the precious gospel was well guarded.

#### **Read 2 Timothy 1:1-18**

#### **What is so good about the gospel? 2 Timothy 1:1-10**

- 1) What are some words and phrases in vv.1-5 that describes Paul's relationship and affection towards Timothy?

- 2) These letters are all about discipleship and mentoring ... Paul used a pattern of words about remembrance in vv3-7 which give insight into how Paul was discipling and mentoring Timothy.

What four things does Paul remember?

What is Paul modelling to Timothy in his life?

- 3) One thing Paul remembered was the faith Timothy's mother and grandmother built into him. We can add Eunice and Lois to a long list of faithful family members who prayed for children and taught them e.g. St Augustine's mother Monica, John & Charles Wesley's mother Susanna. Paul saw a great value in the way a family raised their children in faith.

Why do so many families have trouble building faith into their children?

- 4) Do you think we can apply 2 Tim. 2:2 to families as well as to discipling others?

- 5) How can grandparents play a part in the discipling/mentoring of their grandchildren?

- 6) What things could grandparents model in their lives for their grandchildren to take up?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 7) Describe in simple words what Christ did for us in v.10?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 8) Read 1 Timothy 1:11-14. Describe Paul's understanding of himself and his attitude towards the Gospel.

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We will hear no better news than what the Gospel gives. It's the message of salvation from death in order to live a life of holiness. We are saved from death in the sense that we no longer face eternal separation and punishment because of our rejection of God. Because of what Jesus did we can put death behind us and look forward to a life of holiness and a satisfying relationship with God, as well as eternal life. But our life of holiness starts not when we go to heaven but as soon as we believe. Through faith we are no longer enslaved by our sin and guilt and we are free to live the way God has intended.

The message of the Gospel, therefore, is a very precious thing. Hearing and responding to this news about Jesus is a matter of eternal consequences. But more often it is this very Gospel that we ignore or take for granted in life. God reminds us of the incredible beauty and value of the Gospel, which should compel us to guard it and protect it at all cost.



## Living for the Gospel

1. What does the Spirit of God do and what does He give us (v.7)?
2. What two things is Paul encouraging Timothy not to be ashamed of (v.8)?
3. Why would Timothy be ashamed of the Gospel or of Paul?
4. Note all the things that Paul was appointed (2 Tim. 1:11). How do the roles contribute to the spread of the gospel?
5. What is Paul's basis for not being ashamed (v.12)? How is this helpful to us?
6. What is Jesus guarding for Paul?

7. What are the things Timothy has to guard?
  
8. What things will you be entrusting to Jesus to guard for you?
  
9. What two commands did Paul give to Timothy in vv.13-14?
  
10. If we are to keep to the pattern of Paul's teaching, if we are to guard the good deposit entrusted to us, what does this mean we have to do?
  
11. Paul gives both negative and positive examples of people guarding their own 'good deposit'. What did they do to deserve their mention as an example? *Notice the negative examples are not heretics as they can be in other letters.*

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The importance of the Gospel is clearly shown in what Paul endured for it and what he expected Timothy to also endure for it. Paul's life was clearly lived for the Gospel alone, and he wanted Timothy to follow in his way. The call of suffering for Jesus, of being unashamed of the Gospel in the face of

opposition, and of being a self-disciplined herald and guardian of the Gospel also applies to us today. Our first duty is to proclaim the Gospel, which undoubtedly will lead to persecution as well as the temptation to be ashamed of it. But we must resist the temptation, for we are also called to guard the Gospel, keeping it pure at all cost.

## Implications

1. Often we forget or take for granted the preciousness of the Gospel in our own lives. What are some practical ways we can help each other to remember the value of the Gospel message?
2. If people don't hear and believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ then they will be facing eternal punishment and separation from God. Why is it that we often don't feel the urgency, importance and boldness of sharing the Gospel? What can we do as a group and as a church to have a stronger sense of our calling to proclaim and defend the Gospel?
3. Paul commanded Timothy to 'guard the good deposit' that was entrusted to him – which is the Gospel. Why would the Gospel need 'guarding' today and how can we ensure that we do?

4. Paul exhorts Timothy not to be ashamed but to join with him in suffering for the Gospel. What would make us ashamed of the Gospel today? What are some ways that we might be involved in suffering for the Gospel?

## Prayer

- Give thanks for all that God has done for you through Jesus Christ.
- Thank God for the people who have helped shape your faith in the Lord Jesus.
- Ask God to help you to live a life worthy of His calling, unashamed of His Gospel. Ask Him to help you to be willing to share in Christ's sufferings and willing to guard the good deposit of the Gospel.

# Study #2

## **Persevering in the Gospel**

### *2 Timothy 2:1-13*

In this second chapter Paul encourages Timothy to persevere in his calling to proclaim and preserve the Gospel, and assures him God is faithful to His promise.

#### **Discuss**

1. Is there anything in life that you are proud of finishing and accomplishing (i.e. running a marathon; gaining a black belt; playing in a music recital; earning a university degree etc.)? Share the journey of how much you had to train and sacrifice to reach your goal. Was there ever a time you wanted to quit?

As they often say, it takes years of dedication, training and sacrifice, blood, sweat and tears to become a champion. Olympic Gold medallists do not train for just a few weeks before the event, but have dedicated their whole of their lives to reach their goal. The difference between winning and losing can sometimes amount to nothing more than the athlete's perseverance. Athletes who persevere when trials and sufferings arise will surpass their own limitations and stand out from the crowd. Christians are also called to persevere in a life that will be full of trials and suffering along the way to glory.

#### **Read 2 Timothy 2:1-13**

#### **Enduring and Passing-on the Gospel**

- 1) What two main things does Paul ask Timothy to do in vv. 1-2?

- 2) What do you think it means to be “strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (v.1)?
  
- 3) Why would Timothy need this?
  
- 4) What does Paul want to “entrust”? What does it mean to “entrust”? And who does he want Timothy to “entrust” it to?
  
- 5) Looking over your answers above, try to write out vv.1-2 in your own words.

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As chapter two opens, Paul points out to Timothy two important ways to “guard the good deposit.” One is to endure the hardship that goes with proclaiming the Gospel and to be loyal to it. The second way is by passing it on to other reliable people who will in turn teach others (v.2). Paul will elaborate more on these points throughout his letter but for now he wants Timothy to emulate his own faithfulness, even to the point of suffering for Christ.

## Suffering for the Gospel

- 1) In what sense does Paul want Timothy to be like a soldier (vv.3-4)?
- 2) In what sense does Paul want Timothy to be like an athlete (vv.5)?
- 3) In what sense does Paul want Timothy to be like a farmer (v.6)?
- 4) Why do you think Paul mentions Jesus and His resurrection in v.8?  
What is significant about Jesus being “the offspring of David”?
- 5) What two things does Paul compare in v.9?
- 6) How does this bring assurance to Paul?
- 7) Summarise in your own words Paul’s encouragement and warning in vv.11-12.
- 8) How does v.13 support vv.11-12?

Staying strong in the Gospel in the midst of a fallen world is not easy. It requires the loyalty of a soldier, the discipline of an athlete and the diligence of a farmer. These are characteristics that Paul encouraged Timothy to have.

But Paul went further and warned Timothy about what would happen if people did not endure with Christ. God has promised to bless and reward those who persevere in faith, but also promised to punish and reject those who deny Him. And He does this because He is faithful to Himself. He will do what He warned us He will do.

Therefore it leaves us with the same question: will we endure or will we reject Him? Have we got the commitment to keep on going with Jesus, especially if it takes us to a harder path in life? Do we have what it takes to guard the Gospel?

## Implications

- 1) The whole passage has five imperatives or commands to Timothy that summarise his responsibilities. Identify them and consider if and how they have been built into your own life. (vv. 1, 2, 3, 7, 8)
- 2) What are some reasons that you can think of that might cause people to fail to endure with Jesus Christ?
- 3) Brainstorm some resources that were at Timothy's disposal to help him stay strong in grace and to endure with Jesus.



- 4) What resources do we have at our disposal today?
  
- 5) Have you ever faced trials and suffering because of your faithfulness to Jesus Christ? If so, how? And how did you overcome it?
  
- 6) What are some specific actions that Christians can undertake to ensure that they endure?
  
- 7) What are some specific actions Grace Church can undertake (i.e. that we can do together) to help its members to endure?

## Prayer

- Praise God for being who He is – faithful, just and unable to deny Himself.
- Ask Him to help you to endure and be faithful as you remember Christ: ask Him to give you the commitment, discipline and single-mindedness to serve Him.
- Spend some time praying for your brothers and sisters in Christ who are currently suffering for the Gospel, even to the point of being “chained like a criminal” (2 Tim. 2:9). Ask God to give them perseverance and endurance as they hope in Him.

# Study #3

## **Man of the Gospel**

### *2 Timothy 2:14-26*

In the previous study we looked at how Paul encouraged Timothy to persevere in the work of the Gospel. In this study we will look at what kind a person you must be in order to guard the Gospel.

#### **Discuss**

1. Was there ever a time when you were deceived or cheated by someone (e.g. a builder who cut corners; a mechanic who use second hand parts; 'professionals' who didn't really have credentials; a person selling an imitation item, etc.)? Share your experience with the group.

One of the biggest obstacles to the spread of the Gospel is Christians who do not live it out in their lives. Our character and integrity speak loudly about what we believe in. So Paul reminded Timothy of the person he must be, and also the kind of person he must look for and entrust the gospel to.

#### **Read 2 Timothy 2:14-26**

#### **Gospel Workmen**

- 1) What did Timothy need to warn people about? What are some examples of these that you can think of?
  
- 2) What sort of workman did Paul want Timothy (and those he passed the Gospel on to) to be?

- 3) What are the results of quarrelling about words? Similarly what is the product of “godless chatter” (v.16)? What are some examples that you can think of?
  
- 4) Hymenaeus and Philetus were both examples of poor workmen (v.17). What was their erroneous teaching and how could this teaching be a problem?
  
- 5) How would you respond to the error that Hymenaeus and Philetus were making?

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Paul had already told Timothy to entrust the Gospel to “faithful men who will be able to teach others” (2 Tim. 2:2). Such men need to be men of integrity and skilled in how they handle the Gospel, for if someone handles God’s Word poorly, it can do immense damage to the church.

There were false teachers at the time Paul wrote to Timothy. Because they didn’t know the Scriptures well enough, they could not discern what was true and what was false; what was important and what was trivial; and so leading people into ungodliness. Worse still, some people like, Hymenaeus and Philetus, had drifted from the truth altogether and were spreading their false teachings. So Paul warned Timothy to avoid entrusting the Gospel to people like them and to avoid becoming like them.

## Gospel Vessels

- 1) What two sorts of “articles” (or vessels) does Paul mention that you can find in a house? What are they used for?
- 2) What kind of “article” does God want you to be (v.21)? Why?
- 3) What specific commands does Paul give to Timothy in order to be a useful vessel for Jesus in vv. 22-23?
- 4) Paul said to pursue “righteousness, faith, love, and peace” (v.22). Try to think of your own words and phrases for each of these words.
- 5) What characteristics must the “Lord’s servant” have (v.24)?
- 6) How should the “Lord’s servant” respond to their opponents (vv.25-26) and why?
- 7) Look back at your answers and summarise in a short sentence what a Gospel worker must be like.

In the closing verses of this chapter, Paul explained to Timothy that an effective teacher of God's Word must be a gentle servant in times of disagreement. Rather than argue in a heated or hostile way, God's servant should explain the truth in love. God's servant doesn't simply wish to win an argument simply in order to protect his or her ego; instead, he or she should strive to be as clear as possible so that God might bring conviction through His Word.

The criteria for a Gospel worker seems to be a challenging list, if not impossible to some. In order to be reliable and effective teachers who pass on the Gospel, they must be skilled workmen at handling the Word; must be godly examples of the Word; and they must be humble and gentle instructors in the Word. These are high standards indeed. But what could be more worthy of such standards than the precious Gospel of Jesus Christ.

## Implications

- 1) Pointless arguments and quarrelling have been mentioned several times in these verses. What modern-day examples can you think of? What are some practical steps that we can take so that we are not drawn into such disputes? Are there ever times when it is necessary to quarrel?
- 2) What is actually involved in rightly handling the truth (v.15)? Suggest ways that we can equip ourselves for this task.
- 3) What are the "evil desires of youth" today? Are they different to the passions of middle age or even old age?



# Study #4

## **Enemies and Friends of the Gospel**

### *2 Timothy 3*

In this chapter Paul warned Timothy about the negative character qualities of the false teachers and he encouraged Timothy to have confidence in Scripture and those who live by it.

#### **Discuss**

1. Have you ever made wrong or bad decisions in life because of the influence of a person or crowd? How did you come to realise the mistake you had made? Were there other people who helped you see the right path? Share your experience with the group.

Most of us go through stages in our lives where we are vulnerable to the bad influences of the wrong crowd. Even Christians are not immune to being controlled by false teachers. Peer pressure, the attraction of sin, and gullibility makes us susceptible to taking the wrong path. This is exactly what some people are experiencing in 2 Timothy 3.

#### **Read 2 Timothy 3**

#### **Gospel Hindrances: 2 Tim. 3:1-9**

- 1) Look at the list of characteristics that Paul outlined in vv.1-5. Discuss how some of these behaviours are reflected in our society and culture today.

- 2) How did Paul advise Timothy to relate to such people (v.5)?
  
- 3) Paul made it clear in 1 Cor. 5:9-11 that believers were not to dissociate themselves from immoral people in the world, but from those in the church (such as the false teachers in the church in Ephesus). How do we reconcile grace with Paul's instructions to having nothing to do with Christians who blatantly sin?
  
- 4) The list of sins reads like a description of a rebellious, disrespectful, worldly person of today. How does that thought inform us regarding the value of parental and grandparents' discipleship? And the value of discipleship for all believers?
  
- 5) What do you think it means to have "a form of godliness but denying its power" (v.5)?
  
- 6) Paul warned that these people manipulated and took control of some women. What reason did Paul give as to why these women were so vulnerable (v.6)?



- 7) Jannes and Jambres (v.8) are thought to be two of the Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses. How are the false teachers similar to these men?
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Paul's lists of evil behaviours are very much evident in our modern society. Rather than loving God, their Creator, people choose to be 'lovers of themselves' and 'lovers of worldly things'. Because of this, people become more selfish, hateful and ungodly. But the worst part is that these people 'worm their way' into churches and deceive 'weak' Christians. For these false teachers, life is all about keeping themselves happy, comfortable, entertained, fulfilled, secured and adored. Such people are a scandalous hindrance to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They combine the Gospel with their disgraceful behaviours and therefore hinder others from knowing the truth. Paul wanted Timothy to be very different – which was exactly what Paul went on to say next.

### **Gospel Helps: 2 Tim. 3:10-17**

- 1) What sort of life had Paul experienced (vv.10-12)? And why could Timothy trust Paul's spiritual influence?
- 2) What did Paul guarantee those who lived a godly life (v.12)?
- 3) If a Christian isn't experiencing persecution of sorts in their life, does this mean that they aren't serious enough about being godly?

- 4) What sort of teaching methods did Paul want Timothy to continue using (vv.14-15)?
  
- 5) Verses 16-17 are the strongest statement in the Bible about itself. The word 'Scripture' includes the New Testament as 2 Peter 3:16 cites the writings of Paul among the 'Scriptures'. What does it mean that Scripture is "God breathed" (v.16)? (The word 'God-breathed' (*theopneustos*) is translated 'inspired' in the NIV, which is less awkward but also less accurate.)
  
- 6) We usually read this passage as being all about Scripture's inspiration but the logical direction of the text is its usefulness. (But inspiration is foundational to its usefulness.) Note the different ways Paul said Scripture was useful?
  
- 7) What difference (if any) is there between teaching, rebuking, correcting and training?

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Having described the evil ways of the last days, Paul then turned to the godliness he expected from Timothy. Timothy was to model himself on Paul. Whereas the false teachers were characterized by selfishness, Paul was characterized by selflessness.

The way of the world is to be lovers of self, which means chasing after pleasure. But Timothy was to be a lover of God, and that meant putting up with persecution. However, Timothy was not just to be different in character, but also in method. As we've seen, the false teachers were secretive manipulators. By contrast, Timothy's method was to be the simple, straightforward teaching of Scripture, because Scripture is all that is needed to equip us for every good work (vv.16-17).

Here, then, are important lessons to help Timothy guard the Gospel: he was to be different from the world; he was to love God more than himself; and he was to use God's Word clearly and faithfully. If we also wish to guard the Gospel, these are powerful lessons for us as well.

## Implications

1. Look back at Paul's list of destructive behaviours in vv.1-5. Do you find yourself showing these characteristics at times? What could you do to avoid it?
2. Why are we vulnerable to spiritual manipulation when we are "loaded with sins" and "swayed by evil desires"? How can we protect ourselves against false teachers?
3. What would enhance your own trustworthiness among those you influence (children, students, co-workers, friends, etc.)?

4. If bad things happen to a believer you know ... do you tend to wonder what they've done wrong? Have you ever considered they might be living a godly life?
  
5. Upon reflection, what might the peace and security in your life tell you about where you are at in your faith? (N.B. good things do happen to godly people too!)
  
6. If Scripture is "God-breathed" (v.16), what should our attitude towards it be?

## Prayer

- Thank God for the Scriptures that He "breathed" for us to read and learn from.
- Ask God to help you hold fast to the truth of Scripture. Ask Him to equip you for every good work and strengthen you to endure persecution.
- Ask Him for the wisdom to identify false teachers and refute their teaching.

# Study #5

## **Preach the Gospel**

### *2 Timothy 4*

In this last chapter Paul's tone became much more serious as it is clear he was thinking about the near end of his life. He charged Timothy to preach the word, because Paul wanted Timothy to finish well in his ministry, just as Paul had.

#### **Discuss**

1. If those closest to you were to give an account at your funeral about the kind of person that you were, your passions and goals in life, and the impact that you had made upon them or upon society, what do you think they would say? What would you like them to say?

A lot of us are probably spending a lot of our time, resources and passion on things that have no great significance or value. It is so easy to be distracted with earthly obsessions that have no eternal value, or goals that only serve our own purpose. The danger is that by the time we realise this it could be too late and we would be left with nothing but regret. Chapter 4 is Paul's final reminder to Timothy, and to us, that the Christian life and values should be of the highest priority. We need to see the world through the lens of Scripture in order to help us pursue what really matters most for God and for others.

#### **Read 2 Timothy 4**

#### **Preach the Word: 2 Tim.4:1-8**

- 1) What charge was Timothy to keep, and how did Paul want him to keep it?

- 2) Who and what would Timothy be evaluated by and against?
  
- 3) What does it mean to be prepared “in season and out of season (v.2)?
  
- 4) What reason did Paul give to keep this charge?
  
- 5) What sort of things do you think “itching ears” like to hear?
  
- 6) It is human nature to hear only what we want to hear and to close our ears to anything that counters our distorted ideas of truth and pleasure. How might we overcome this tendency in our own lives? (Based on what you’ve learnt in 2 Timothy).
  
- 7) Are you aware of any churches or ‘so called’ Christian teachers who have moved away from sound doctrine?

- 8) In what ways did Paul want Timothy to be different from other teachers?
  
- 9) Write verses 6-8 in your own words.

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Paul summarised his instruction in three simple words: Preach the Word. It seems a very simple and easy command but at the time Paul wrote this letter a lot of people, who were meant to be doing this, were not. In our last study we saw how some leaders used their influence to manipulate others, and in these verses we find self-centred students looking for teachers who would say what they wanted to hear. So Paul cautioned Timothy not to be like one of these teachers but to simply preach and teach the Word of God. For it is the Bible that thoroughly equips people for good work and trains them in righteousness. Paul, for his part, had done exactly what he expected to do and was now awaiting his reward along with everyone else who endures in the race.

### **Final Obstacle: 2 Tim.4:9-22**

- 1) What other hardship did Paul mention in these last verses (vv.9-18)?
  
- 2) How did Paul feel about these 'deserters' (v.16)?

- 3) In the midst of these hardships, what encouragement did Paul mention?
  
- 4) How did Paul feel about God during these hard times (vv.17-18)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 5) What do you think Paul meant when he wrote “the Lord will rescue me from every evil deed” (v.18)?

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As we finish these studies on 2 Timothy, we are left with an inspiring picture of a man who understood the importance of the Gospel until the verge of his death. Paul was not running the race anymore; he had finished it (4:7). And since becoming a Christian, Paul’s consuming passion was for Christ’s name to be known and honoured by the spread of the Gospel. His main purpose and ambition in life was to promote the glory of the Gospel of Christ Jesus. Throughout his ministry he endeavoured to proclaim it and to protect it. And here we see him giving his final charge to “preach the Gospel” and to make sure that others endure until the very end where the “crown of righteousness” will be awarded by Christ Jesus himself to those who have finished the race and kept the faith.



## Implications

1. List some examples of when preaching the Word is “out of season” (v.2).
2. Why do you think people “will not put up with sound doctrine” but instead prefer “to suit their own desires” and hear “what their itching ears want to hear”?
3. How can we equip ourselves for the task of sharing the Word with people?
4. What do you need to do to ensure that you keep the faith and finish the race?

5. Behind all these encouragements is the figure of the great apostle, ready to entrust the great work he was doing to a younger man. This must have required a great deal of trust on his behalf. We can ask ourselves similar questions ... if you're a teacher, can you turn over that work to a younger generation, and trust them with it? Or do you grumble and complain about them?
  
6. If you're an older believer, you face a similar issue as you trust the future of Grace Church to our younger generations ... how do you feel about that?
  
7. But this goes both ways as Timothy sat with respect under Paul's guidance. As a younger believer, assess your attitude to the leadership of the older generations?
  
8. Did you notice that even faithful workers for Christ can be led astray by worldliness? Note also that John Mark had also once failed Paul (Acts 15:37-40) and yet here Paul said he was helpful to Paul in his ministry. Reflect on what this informs us about forgiveness and reconciliation.

9. The reference to Trophimus being left “sick in Miletus” raises the issue of healing. If healing can be claimed as either being “a part of the atonement” or as the assured result of believing prayer, why did Paul not have the theological understanding or mature faith to bring healing to Trophimus (Despite all the dramatic healings Paul performed in Acts)?

As Christians we need to grapple with this question as godly people die of incurable diseases as much as anybody else.

## Prayer

- Thank God for the Apostle Paul and for people like him, who remained faithful in their Gospel proclamation and living.
- Ask God to help you to be passionate about the Gospel, fervent about the faith and determined to finish the race with strength.
- Ask God to help you put into practice everything you have learned from 2 Timothy.

# Paul's letter to Titus

## Study #1

### Godly Leadership

#### *Titus 1*

The first two matters raised by the Apostle Paul in his letter to Titus is the appointment of church leaders (elders) and the danger of false teachers. Both were important to Paul because the Gospel needed to be passed on faithfully and carefully protected.

#### **Discuss**

1. Imagine that Jesus appeared before you (or your Bible study group) and commanded you to start a church in your suburb, but he didn't give any other instructions or details of what to do. How would you go about starting this church? What would the leadership structure be like? What would you emphasize? What would the church look like? Discuss.

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Paul's letter to Titus, like the other Pastoral letters (1 & 2 Timothy), is mostly concerned with the issue of succession. Paul was considering the future of the church that he had established and wanted to ensure the next generation of Christians would be faithful to the Gospel's message and mission.

#### **Read Titus 1**

## **Introduction: Titus 1:1-4**

1. What was Paul's mission as an apostle according to v.1?
2. What is this 'faith and knowledge' based upon (v.2)?
3. How is the Gospel manifested or revealed (v.3)?

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Paul did not merely introduce himself in his opening words but set before us the goal of Gospel ministry, which is to 'further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness.' This is Paul's main theme in the letter: the Gospel truth brings a good life lived for God. Therefore it is clear that conversion is not the only goal of Gospel ministry but a life of good works that changes our lives so that we are profitable in God's service. Paul added that this life-changing Gospel was manifested through faithful preaching entrusted to faithful and reliable servants of God.

## **Appointing Elders: Titus 1:5-9**

1. Why did Paul leave Titus in Crete (v.5)?

2. List the qualities of an elder and consider how they apply today.  
Either go through it together or divide the passage within the group.

<b>Elder Qualities (vv.6-9)</b>	<b>Own description</b>

3. Why do you think these traits are 'necessary' for an elder?

4. According to verse 7 and 9, what is the elder's role in the church?

Paul's reason for leaving Titus behind in Crete was to finish the work of planting churches and to bring it 'into order' by appointing elders.<sup>1</sup> It is important to notice that Paul was not concerned with establishing particular structures or processes or hierarchy in establishing church leadership, instead, Paul's main concern was the character of the leaders (v.9). So Paul's emphasis when he talked about leadership was in identifying good disciples who would make good leaders.

### **False Teachers: Titus 1:10-16**

1. What were the general qualities of a false teacher as described by Paul? What were the consequences of their actions (v.10 - 16)?
2. How did Paul describe the Cretans (v.12)? And how did Paul command Titus to treat them because of the alleged Cretan character (v.13)?
3. When Paul quoted a prophet of the opposition, it contained a slur on the residents of Crete. The Apostle Paul is most likely not agreeing with it but, rather using irony to further reduce the reputation of the false teachers. If the false teachers were teaching such a thing, what sort of division would this bring and how would it work against the truths of the Gospel?  
(Refer to Gal. 3:28 and Eph. 2:11-22)

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<sup>1</sup> In Paul's mind, there are no difference between an elder and an overseer (note how the words are used interchangeably in vv.5 and 7).

4. How were the church leaders to respond to these false teachers (v.11, 13-14)?
  
5. In 2 Timothy the false teachers were targeting certain women (2 Tim. 3:6) while here in Titus they were turning *whole families* upside down. This sheds some light on the importance of both fathers and mothers taking responsibility for their family's faith. Discuss ways both parents can protect their family from false doctrine and false teachers ...
  
6. How did these false teachers deny God even though they professed to know God (v.16)?

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Paul mentioned earlier the necessary trait of an elder to be blameless in their doctrine because they not only needed to 'encourage others by sound doctrine' but they also needed to 'refute those who oppose it.' And this was exactly what had happened in Crete! False teachers were disrupting 'household' churches and so Paul commanded Titus to silence them, and rebuke those who entertained them. Paul strongly emphasised having trustworthy leaders who correctly handled the truth because he understood that ungodly teaching could only lead to ungodly living. As our faith grows in knowledge of the truth so we will also grow in godliness.



## Implications

1. In verse 1, Paul mentioned that preaching brought to light God's promised hope of salvation, which in turn led to godliness. Is it still an effective way of converting and growing people today? Why or why not?
2. In appointing leaders for a church and its ministry (i.e. pastors, kids leaders, youth leaders, small group leaders), what personal qualities *should* we look for? What characteristics do we often look for instead?
3. These characteristics are not intended to be unique to elders, for in one form or another they describe the ideal character of all Christian men and women. Their function here is to portray a morally well-rounded person, who would not disgrace the Lord and His Church. Is this a reasonable expectation to place on all who profess faith in Christ? Why or why not?
4. It is easy to encourage people but we often find it difficult to confront them (or be confronted). When is it necessary to confront people in a church and what would be the best way of doing so?

## Prayer

- Thank God that He has given you the knowledge of truth that leads to godliness.
- Pray for your pastors, elders and various church leaders that they may be blameless in their character and their doctrine, both publicly and in private. Refer to Hebrews 13:7 & 17.
- Pray for those who teach the Bible that they would strive to be true and godly teachers, always teaching sound doctrine.

# Study #2

## **A Godly Household**

### *Titus 2*

After warning Titus about rebellious people, Paul then turned to describe how Christians were to live the good life and the motivation for living it.

#### **Discuss**

1. A good way to understand how the current culture defines success, happiness, and purpose in life is to analyse television programs. What kind of programs dominate the media and what do you think it says about our culture?

If there is one word to encapsulate what our current society highly values it would be 'lifestyle'. Whether it is a better quality of food, bigger and more luxurious housing, or a more entertaining holiday, we want to experience 'the good life'. Christianity is also about 'the good life', but definitely not in the way our society would define it. In this chapter, Paul directed Titus as to how Christians were to live 'the good life' of faith. More importantly, he showed us the engine that would propel us there.

#### **Read Titus 2**

#### **Godly Living: Titus 2:1-10**

1. List all of Paul's commands in verses 1-15. What can you say is at the heart of Titus' ministry and leadership?





7. Paul didn't overly labor the point of teaching the young men, rather Paul encouraged Timothy to set them an example. This suggests younger people tend to grow through imitation rather than being taught. Are you currently intentionally seeking to be an example of the faith for younger Christians? Would you consider using your faith-experience to mentor a younger or new Christian? Have you ever had such an experience?
  
8. What principles or values are being taught here in regards to:
  - a. Family?
  
  - b. Work?
  
  - c. Church life?

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In these passages we'll notice that Paul outlined the *content* of the good life which the gospel creates: It is a life lived in self-control and godly submission; a life that is in accordance 'with sound doctrine'; and a life counter to the self-gratifying culture around us. But even though people may not agree with us or like it when we talk about self-control or submission, Paul assured us that it would attract non-Christian to the Gospel. Secondly, these verses also describe the *context* in which this good life is to be lived – through the everyday life of discipleship within the Christian family. It means discipleship can happen through planned programs and meetings, but in most cases it occurs through various ad hoc interactions. It means that discipleship takes place in inter-generational community, and therefore we need to be intentional in seeking out those who can disciple us and those whom we can disciple.

## Reason for Godly Living: Titus 2:11-15

1. The word 'for' links verses 11-14 with the verses before it. What connection is being made between the commands in the previous verse and the statement about the 'grace of God'?
2. What are the two things that the grace of God does for people (v.11-12)?
3. Paul mentions that we live in between two monumental 'appearings'. What are they and how does it help us change today?
4. Does v.11 teach that everyone ('all people') will be saved? (Compare this to Titus 1:1).
5. What is the underlying purpose of the rescue?

6. Why do you think Paul needed to encourage Titus to ‘not let anyone despise him’ in verse 15?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. The word ‘rebuke’ appears repeatedly in Titus in terms of how we are to teach and use the Scriptures (here in v.15). Modern Christians tend to reject a rebuke, even if made out of a sense of love. Why is this so? What modern circumstances mean we will not accept a rebuke from a godly leader?

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After describing the content of the good life and the context in which people were to be disciplined, Paul moved on to describe the source of this good life. The source and motives of the good life described in Titus 2:1-10 are the grace and glory of God revealed. These are the truths that Titus was to use to “encourage and rebuke” people as he exhorted them to live good lives. The grace of God does not simply prepare us for the future age by saving us from God’s judgment. Grace also shapes our lives in the present. It is by grace we are saved through faith and it is by grace we live out our faith. Grace does not mean we can live how we choose since God will always forgive us, instead it motivates us to control ourselves and to be upright and godly in our behaviour towards others.



## Implications

1. In regards to the different age groups mentioned in Titus 2, how do Paul's words encourage and/or challenge you?
  
2. Paul urged Titus to teach slaves how to behave so that they would make the teaching about God our Saviour attractive (vv. 9-10). What behaviours among Christians can make the Gospel unattractive to people? Have a look at the qualities we are to develop ... what are the reverse of many of these qualities.
  
3. A modern parallel (though somewhat inadequate) to the master/slave relationship is the employer/employee relationship. How could Paul's instruction to Titus be made applicable to the modern workplace?
  
4. We may not be able to apply the scriptures regarding slaves as easily as others. But there are clear principles in these passages that can help us apply them to any situation, no matter how awkward ...
  - a. They are found at the end of vv. 5, 8 and 10. Identify them and discuss their usefulness.

5. 'Self-control' is a prominent trait in Paul's instruction. In what areas does our society lack self-control? In what areas of your life do you find self-control difficult?
  
6. Do you have the experience of being disciplined by someone older than you or of disciplining someone younger than yourself? How did this discipleship relationship come about? If you have not experienced this yet, how could you follow Paul's (or Jesus') model of relational and generational discipleship?
  
7. How does living between the 'appearing' of the grace of God and the 'appearing' of the glory of God shape your attitude and purpose in life?

## Prayer

- Thank God for the appearing of His grace in Jesus and His future appearing in glory in which we hope and long for.
- Ask God to continually help you live out 'the good life' of faith that reflects the grace and glory of God in Jesus Christ.
- Pray that our church will develop and nurture a culture of inter-generational and intentional discipleship.

# Study #3

## **Godly Living**

### *Titus 3*

In this last chapter Paul gave his final instruction on how to live the 'good' life in the public eye and private gatherings, but also how to be devoted to it.

#### **Discuss**

1. What is an example of one of the nicest thing any person has ever done for you? How did you express your gratitude to that person? How did it change your view of that person?

We are often nicest to the people who have been kind, generous and loving towards us. If someone has given us something valuable it is natural to be very grateful towards them or even try to repay them. If someone ever saved our life it is normal to feel that we owe them a great debt. Paul in this last chapter stressed what the Gospel has done for us because it is only by reminding ourselves of the 'kindness and love of God' that we will find the power to live out a life worthy of the Gospel. Our devotion to God results in devotion to 'doing what is good.'

#### **Read Titus 3**

#### **Kindness and Renewal: Titus 3:1-15**

1. List the qualities that should help Cretan Christians stand out from the world around them (vv.1-2).
  
2. What does it mean to be 'subject' and 'be obedient' to rulers and authorities?

3. How do the qualities in vv.1-2 contrast with what they were once like in v.3 (and presumably what their neighbours are still like)?
  
4. These verses show that with true conversion comes good character and good works. Notice the behaviours of non-believers towards others is an outcome of their rejection of God. Do you struggle with such behaviours in your own life? Would they be evident to others? Consider how others might describe you?
  
5. Vv 1-3 and 8 stress the importance of good works. Discuss how carrying out such 'good works' and 'salvation by grace alone' (Eph. 2:8-9) can be reconciled ...
  
6. What reason did Paul give as to why God saved us?
  
7. Explain what the role of the Holy Spirit is in our salvation (v.5)?
  
8. What did Paul mean to 'stress' the gospel (v.8)?
  
9. How does stressing the gospel lead to a stronger devotion of 'doing what is good'?

10. In their relationship with other Christians, what should the Cretan Christians avoid (v.9)? Why?
  
11. How did Paul want Titus to deal with people who stirred up ‘foolish controversies’ (v.10)?
  
12. Given that not all disagreements are wrong (e.g. in Chpt.1 the elders were to confront the false teachers), what are some ways of deciding whether something is a ‘foolish controversy’ or an ‘important argument’?
  
13. It’s hard to read a passage such as Titus 3:9-11 and reconcile that with others such as John 13:34-35, Eph. 4:2-3 & Col. 3:13. So how could we apply this Titus passage in church-life today?
  
14. How would you summarise the message of Titus in a sentence?

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The Cretan Church was having to live out the Gospel in a harsh, selfish, uncaring culture; a culture that they were still a part of. That is why Paul encouraged them to continue to do whatever was good and profitable because they were no longer what they used to be. Instead Paul wanted them to be good citizens who were proactively looking for opportunities to bless their cities and serve their neighbourhoods in order to live a ‘productive’ life

(v.14). As heirs of God we Christians are meant to shine like a light in a dark world. Paul was also careful to remind us that our status before God is not because of any 'righteous things we had done'. He highlighted that we, like the Cretans, were enslaved, foolish and utterly underserving, and it is only because of God's kindness and mercy that we have come to believe in Christ and are saved. It is this wonderful truth of the Gospel that fuels us to live the good life. But the danger for the Cretan church and in ours today, was to be divided because of unprofitable and useless controversies.

In summary, Paul wanted Titus to put things in order by appointing godly leaders in Crete who could teach sound doctrine and protect the church from false teachers. Titus was also to teach the church to live in such a way that 'no one will malign the Word of God' (2:5). In some way the book of Titus presents a clear presentation of what it means for Christians to live, and in doing so the lives of Christians are able to 'make the teaching about God our Saviour attractive' (2:10). This means that we do mission in the context of our everyday life. There is a place for evangelistic events and programs but the groundwork of mission is doing 'good' in our home, neighbourhood, workplace, or school. And this is only possible if we stress the Gospel in our teaching because change in belief by the power of the Gospel leads to changed lives.

## Implications

1. Paul described in v.3 the way the Cretan Christians used to live. Have you also overcome some of these ungodly characteristics? Would you share which of these you might still be struggling with today?
2. In Titus 3 Paul again stressed the great theme of 1 & 2 Timothy & Titus ... sound doctrine must be accompanied by a godly life. Discuss together ways your Grow Group can "do what is good" to benefit your neighbours or your community ...

3. Why do we find controversy and argument so attractive? And what issues today might fall into the 'foolish controversy' category?
  
4. How has your understanding of the Gospel transformed your life and how does it help you to continually live out the Gospel?
  
5. Do you find it easier to discuss controversy instead of the Gospel? How can we make sure that we stress the Gospel foremost and avoid foolish controversies in our small groups, church meetings and discipleship?
  
6. What key areas of life have you been challenged in as a result of studying the book of Titus?

## Prayer

- Thank God for His kindness and love and for giving us new birth in spite of what we were like.
- Ask God to help you discern between important arguments about the truth and foolish and useless controversies.
- Ask God to help you be reminded of the truth of the Gospel in order to devote yourself to doing what is good.

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