

This guide is to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God's Word. There may be questions you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience not to complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid teaching task list.

2 Timothy 3:1-9

Study the Text...

The book of Second Timothy contains the final recorded words of the apostle Paul. Paul wrote this letter to his "beloved child" Timothy (1:2) from a Roman prison, where he was awaiting his execution. Church history tells us that Paul was martyred during the reign of Nero between A.D. 64 and A.D. 68. Although Paul was not Timothy's biological father, he was his father in Christ. Timothy was a young pastor into whom Paul had poured his life. This letter has the tone of a dying father who knows he may be speaking to his son for the final time. He doesn't waste any words. He tells his son what he most needs to hear.

Group Discussion...

- Imagine that you are at the end of your life. You have only one shot to leave a final bit of wisdom to the people who are important to you, either members of your biological family or your faith family. What would you say to them? What do you think they would most need to hear?

In this section of the letter, Paul warns Timothy that perilous times will come "in the last days." Throughout the New Testament, we see that we are already living in the last days (see for example Acts 2:17). So, what Paul is saying is that the perilous times have already begun, and we need to be on our guard. These perilous times in which we find ourselves are defined by rebellious living (3:2-4) and false teaching (3:5-9).

Group Discussion...

- The picture that Paul paints of the last days in verses 2-5 bears a striking resemblance to what we see in our own day. What are some ways that you see this godless mindset promoted in our society – in others AND in yourself?
- What does it mean to be "always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth?" (3:7) Where is ultimate truth found?

Paul wants Timothy to stand firm against the lies and godlessness of his time. In order to help him do so, Paul reminds Timothy of three truths:

1. The Reality of Suffering (3:10-13)

2. The Reliability of Scripture (3:14-17)
3. The Responsibility of the Saints (4:1-8)

I. The Reality of Suffering (3:10-13)

Study the Text...

The first truth of which Paul reminds Timothy is the reality that in a sinful world the righteous will experience suffering. Suffering for Christ had been a normal part of Paul's Christian experience since he first met Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:16) and here Paul reminds Timothy that everyone who truly follows Christ will suffer hardship in this life (2 Tim. 3:12). We should not be surprised when we experience hardship in this life. Jesus promised us that in this world we would have trouble, but He also promised that he had overcome the world (Jn. 16:33).

Group Discussion...

- Spend some time studying and discussing the account of Paul's trials at Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra recorded in Acts 13-14. Pay special attention to Acts 14:19-23. How was Paul treated in Lystra? How did he respond? How did God work through these trials? How did the church respond?
- What are some ways that you may experience persecution for following Christ?
- In this section, and really in the entire letter, Paul is reminding Timothy of the legacy that he is leaving him. It is a legacy of faithful endurance, even in the midst of suffering, for the advancement of the gospel to all nations. What is the legacy that you want to leave?

II. The Reliability of Scripture (3:14-17)

Study the Text...

The second truth of which Paul reminds Timothy is the reliability of Scripture. The Bible is utterly truthful and sufficient to give us the strength that we need to persevere to the end. Paul commands Timothy to hold onto the truth of the gospel that he has already learned. This mindset stands in stark contrast to the false teachers who are "always learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth." (3:7)

The world has not really changed much over the past two thousand years. Human beings still think that they know better than God, and so they continually seek to invent new ways to solve their problems. But God has revealed the ultimate solution to the human condition in the pages of Holy Scripture.

Small Group Guide – Week 51

2 Timothy 3:1-4:8

The Church at Brook Hills

December 20-26, 2010

2 Timothy 3:1-4:8

We can have full confidence in the Scriptures because “all Scripture is breathed out by God” (3:16). This means that the very words of Scripture are the very words of God. The Holy Spirit supernaturally led the men who wrote these books to write the exact words that He wanted them to write.

This means two very important things for us. First, it means that the Bible is absolutely true and without error. Since God cannot make a mistake, and since God cannot lie (Heb. 6:18), and since the words of the Bible are the very words of God, then the Bible must be absolutely true and without error. We can trust it completely.

Secondly, this means that the Bible is powerful. Paul tells Timothy that the Scriptures are sufficient to bring us to salvation (3:15), to teach, reprove, correct, and train us for righteousness (3:16), and to equip us for every good work (3:17). In other words, in the Scriptures, God gives us what we need to bring us to faith in Christ and to conform us to the likeness of Christ, so that we live like Christ. Throughout the Bible, we see that the Word of God is powerful, it accomplishes its mission. God created the universe by His Word (Gen. 1; Jn. 1:1-4) and Jesus Christ upholds all things by the Word of His Power (Heb. 1:3). Here we see that God’s Word has the power to change us and make us more like Christ and to give us the strength we need to hold onto Christ to the end.

Group Discussion...

- What are the means by which God makes us wise for salvation and equips us for every good work?
- If the Scriptures are the means by which God preserves our faith and conforms us to the likeness of Christ, then they are absolutely essential for our eternal well-being. Why, then, would we ever neglect the study of Scripture?
- How does knowing that the words of Scripture are the words of God give you confidence?

III. The Responsibility of the Saints (4:1-8)

Study the Text...

The final truth of which Paul reminds Timothy is the responsibility of the saints. As Christ-followers, we have been given a commission to make disciples of all nations, and we need to keep this mission always in the forefront of our minds. It would have been easy for Timothy to begin worrying about his own safety at a time like this. His father in the faith, Paul, was about to be executed for preaching the gospel. In spite of this, Paul commands him to continue preaching the gospel, and to keep preaching the gospel, regardless of the cost. This is not always popular, even in the church. Verses 3-4 say that many people who outwardly appear to be believers will turn aside from the hard truth of the gospel and seek a “feel-good” message. But Timothy, and we, must continue to boldly proclaim the gospel that has been handed down to us.

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In verses 6-8, Paul shows us how he viewed his life, and how we should view ours. We are drink offerings to be poured out to God, and whether we live or die, the goal is that God would be glorified. Paul's one desire is to fight the fight, to finish the race, to keep the faith, and to take hold of the crown of righteousness laid up for him in heaven. May God give us all grace to live with such a single-minded focus!

Group Discussion...

- How will you follow Paul's command in 2 Timothy 4? While we may not all preach on a stage on Sunday morning, we are ALL called to make disciples of all nations. Think of specific ways you can obey these commands, even when it is difficult and unpopular?
- Verses 7-8 show us the key to Paul's endurance: he was looking forward to his eternal reward. How does living with eternity in view change the way you live now?