

2 Timothy Devotionals

- Spurgeon on 2 Timothy - Part 1
- Spurgeon on 2 Timothy - Part 2
- 2 Timothy 2:19 Study of A Firm Foundation
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17 Study of the Authority of God's Word
- 2 Timothy Overview Guard the Treasure
- 2 Timothy Handle Accurately the Word of Truth

2 TIMOTHY 1

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2 TIMOTHY 1:1-5 - PUTTING ON A FACE

I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you (2 Timothy 1:5).

Several customers were waiting in line at a London cheese shop one day when the famous preacher C. H. Spurgeon came in to make a purchase. Not one to stand around calmly, he became a little fidgety as he stood behind the others and waited his turn. Noticing a fine block of cheese in the shop window, he couldn't resist touching it, and gently tapped the cheese with his walking stick. To his surprise, the "cheese" made an empty metallic sound—like the ring of a big bread pan. Spurgeon later recounted,

"I came to the conclusion that I had found a very well-got-up hypocrite in the window."

People can be like fake cheese—they look like something they aren't. Many use the name Christian and make a rather pretty display on Sunday morning, yet they have the hollow sound of a hypocrite. A person may look like a Christian but lack genuine faith. When tapped with temptation or spiritual duty, the sham becomes evident. What seemed to be spirituality is a veneer of profession—without the substance of possession.

Not so with Timothy. His faith was genuine—so real that thinking of it filled Paul with joy. Satisfaction must have filled Timothy's heart as he read the apostle Paul's words (2 Tim. 1:5).

We must continually evaluate our faith and ask ourselves if what we profess will stand up under God's examination. —P. R. V.

Many give Christianity their **countenance** but not their **heart**.

1 Timothy 1:1-2

Many people who could easily identify the name Martin Luther would be hard pressed to name Luther's close associate and ally. He was Philip Melancthon, a brilliant theologian and teacher who dedicated himself to explaining and defending the truths that formed the heart of the Protestant Reformation. One writer says, ""As Timothy was to Paul, so Melancthon was to Luther--a younger companion and co-laborer in the truth."" (**Today in the Word**)

Prayer Patrol

By Dave Branon

2 Timothy 1:3

I was headed out the door one morning when my wife Sue said, "Don't forget to pray for Julie. She has a big test today." It's not unusual for Sue to give me a reminder like that before I leave. "Don't worry," I replied, "I'll be on prayer patrol!"

In reality, we all need to be on prayer patrol all the time. When we are, we follow in the tradition of patrol members like Daniel, who prayed despite opposition (Dan. 6:10); the widow Anna, who prayed night and day (Lk. 2:36-37); Paul, who prayed for his friends in Rome (Rom. 1:9); and Cornelius, a God-fearing soldier who did double-duty by being in constant prayer (Acts 10:1-2).

God's Word contains our marching orders for being on prayer patrol. Some of them are:

Pray without ceasing (1 Th. 5:17).

Continue steadfastly in prayer (Rom. 12:12).

Pray morning, noon, and night (Ps. 55:17).

Pray always and do not get discouraged (Lk. 18:1).

It's not difficult to find enough things to pray about. There are needs everywhere. The tough part is following through on our commitment to pray. Remind yourself throughout the day that you have a job to do. People are counting on you. You're on prayer patrol.

Commit to pray and intercede—

The battle's strong and great's the need;

And this one truth can't be ignored:

Our only help comes from the Lord. —Sper

Praying frequently will lead to praying fervently.

RELATED RESOURCES ON PRAYER:

- [Colossians 1:9 Commentary](#)
- [Colossians 4:12 Commentary](#)
- [Devotional on Prayer](#)
- [Guide to Praying for Missionaries](#)
- [Pithy Prayer Phrases](#)
- [Prayer - Greek Words for Prayer](#)
- [Prayer Devotionals and Illustrations](#)
- [Prayer Hymns and Poems](#)
- [Prayer Quotes](#)
- [Praying in the Spirit](#)
- [Spurgeon's Gems on Prayer](#)

Mothers Who Pray

By David C. Egner

2 Timothy 1:5

The faith and prayers of mothers can have a profound impact on the lives of their children. First Samuel 1 records Hannah's plea and God's answer in the birth of her son Samuel. And in a letter to Timothy, Paul referred to the faith of Timothy's mother, which I'm sure was often expressed in earnest prayer on his behalf. No wonder he was used of God in the early church.

I know a pastor's wife who is a woman of prayer. Whenever her husband left for an important meeting or visit, she prayed a sentence or two for him, asking the Lord's guidance, protection, wisdom, and strength. She usually prayed aloud and the children often heard her, but she never thought much about the impact it would have on them.

Imagine this mother's delight when her college-bound daughter said that leaving home would be easier because she knew that her mother would pray for her—and keep on praying!

Sometimes mothers feel frustrated because they think they are limited in what they can do for their children. But they can always pray—and their prayers are among the most cherished gifts of all.

I heard my name in Mother's prayer

When I was but a child,

And now because of her concern,

To God I'm reconciled. —Hess

A mother's prayers can build a fortress around her children.

2 Timothy 1:5 - A Praying Mother

Evangelist Billy Sunday told of a minister who was calling on his people. He came to one home and asked the girl who answered the door if he might talk to her mother. "No," she replied, "mother prays from nine to ten." The minister waited for forty minutes; and when the mother came out, her face was so radiant that he understood why her oldest daughter was a missionary and her two sons were in the ministry. Billy Sunday added, "All hell cannot tear a boy or a girl away from a praying mother." (**Today in the Word**)

Many students of church history are familiar with the story of Susanna Wesley, who counted John and Charles among her nineteen children, only nine of whom lived to adulthood. Susanna was said to have prayed for her children two hours a day, along with teaching them their basic school subjects. She was well-prepared to care for and lead her large family. She herself was the daughter of a well-known minister, the youngest of his twenty-five children. Susanna benefited from a godly home and passed the heritage onto her children. Although his Christian heritage probably did not span as many years as that of the Wesleys, Timothy also benefited from a godly home. His mother and grandmother, Eunice and Lois, are two largely unsung heroines of the Bible. (**Today in the Word**)

Indispensable

By Herbert Vander Lugt

2 Timothy 1:1-5

I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice. —2 Timothy 1:5

A talented stay-at-home mother wrote a delightful essay in which she vividly describes (without complaining) the frustrations, sacrifices, and loneliness that accompany her chosen lifestyle. It's not glamorous to deal with a fussy 18-month-old who is teething, to settle quarrels between an irrational 3-year-old and a pushy 5-year old, and to listen to the incessant chatter of small children. Yet she concludes that her role is indispensable for the total well-being of her children. How true!

The importance of a godly mother's role in the life of a child cannot be overemphasized. Think of Timothy, for example, the young man the apostle Paul considered his spiritual son and a valuable partner in ministry. In his second letter to him, Paul recalled how Timothy had been influenced by "the genuine faith" of his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice (2 Timothy 1:5). God used two generations of loving mothers to prepare Timothy for the crucial work he would have in spreading the gospel and establishing congregations of believers in Christ.

Let's praise the Lord for mothers who not only care for their children physically but also nurture them spiritually. Mothers like that are indispensable!

God has conferred on motherhood

A true nobility,

And she who gladly fills that role

Can shape man's destiny. —D. De Haan

No man is poor who has had a godly mother. —Abraham Lincoln

A Mother's Influence

By Dennis J. De Haan

2 Timothy 1:1-7

I thank God ... when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in ... your mother. —2 Timothy 1:3,5

As a lawyer, as a congressman, as Governor of Ohio, and as President of the United States, William McKinley had a close relationship with his mother. He either visited her or sent a message to her every day.

When she became seriously ill, he arranged to have a special train standing by, ready to take him to her bedside. Mrs. McKinley died December 12, 1897, in the arms of her 54-year-old son. Her gentle, Christian virtues helped mold the President's character, for when he was gunned down in Buffalo, New York, about 4 years later, he showed no bitterness toward his assassin. With Christian courage he said, "God's will be done." Before he died, he asked to hear once again the hymn "Nearer, My God, to Thee," which his

mother had taught him.

Perhaps you too have been blessed with a Christian heritage. But unlike McKinley, you've strayed from God. On this day set aside to honor mothers, confess your sin and come back to the Lord. Let the precious memories of that special person in your life, who all these years has been pointing you to God, awaken in your heart a new desire to live for Him. Don't turn your back on the influence of your godly mother.

No man is poor who has had a godly mother! —Abraham Lincoln

Grace, Mercy, And Peace

By Albert Lee

2 Timothy 1:1-10

Bless the Lord, ... who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies. —Psalm 103:1,4

Bible in a Year:

The words grace and peace are found in all of Paul's greetings in his New Testament letters to the churches. And in his letters to Timothy and Titus, he also includes mercy: "Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord" (2 Tim. 1:2). Let's examine each of these words.

Grace is what our holy God gives that we, as sinful people, don't deserve. In Acts 17:25, we learn that "He gives to all life, breath, and all things." His gifts include our very next breath. Even in our darkest hour, strength is given by God so that we can endure.

Mercy is what God withholds that we do deserve. In Lamentations 3:22, we read, "Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed." Even when we're wayward, God gives time and help for us to turn back to Him.

Peace is what God brings to His people. Jesus said: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you" (John 14:27). Even in the worst of times, we have inner tranquillity because our God is in control.

We can be encouraged that throughout our lives the Lord will give us the grace, mercy, and peace we need to live for Him.

He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater,

He sendeth more strength when the labors increase;

To added affliction He addeth His mercy,

To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace. —Flint

God's grace is immeasurable, His mercy is inexhaustible, His peace is inexpressible.

2 Timothy 1:5a Indispensable

READ: 2 Timothy 1:1-5

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2 Timothy 1:5b

When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.

There is no transmigration of souls, but there is a kind of transmigration of faith, as if the very form and shape of faith, which was in Lois and Eunice, afterwards appeared in Timothy. Truly, there are certain idiosyncrasies which may pass from some Christian people to others; and when those idiosyncrasies are of a high and noble kind, it is a great mercy to see them reproduced in children and children's children. "I thought I heard your mother speak," said one, when she heard a Christian woman talking of the Savior, "you speak in just the way in which she used to tell out her experience, and describe the love of Christ."

Grace does not run in the blood, but it often runs side by side with it. The "grandmother Lois" and the "mother Eunice" had the true grace of saving faith dwelling in them, and Paul was persuaded that it dwelt in the son and grandson Timothy. (**Spurgeon, C. H. Exposition**)

Thank God for Mothers!

Joe Stowell

2 Timothy 1:5

It was Sunday morning and her son still had not appeared at the breakfast table. She had tried yelling up the stairs: "Wake up and get down here!" But there had been no response. Finally, she went up the stairs and opened the door to her son's room and said, "You need to get up and get dressed. It's time to go to church!"

"I don't want to go to church," her son groaned from under the covers.

"You can't give me a good reason not to go to church, so get up!" his mom replied.

"Actually, I'll give you three reasons. Number one: it's boring. Number two: the people there are gossipy and critical. And number three: no one likes me. So why should I bother?"

"I'll give you three reasons," retorted his mom. "Number one: the Bible says you should go. Number two: you're 45 years old. And number three: you're the pastor! Now get out of bed and get dressed for church!"

Where would we be without the tireless urging of our mothers to do what is right? All over the United States this weekend, flowers will be delivered, homemade cards will be given, and moms will be celebrated on Mother's Day. And it's fitting that we should do so. I know of very few roles that demand such unconditional, self-sacrificing perseverance and commitment as that of motherhood.

In his second letter to Timothy, Paul pauses to acknowledge the impact that a mother can have, mentioning Lois, Timothy's grandmother, and Eunice, his mother. Paul's mention of these women is interesting because he personally could claim a great deal of influence on the spiritual journey of Timothy. Paul called him his spiritual son (2 Timothy 1:6; 1 Corinthians 4:17; Philippians 2:22) and had not only included Timothy on missionary journeys, but had entrusted numerous assignments to him, including shepherding the growing church at Ephesus. It's clear that Paul had invested much of his life in mentoring and helping to make Timothy capable and usable.

But Paul readily and willingly acknowledged that the seeds of Timothy's faith were planted by these two women. We know very little about Lois and Eunice, but our imaginations can picture them praying with young Timothy, teaching him the simple stories of Jesus and the life-changing truths of God's Word, and introducing him to the early leaders of the church. All of us know that mothering is a challenging task, but the rewards to faithful moms are great. Think of how Timothy's mother and grandmother must have felt to see him blossom as a leader in the work of Jesus!

I know for certain that my character and faith has been shaped and molded by my mom. I will be forever grateful for her influence in

my life. And it's been a privilege for me to watch the way my wife, Martie, has impacted the lives of our kids, and now our grandkids. So this weekend, I'm excited for the opportunity to celebrate the significant role of our mothers.

Because, let's face it, where would we be without them? Let's hear it for moms!

YOUR JOURNEY...

For some, Mother's Day brings pain—perhaps the pain of a fractured relationship between a mother and child, the pain of losing a loved one, or the pain of unfulfilled longings for motherhood. Psalm 34:18 offers these compassionate words: "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." Jesus knows and understands your pain and is ready to not only grieve with you, but to bring you His gentle peace and hope.

If you are a mom, how does it encourage and excite you to know that you can have such a key role in the life of your kids (and grandkids)?

Take a moment to thank the Lord for your mom, and then be sure to express your thanks to your mom in specific ways!

2 Timothy 1:6 - "Stir Up the Gift of God" (Vance Havner)

I believe that Timothy was afflicted with a constitutional timidity. Paul reminds him to let no man despise his youth, and to the Corinthians he wrote: "Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be among you without fear" (1 Cor. 16:10). He was a splendid young preacher, with good ancestry and in dead earnest, but he needed to be set on fire.

Paul advises Timothy to kindle the sacred flame within him... There come times in our experiences when the fires of God burn low and we must stir up the heavenly flame within our hearts.

Timothy was not exhorted to stir up himself. It is not our fire but God's that we are to kindle... It is stated in another verse: "Neglect not the gift that is in thee which was given thee by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery" (1 Tim. 4:14). It was the gift of the Spirit for his peculiar ministry, the supreme qualification for preaching and witnessing and service. And in application it represents the fire of the Spirit in each and all of us believers.

[Paul] knew the value of experience, for he would have no bishop be a novice. But, above all that, he would say, "Timothy, stir up the fire, don't get in a rut and don't let them make an ordinary preacher out of you."

If for any reason the fire has become coals, stir up the gift of God! Keep aglow at any cost! No price is too great to pay to be a "burning and shining light" for Him! Better go to lengths that may seem absurd to others to keep the fire blazing!

There are so many things that can smother the fire.

1. Willful sin will do it.

Our Lord told us that the candle of testimony may be smothered by the bushel or the bed. The bushel stands for money-making, the cares of business, the temporal concerns of this life. The bed stands for luxury, ease, worldly pleasure, the sloth that so enervates the soul.

2. Neglect will smother the fire.

Let the fire alone and it will burn low and the ashes will gather. If we neglect the means of grace, prayer, the Word, and holy exercise, we shall soon need a stirring.

3. Then, too, others can quench the Spirit and smother our fire.

"Stir Up the Gift of God"

If [the Christian] allows it, men will tone him down, steal the joy of his salvation, and reduce him to the dreary level of the general average. If the devil cannot keep us from being saved, he next endeavors to make average Christians of us, and in this he usually succeeds... The devil does not mind our joining church if we behave like most of those who are already inside. But when a real, wide-awake Christian breezes along, taking the Gospel seriously, the devil grows alarmed and begins plotting his downfall.

4. Certainly, fear can choke the fire.

Paul says to Timothy in the very word next to the passage we are considering, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power and of love and of a sound mind." The man who hid his talent said, "I was afraid." The fires that fear has smothered—fear of the past or present or future, fear of others, of failure, of sickness, of death! Whatever fear you may have, it is not of God, for He

hath not given us such a spirit.

Let us remember that stirring up the gift of God is our business. God will not do it for us. We must rouse ourselves from our lethargy and get down to business in prayer and feeding upon the Word and holy exercise.

It is related that in Scotland years ago, before the day of matches, the fires had gone out throughout a community. The people set out looking for someone who had a fire. At last, far up on a hillside, they found a humble home where the hearthstone glowed with cheery flame. Soon they were carrying coals here and there to replenish their own blackened fireplaces. Today there are weary hearts, discouraged souls, needy churches looking for a soul with a fire, someone who has kept aglow in spite of the world, the flesh and the devil.

What has smothered your fire? Renounce it, yield afresh to God, and stir up His gift within you! (**Vance Havner**)

2 Timothy 1:6 SERVICE FOR OTHERS

"Stir up the gift of God, which is in thee through the laying on of my hands."-- 2Ti 1:6 (R.V.).

MOST YOUNG people are fond of athletics, and the Roman and Greek youth were specially addicted to them. The Divine Spirit does not under-value any of these means for keeping our physical health vigorous. But if we pay such earnest attention to these things we ought, all the more, to give attention to godliness, which disciplines the soul for Eternal Life. We all know what it is to discover and bring into play certain muscles of the body which we had not previously used. Are we equally keen to discover the hidden properties and resources of the soul and spirit?

Timothy was gifted in various ways, but specially for public ministry; and in this Epistle and the next, the Apostle bids him stir it up, i.e. stir into flame (marg.). The fire may be well provided with coal, the heat and light may be present, but the poker needs to be used to let in the air. We may have gifts, but we must carefully practise the duties in which they can be used for the benefit of others. It becomes us all to give ourselves to the duties which lie immediately to our hands, not shirking or scamping them. We must not give part of our thought and care to our appointed tasks, but give our whole selves. What our hands find to do must be done with our might. Just as men build arches of brick over slight structures of wood, and when these are taken away the substantial Material remains, so on the passing duties of an hour we are building up habits and character which will live for ever. What we do is comparatively unimportant, but how we do what we do is all-important. We must always be on guard, always on the alert, for we have in our hands the interests of others as well as our own (1Ti4:16).

The grace of God can so reveal itself in a young man or girl, that he or she will become an example in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity (1Ti4:12).

PRAYER - Prosper us, O God, we pray Thee, in all that we put our hands unto. May our hearts be filled with Thy love, our lips with gentle, helpful words, and our hands with kind, unselfish deeds. May Thy Holy Spirit in all things direct and rule our hearts. AMEN. (**F B Meyer. Our Daily Walk**)

Power Outage

By David C. McCasland

2 Timothy 1:6-12

God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. —2 Timothy 1:7

The silence awakened me at 5:30 one morning. There was no gentle whir of fan blades, no reassuring hum from the refrigerator downstairs. A glance out the window confirmed that a power outage had left everyone in our neighborhood without electricity just as they would be preparing for work.

I realized that alarm clocks would not sound, and there would be no TV news. Coffee makers, toasters, hair dryers, and many telephones would be useless. Beginning a day without power was simply an inconvenience and a disruption of routine—but it felt like a disaster.

Then I thought of how often I rush into the day without spiritual power. I spend more time reading the newspaper than the Bible. Talk radio replaces listening to the Spirit. I react to difficult people and circumstances in a spirit of fear rather than the spirit of "power and of love and of a sound mind" that God has given us (2 Timothy 1:7). I must appear as spiritually unkempt as a person who dressed and groomed in the dark.

Our power outage was short-lived, but the lesson remains of my need to begin each day by seeking the Lord. His strength is not for

my success or well-being, but so that I will glorify Christ by living in His power. (Ed: See related article - [A Spirit Filled Church](#))

There's never a lack of God's power

In prayer and reading His Word,

For Jesus in heaven is listening-

Your prayer will always be heard. —Hess

The human spirit fails us unless the Holy Spirit fills us.

An Unbroken Chain

By Herbert Vander Lugt

2 Timothy 1:1-7; 2:1-2

The things that you have heard from me ... commit these to faithful men. —2 Timothy 2:2

Whenever I meet a Christian for the first time, I'm interested in learning how he came to trust Jesus as his Savior. Each person has a different story to tell, but they all testify that they learned the truth because of the efforts of others—their parents, pastors, Sunday school teachers, Bible club leaders, friends, writers. Someone has rightly observed that the body of Christ grows through “an unbroken chain of teachers.”

In today's Scripture we learn that Timothy became a believer through the influence of his grandmother Lois, his mother Eunice, and the teaching of Paul (2 Timothy 1:5; 2:2). The apostle told Timothy to become part of that chain and “commit these truths to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (v.2).

The “faithful men” Paul had in mind were probably church elders, yet he was expressing a principle that applies to every believer. We had to receive the truth from someone; now it is our gracious privilege and solemn duty to transmit that truth to others.

Think of yourself as a link in the living chain that extends from the time Jesus lived on earth to the present. We must keep that chain strong by telling others about Him so that the gospel will reach to future generations.

Give me a passion for souls, dear Lord,

A passion to save the lost;

O that Thy love were by all adored,

And welcomed at any cost. —Tovey

The good news is meant to be shared.

Christ Is Able!

By Joanie Yoder

2 Timothy 1:8-12

I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him. —2 Timothy 1:12

Only when we fully trust someone will we commit ourselves to that person. Such complete trust is depicted in the following story.

A crowd gazed in awe as a tightrope walker inched his way across Niagara Falls. The people cheered when he accomplished the feat.

Then he turned to a man and said, “Do you think I could carry someone across?” “Sure,” the man replied.

“Let's go then!” “No thanks!” the man exclaimed. So the tightroper asked another man, “What about you? Will you trust me?” “Yes, I will,” he said. That man climbed onto his shoulders, and with the water roaring below they reached the other side.

Hidden in this story is a spiritual challenge each of us must face. Our sinfulness is a yawning chasm between us and God, and we are unable to cross it. Only Jesus is able to bring us safely to the other side. But we must repent and trust Him with our lives. The apostle Paul confidently wrote, “I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to

Him until that Day” (2 Tim. 1:12).

Are you trying on your own to cross the chasm of sin that separates you from God? It’s impossible. Put your trust in Christ, for He alone is able to bring you to God.

My hope is built on nothing less

Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;

I dare not trust the sweetest frame,

But wholly lean on Jesus' name. —Mote

Christ is the bridge over the chasm of sin.

Playing It Safe

By David C. McCasland

2 Timothy 1:1-12

God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. —2 Timothy 1:7

The founder and chairman of a successful US airline expressed his business philosophy by saying, “I love doing things that scare me. There’s no courage without fear.” Instead of basking in the airline’s prosperity, he’s always looking for places to expand, and he takes a risk every time he begins service to a new city. But he wouldn’t have it any other way.

Courage is not the absence of fear but the willingness to act, even if we are afraid of what might happen when we do.

When Paul wrote to his co-worker Timothy, he urged him to take an open stand for Christ, even though Paul’s own boldness had led to imprisonment. “God has not given us a spirit of fear,” Paul wrote, “but of power and of love and of a sound mind. Therefore do not be ashamed” (2 Tim. 1:7-8).

“Playing it safe” should not be an option for followers of Christ. Believers have always been called to identify openly with Jesus and with those who suffer for their public allegiance to Him. The power to do that comes from God’s Holy Spirit within us.

Let’s act with courage and face the very thing we fear today.

God cares and sends us courage

To put our woes to flight,

For courage is God's candle

That lights the darkest night. —Gilbert

Courage is not the absence of fear but the mastery of fear.

A Letter From Dad

By David C. McCasland

2 Timothy 1:1-10

Stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. —2 Timothy 1:6

A few months before my father died of cancer, he wrote me a letter in which he said: “I never think of you that I don’t offer up a short prayer for you and your success. I know you. I know what’s behind you. And I am pretty sure that I understand your goals, the kind of writing you hope to do, and the message you wish to convey. Stay in there and pitch, and may the Lord bless you. I am just so proud and thankful that the Lord let me be your father.”

That letter is one of my dad’s greatest gifts to me.

The New Testament contains two letters from Paul to Timothy, a young man he mentored and considered his “true son in the faith” (1 Tim. 1:2) and his “beloved son” (2 Tim. 1:2). The second letter begins with Paul’s deeply personal words assuring Timothy of his love and faithful prayers (vv.2-3). Paul affirmed Timothy’s spiritual heritage (v.5) and his God-given gifts and calling (vv.6-7). Then he

encouraged him to live boldly for the gospel of Christ (v.8).

Dads, you can give great encouragement to your children by writing them a letter of love and affirmation. It may be the greatest gift you can give them. Why not sit down and write it from your heart today?

God gives us children for a time

To nurture and to love,

To give them our encouragement,

With wisdom from above. —Sper

The greatest gift a father can give his children is himself.

2 Timothy 1:7

Martin Neimoller A Man with No Spirit of Fear:

In 1934, Adolf Hitler summoned German church leaders to his Berlin office to berate them for insufficiently supporting his programs. Pastor Martin Niemoller explained that he was concerned only for the welfare of the church and of the German people. Hitler snapped, "You confine yourself to the church. I'll take care of the German people."

Niemoller replied, "You said that 'I will take care of the German people.' But we too, as Christians and churchmen, have a responsibility toward the German people. That responsibility was entrusted to us by God, and neither you nor anyone in this world has the power to take it from us."

Hitler listened in silence, but that evening his Gestapo raided Niemoller's rectory, and a few days later a bomb exploded in his church. During the months and years following, he was closely watched by the secret police, and in June 1937, he preached these words to his church: "We have no more thought of using our own powers to escape the arm of the authorities than had the apostles of old. We must obey God rather than man." He was soon arrested and placed in solitary confinement.

Dr. Niemoller's trial began on February 7, 1938. That morning, a green-uniformed guard escorted the minister from his prison cell and through a series of underground passages toward the courtroom. Niemoller was overcome with terror and loneliness. What would become of him? Of his family? His church? What tortures awaited them all? The guard's face was impassive, and he was silent as stone. But as they exited a tunnel to ascend a final flight of stairs, Niemoller heard a whisper. At first he didn't know where it came from, for the voice was soft as a sigh. Then he realized that the officer was breathing into his ear the words of Proverbs 18:10:

"The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe."

Niemoller's fear fell away, and the power of that verse sustained him through his trial and his years in Nazi concentration camps.

People Of Courage

By Mart De Haan

2 Timothy 1:7

Police found it hard to believe, but an unarmed housewife captured three burglars singlehandedly. The woman had come home and found three men loading household items into their car parked in her driveway. She pulled her van behind their car and then ordered the men to carry her belongings back into the house and sit on the couch until the police arrived. Later, when asked why they didn't escape, she replied, "The Lord was with me... I wasn't going to move my van so they could get away. What was I to do? Run away?"

The apostle Paul also showed unusual courage. His friends probably thought he was being reckless when he insisted on going to Jerusalem after he had been warned of the danger that awaited him (Acts 21:11-13). A strong argument could be made for him to delay his trip. After all, on another occasion he had escaped from danger (9:23-25). Yet Paul knew what he had to do. With unwavering determination he courageously headed for Jerusalem.

It's not easy to know when such boldness is wise or foolish. Only the Spirit can show us. But one thing is sure, Christians have reason to be courageous. God is our helper. And when we rely on Him, He'll enable us to stand firm no matter what danger we may face.

Ask God for good judgment and courage

To face unexpected events;

To follow the teachings of Scripture

Is the best, most effective defense. —Hess

Courage is fear that has said its prayers.

2 Timothy 1:7a

Mickey Mantle, the late Hall-of-Famer for the New York Yankees, was a teenager when the Yankees sent him back to the minors in 1951. Convinced he couldn't make it as a ballplayer, Mantle called his father, who came to Kansas City and found a tearful Mickey ready to quit the game. 'OK, son, if that's all the guts you have, you might as well come home with me and work in the zinc mines,' the elder Mantle said. His dad's challenge stung Mantle back to reality, and he went on to greatness. Paul's challenge to Timothy wasn't a stinging rebuke, but the apostle did urge his young spiritual son to 'get back in the game,' so to speak. **(Today in the Word)**

2 Timothy 1:7b

When it comes to the ""spirit of power"" that God has given His servants, Dwight Moody must have been given a double portion. No review of Mr. Moody's life can miss the fact that his ministry was carried out with a power and passion that often amazed the people around him. When Moody's critics said he lacked the eloquence, the education, and the other qualities necessary to produce amazing results as he did, Moody readily agreed. He gladly attributed the power behind his preaching to the Holy Spirit's work in his life. **(Today in the Word)**

2 Timothy 1:8-13 An Atheist's Point Of View

By Anne Cetas

Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. —2 Timothy 1:13

Three young men who say they are atheists decided to "sample" and report on several churches in their city. One of these men said, "There is something other than teaching that is appealing to people. We didn't see a lot of doctrine... The appeal was mostly the community. The content in most churches isn't nearly as important as the packaging." The three atheists offered this explanation for why thousands of people in their area attend church each Sunday: The attraction stems more from a person's Christian identity than from what the religion teaches.

Their experience agrees with the observation of author A. W. Tozer, who said, "Increasing numbers of [Christians] are becoming ashamed to be found unequivocally on the side of truth. They say they believe, but their beliefs have been so diluted as to be impossible of clear definition."

The apostle Paul knew whom he believed, and he instructed Timothy to "hold fast" to the truth he had been taught (2 Timothy 1:12-13). We too need to hold tightly to our beliefs based on the unfailing, God-inspired Bible. What we believe about God is more crucial than any feeling we get by being in church. Tozer calls us to stand "firm on the Word of God that lives and abides forever."

Since by faith I have clear vision,

Your blest Word is rich and new;

Men with eyes by sin distorted

Cannot all its treasures view. —Bosch

Don't be a Christian in name only.

2 Timothy 1:1-7 For Future Generations

By Dennis J. De Haan

I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother. —2 Timothy 1:5

Bible in a Year:

When a team of Christians visited Stavropol, Russia, in 1994 to hand out Bibles, a local citizen said he recalled seeing Bibles in an old warehouse. They had been confiscated in the 1930s when Stalin was sending believers to the gulags. Amazingly, the Bibles were still there.

Among those who showed up to load them into trucks was a young agnostic student just wanting to earn a day's wage. But soon he slipped away from the job to steal a Bible. A team member went looking for him and found him sitting in a corner weeping. Out of the hundreds of Bibles, he had picked up one that bore the handwritten signature of his own grandmother. Persecuted for her faith, she had no doubt prayed often for her family and her city. God used that grandmother's Bible to convict that young man.

God has no grandchildren. We must each become first-generation believers through personal faith in Jesus. But the devotion to God of a grandparent or parent is a powerful ally of His Spirit to bring our children to Christ.

Paul encouraged Timothy by recalling the faith of his grandmother and mother. Although Timothy's faith was his own, it was deeply linked to theirs. What an admonition to us who are parents and grandparents to be faithful!

We can help our precious children

Follow in God's way,

Living out our faith with gladness,

Praying every day. —Sper

Better than having children bear your name is to have your children bear Christ's name.

2 Timothy 1:1-7 Powerful Influence

By Herbert Vander Lugt

At midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. —Acts 16:25

I'm sure that I am a Christian today because of the formative influence of my parents in my childhood. They taught me by example and from the Bible. Just as Timothy was reminded by Paul of the faith of his mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5), so too I recall the faith of my mother and father. At an early age, I committed my life to Christ. I realized I was a sinner and needed His forgiveness.

Strong influences may also come from people outside the family. I know a young man who became a devout believer as a young boy because he saw Christ in the life of his Sunday school teacher.

In Acts 16 we read that Paul and Silas sang and prayed in a Philippian jail at midnight. When an earthquake broke open the prison doors, the jailer was so terrified that he was about to commit suicide, but Paul stopped him. Seeing that the prisoners did not try to escape, the jailer fell down trembling. "What must I do to be saved?" he asked (v.30). That day he and his entire household became believers. Why? Because of the powerful influence of two men who were faithful to Christ.

The way we live does affect others for good or for bad. This is a sobering and challenging truth that should influence the way we as Christians walk and talk. —HVL

Only one life, so live it well,

And keep your candle trimmed and bright;

Eternity, not time, will tell

The radius of that candle's light. —Miller

Your life either sheds light or casts a shadow.

2 Timothy 1:1-7 Reason Enough

By Herbert Vander Lugt

I [recall] the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice. —2 Timothy 1:5

If you are like most Christians, you didn't go through a long reasoning process before believing on Jesus. You heard the good news and realized you were a sinner and needed God's forgiveness. You understood that when Jesus died on the cross He took the

punishment you deserved. You believed that He rose from the dead, and you placed your trust in Him. This simple act of faith gave you inner peace and brought you into a personal relationship with God.

Let's suppose, however, that a well-educated skeptic challenges you to present solid historical evidence for the truthfulness of the Gospels. Though some Christians can skillfully defend their faith, you might not be one of them. Does this mean you believe without reason and your faith is just wishful thinking? Not at all! You believe because God showed you your need and His provision for it. That's reason enough! And the peace you have comes from the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:16-17).

Study so that you can give reasons for believing in Christ. But don't worry if you don't have all the answers. The God who helped timid Timothy be a good soldier for Him (2 Tim. 1:7; 2:1-4) can use you too. Thank God for enabling you to believe. Then tell others what He has done for you.

"I put no faith in faith," he said,

"I only trust what's in my head."

So I told him that my reliance

Is faith in God, who thought of science. —Gustafson

The heart has its reasons which reason knows nothing of. —Pascal

2 Timothy 1:8-12 Knock, Knock

By Dave Branon

Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord. —2 Timothy 1:8

A knock came at the door of the home of a man who had a young family. When the father answered the door, he was greeted by someone he had never met—a friendly man from a nearby church who had stopped by to say hello.

His pleasant demeanor and kind words impressed the dad, and the two agreed to meet again. When they did, the visitor introduced the man to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Both he and his wife trusted Jesus as Savior.

That changed everything. The couple began attending church, and all six of their children became believers in Christ. Eventually the dad became a Sunday school teacher and a deacon.

One of this couple's daughters grew up to attend the same Christian college I attended. That student's name was Sue, and from the first time I saw this cute girl from Grand Rapids, I was smitten. The man who had answered the door eventually became my father-in-law. That door-to-door ambassador changed not just one man, but an entire family—and the results continue to reverberate.

Paul encouraged us, "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one" (Col. 4:6).

Whose life, whose future, will you impact?

Lord, lay some soul upon my heart,

And love that soul through me;

And may I nobly do my part

To win that soul for Thee. —Tucker

The Good News of Christ is too good to keep to yourself.

2 Timothy 1:3-12 Caught And Cleaned

By David H. Roper

[God] has saved us and called us with a holy calling. —2 Timothy 1:9

There's a little church in the mountains west of Boise, Idaho, that recently celebrated its centennial. One part of the celebration was an enactment of the history of their church. Townspeople dressed in period costume portrayed the pastors who served their church over the years.

One of the former ministers was played by an old logger who had lived through much of the history of the church. The logger had come to faith in Christ as a result of that pastor's ministry.

He told of the efforts of the pastor to reach him—a hard-drinking, hard-living man with no interest in the gospel, a man who once said he “had never met a preacher he liked.”

The minister was praying one day and complaining that he'd never win the logger to Christ, and that even if he did he wouldn't know what to do with him. The Lord's answer came to him in a way he could understand: “Don't worry about a thing. You 'catch' him, I'll 'clean' him.”

It's a privilege to tell people about Christ. Salvation is “a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace” (2 Timothy 1:9).

If we just keep fishing, we'll “catch” some, and God will make the foulest clean—just as He has done for us. —DHR

You've fished for men's souls for years,

Yet little success you can claim;

Keep casting the net where God leads—

Your faithfulness honors His name. —Egner

You can never speak to the wrong person about Christ.

2 Timothy 1:7 No Fear Factor

Joe Stowell

The reality TV show Fear Factor featured people who are willing to face their worst fears for notoriety and financial gain. I need to tell you that I rarely watched more than a fleeting moment of the show as I surfed with my remote. I find it tough to watch people eat cockroaches, immerse themselves in a tank full of creepy worms with legs, and stay under water far too long with slimy eels crowding around their heads. It's just not my definition of high-value entertainment. But the program did remind me that fear is an emotion that we are all very familiar with. In fact, my discomfort with watching for any length of time probably has something to do with reminding me of things and events that I fear or at least find uncomfortable.

Yet thinking of the program does make me wonder: Would I be willing to conquer my fears to do what Jesus asks me to do, just as these contestants overcome their fears for a moment in the spotlight of national TV?

There is no doubt that fear is no friend of our effectiveness for Christ. We are often fearful about witnessing, giving our money away, saying no to our friends, forgiving a cruel offense, saying yes to a short-term missionary assignment, or risking being misunderstood if we speak up for biblical values at the water-cooler. If Satan can get us stymied by fear, he doesn't have to do much else to shut down our spiritual progress and usefulness.

So, let's talk about what it takes to succeed for Jesus in the face of fear.

First, let's remind ourselves that fear primarily focuses on protecting and preserving “me.” Overcoming fear begins with deciding that some things in life are more important than ourselves. Things like the eternal destinies of others, the prosperity of the work of Christ in our world, the fact that the reputation of Jesus is more strategically important than my fleeting popularity, and that His integrity and righteousness showing up in my life is more important than cheating for some personal gain. Once you and I realize that a self-surpassing passion for others and Jesus trumps fear, we can understand why the apostle John wrote that love casts out fear (1 John 4:18).

But loving can often feel like a risky, sometimes losing proposition, which is why we need another ingredient to release the power of the love that conquers fear. That ingredient is trust. Trusting that God will protect you when you are fearful, that God will reward you when you feel at risk, that God will give you guidance and courage when you feel lost and intimidated is what it takes to defeat the fear that holds you back. Are you afraid that when you love you will become vulnerable, misunderstood, taken advantage of, or misused? Trust God to watch over you, meet your needs, and give you His best, and those fears will become increasingly nonexistent.

When our lives are characterized by trust-filled love, fear ultimately will not be a factor. As President Roosevelt said in his inaugural speech, “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself!”

YOUR JOURNEY...

What does God want you to do but you are afraid of doing?

List the advances you could make spiritually if fear were not a factor in your life. Be specific.

What would it take for you to be more passionate about others and Jesus than you are about yourself?

In Psalm 56:3, what did David say he would do in the face of fear? Are you ready to do the same?

What specifically can you trust God for when fear threatens your walk with Him?

2 Timothy 1:8 Join with Eugenio in Suffering

On March 28, 1997, pastor Eugenio Nij of San Raymundo, Guatemala, was arrested and imprisoned on charges of assault and attempted murder. The charges were completely false--no evidence was produced. Yet Eugenio remained in prison despite petitions signed by hundreds of townspeople. In jail Eugenio continued to minister. He told Pulse magazine: "I've preached thirty or forty times in the fifty days I've been here... I've also been able to comfort fellow prisoners, some of whom have confessed their crimes to me while others are innocent. There have been twenty to thirty conversions... As a minister, I find this a special experience from God." **(Today in the Word)**

2 Timothy 1:8a Suffering for the Gospel

Early in the morning on January 23, 1999, a group of about sixty Hindu fundamentalists shattered the windows of Graham Staines's jeep. Graham, longtime director of a leprosy mission in India, and his sons, Philip and Timothy, were participating in a Bible conference in the village Monoharpur. After breaking the windows, the fanatics poured gasoline over the vehicle and set it on fire. Graham and his sons died, though not instantly, as many heard screams coming from the blaze. Days later, Graham's wife, Gladys, made a public statement forgiving the murderers of her husband and sons. She also expressed hope that the guilty individuals would be touched by the love of Christ. India was stunned by her spirit of forgiveness, as well as her commitment to stay on and direct the mission. Gladys has this advice for future missionaries: "Make very sure of your call from God and, once you're sure of it, be very prepared for whatever, even if it costs your life." The strength, love, and commitment of the Staines family teach us much about a godly response to suffering, the focus of today's devotion.

We suffer in the knowledge of reward and victory. Jesus promised: "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:10-12; 2 Thess. 1:4-5; Heb. 10:32-39; Rev. 2:10). **(Today in the Word)**

2 Timothy 1:8-14 What You Don't Know

By Dave Branon

I know whom I have believed. —2 Timothy 1:12

Do you know an aglet from a tang? Would you recognize duff if you walked on it?

It's not essential to know these terms to make it through life successfully. If you didn't know that an aglet is "the covering on the end of a shoelace," that a tang is "the projecting prong on a tool," or that duff is "the decaying matter found on a forest floor," it's not all that important. You could always look it up.

We can be glad we don't have to know everything to get by in this world. We often can depend on someone else's knowledge. For instance, I don't know how to fix the brakes of my car—but as long as someone else knows and can fix them, I'm okay.

There is a knowledge, however, for which we are individually responsible if we expect to enter heaven. I'm talking about knowing Christ personally. We live in an age of expanding information, and a personal relationship with Christ is the only way to live wisely and be prepared to meet God. The apostle Paul had this in mind when he said, "I know whom I have believed."

Do you know the One who died for you and can forgive your sins? Unless you know Him, all other knowledge is insignificant.

Eternal life is knowing God

Through Jesus Christ His only Son;

Such knowledge is life's greatest quest—

Without it life has not begun. —DJD

To know Christ is the greatest of all knowledge.

2 Timothy 1:9 "Who bath saved us, and called us ... according to his own purpose."

It is a strange thing that men should be so angry against the purpose of God. We ourselves have a purpose. We permit our fellow creatures to have some will of their own, and especially in giving away their own goods. But my God is to be bound and fettered by men, and not permitted to do as he wills with his own. (**Spurgeon, C. H.**)

2 Timothy 1:9a - "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." (**Spurgeon, C H: [2 Timothy 1:9: Salvation Altogether by Grace](#)**)

If we would influence thoughtful persons, it must be by solid arguments. Shallow minds may be wrought upon by mere warmth of emotion and force of excitement, but the more valuable part of the community must be dealt with in quite another manner. When the apostle Paul was desirous to influence his son in the faith, Timothy, who was a diligent and earnest student and a man of gifts as well as of grace, he did not attempt to affect him by mere appeals to his feelings, but felt that the most effectual way to act upon him was to remind him of solid doctrinal truth which he knew him to have believed.

This is a lesson for the ministry at large. Certain earnest preachers are incessantly exciting the people, but seldom if ever instructing them; they carry much fire and very little light. God forbid that we should say a word against appealing to the feelings; this is most needful in its place, but then there is a due proportion to be observed in it. A religion which is based upon, sustained, and maintained simply by excitement will necessarily be very flimsy and insubstantial and will yield very speedily to the crush of opposition or to the crumbling hand of time.

The preacher may touch the feelings by rousing appeals, as the harper touches the harpstrings; he will be very foolish if he should neglect so ready and admirable an instrument; but still as he is dealing with reasonable creatures, he must not forget to enlighten the intellect and instruct the understanding. And how can he appeal to the understanding better than by presenting to it the truth which the Holy Ghost teaches? Scriptural doctrine must furnish us with powerful motives to urge upon the minds of Christians. (from Spurgeon's sermon [2 Timothy 1:9: Salvation Altogether by Grace](#))

2 Timothy 1:10 Touching Bottom

By Vernon C. Grounds

Crowds gathered each week to hear the soul-stirring sermons of Joseph Parker, the famous pastor of London's City Temple in the late 19th century. Then a crisis hit him hard. His wife died after an agonizing illness. Parker later said he would not have allowed a dog to suffer as she did. A heartbroken husband whose prayers had gone unanswered, he confessed publicly that for a week he had even denied that God existed.

But Parker's loss of faith was only temporary. From that experience he gained a stronger personal trust in Jesus' death-destroying resurrection and began to testify: "I have touched the bottom, and it is sound."

Listen to this exclamation of triumph from the risen Christ as He proclaims His victory over the grave: "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore" (Revelation 1:17-18).

Death is our most venomous enemy, robbing us of joy and hope—unless the triumph of Christ's resurrection reverberates in our heart. As we believe in the mighty Victor over death, doubt is banished and light drives away the darkness.

Hold fast to that triumphant trust as you struggle through life's worst crises.

Some through the waters, some through the flood,

Some through the fire, but all through the blood;

Some through great sorrow, but God gives a song

In the night season and all the day long. —Young

Because of Christ's empty tomb, we can be full of hope.

2 Timothy 1:10 The Cape of Good Hope

By Henry G. Bosch

At the southern tip of Africa, a cape jutting out into the ocean once caused sailors great anxiety. Many who attempted to sail around it were lost in the swirling seas. Because adverse weather conditions so often prevailed there, the region was named the Cape of Storms. A Portuguese captain determined to find a safe route through those treacherous waters so his countrymen could reach Cathay and the riches of the East Indies in safety. He succeeded, and the area was renamed the Cape of Good Hope.

We all face a great storm called death. But our Lord has already traveled through it safely and has provided a way for us to do the same. By His crucifixion and resurrection, Christ abolished eternal death for every believer and has permanently established our fellowship with Him in heaven. Although this “last enemy,” physical death, can touch us temporarily, its brief control over our earthly body will end at the resurrection. The sting of death has been removed!

Now all who know Christ as Savior can face life’s final voyage with confidence. Even though the sea may be rough, we will experience no terror as we pass through the “cape of good hope” and into heaven’s harbor. The Master Helmsman Himself has assured our safe passage.

Think of just crossing a river,

Stepping out safe on that shore,

Sadness and suffering over,

Dwelling with Christ evermore! —Anon.

Christ has charted a safe course through the dark waters of death

2 Timothy 1:10 Scared To Death

By Bill Crowder

The opening line of a country song, “Sarabeth is scared to death . . . ,” leads the listener into the fearful heart of a teenage girl who is diagnosed with cancer. The lyrics of “Skin (Sarabeth)” expose the struggles she faces, not only with the disease and its treatment but also with the obvious evidence of her struggle—the loss of her hair (hence, the title). It is a touching song of triumph in the midst of tragedy, as Sarabeth deals with the understandable life-and-death fears that cancer brings.

The specter of death is faced by every human being. Yet, whether we face that reality with fear or with confidence is not dependent on having a good outlook or a positive attitude. The way we face death depends completely on whether or not we have a personal relationship with Jesus, who gave Himself to die so that death itself could be abolished.

Paul wrote to Timothy that our Savior was the One who “abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10). The result is that even in the most disturbing times of life, we never need to be scared to death.

We can live confidently and filled with hope, because Jesus conquered death.

Your love, O God, would spare no pain

To conquer death and win;

You sent Your only Son to die

To rescue us from sin. —M. Gustafson

Because Christ is alive, we need not fear death.

2 Timothy 1:10 Candles Or Stars?

By Vernon C. Grounds

Whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this? —John 11:26

Some say that life is like the flickering flame of a candle. When the flame is snuffed out, the light is gone forever. They believe that when we breathe our last breath, we are totally extinguished—as if we had never been!

British writer Arthur Porritt gives this sad description of how atheist Charles Bradlaugh was buried: “No prayer was said at the grave. Indeed, not a single word was uttered. The remains, placed in a light coffin, were lowered into the earth in a quite unceremonious fashion as if carrion were being hustled out of sight.” Porritt said that he came away “heart-frozen,” realizing how the “loss of faith in the continuity of human personality after death gives death an appalling victory.”

Life is not a brief candle-flame that death will forever extinguish. Christians in particular can rejoice that Christ “abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10), that He is “the resurrection and the life,” and that all who believe in Him “shall never die” (John 11:25-26).

Because of God’s power and grace exhibited at Calvary, we will receive bodies like Jesus’ resurrection body, and we “shall shine ... like the stars forever” (Daniel 12:3). Praise God! We’re not flickering candles, but shining stars!

In bodies that will ne'er grow old,

We'll reign with Him, through years untold;

O precious thought, we all shall be

With Christ through all eternity. —Watson

Because Jesus lives, we too will live.

2 Timothy 1:10 Unlimited Power

By Vernon C. Grounds

Read: Isaiah 40:25-31

[God] brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name. —Isaiah 40:26

Why don't the stars fall down?" A child may ask that question, but so does an astronomer. And they both get essentially the same answer: A mysterious power or energy upholds everything and prevents our cosmos from collapsing into chaos.

Hebrews 1:3 tells us that it is Jesus who upholds all things by the word of His power. He is the source of all the energy there is, whether the explosive potential packed inside an atom or the steaming kettle on the kitchen stove.

That energy is not simply a mindless force. No, God is the personal power who created everything out of nothing, including the stars (Genesis 1; Isaiah 40:26); who divided the Red Sea and delivered the Israelites from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 14:21-22); who brought to pass the virgin birth of Jesus (Luke 1:34-35); and who raised Him from the dead and conquered death (2 Timothy 1:10). Our God, the one and only true God, has the power to answer prayer, meet our needs, and change our lives.

So when life's problems are baffling, when you face some Red Sea impossibility, call upon the wonder-working God who upholds all things. And remember that with our almighty God, nothing is impossible.

Thou art coming to a King—

Large petitions with thee bring;

For His grace and power are such

None can ever ask too much. —Newton

God is greater than our greatest problem.

I Know Him

By Herbert Vander Lugt

2 Timothy 1:1-12

I know whom I have believed. —2 Timothy 1:12

When the great Princeton scholar James Alexander was on his deathbed, his wife incorrectly quoted 2 Timothy 1:12, “I know in whom I have believed.” Gently he corrected her for adding the word in. He wanted to make it clear that in addition to possessing an accurate understanding of the person and work of Jesus Christ, he knew Him in a deeply personal way. He saw his impending death

as the door through which he would be ushered immediately into the presence of the One he had come to love and know so well.

As a former pastor, I have talked and prayed with scores of people on the brink of death. I have observed every emotion from sheer terror to joyous anticipation. Even among Christians, I've seen some die more triumphantly than others. Believers who show the most confidence at death are those who have a deeply personal relationship with Jesus. Like the apostle Paul, they can honestly say, "I know whom I have believed."

We develop an intimacy with the Savior by learning about Him in the Bible, expressing our love to Him in prayer, and obeying His Word. As we learn to follow the Spirit's leading, He'll witness with our spirit so we too will be able to say, "I know whom I have believed."

But I know whom I have believed,

And am persuaded that He is able

To keep that which I've committed

Unto Him against that day. —Whittle

Faith in Christ is the bridge across the gulf of death.

2 Timothy 1:12

Paul does not say, "I know what I have believed," though that would have been true. He does not say, "I know when I have believed," though that would have been correct. Nor does he say, "I know how much I have believed," although he had well-weighed his faith. He does not even say, "I know in whom I have believed." He says expressly, "I know whom I have believed," as much as to say, "I know the person into whose hand I have committed my present condition and my eternal destiny. I know who he is, and I therefore, with-out any hesitation, leave myself in his hands." (**Spurgeon, C. H.**)

I Know The Author

By **M.R. De Haan**

2 Timothy 1:12

In his letter to Timothy, Paul did not say, "I know in whom I have believed," although this also was true. He did not say, "I know what I have believed," although this also was true. But Paul said, "I know whom I have believed" (2 Tim. 1:12).

Not only did Paul know something about Christ, but he also knew Him personally. Salvation is not merely a matter of knowing something but believing Someone.

Do you know Him? Then do you enjoy reading what He says? If you know the author of the Book, you will love His Book.

A young woman laid aside a certain book she was reading because she thought it was dull. Some time later she became engaged to be married. One evening she said to her fiancé, "I have a book written by a man with the same name as yours. Isn't that a coincidence!" The man replied, "That's not a coincidence. I wrote that book!"

That night she sat up until 3 o'clock in the morning reading the book she once found dull. It was now the most thrilling book she had ever read. She had fallen in love with the author.

Is the Bible a dull book to you? Then maybe you should meet the Author.

Oh, Christ, He is the fountain,

The deep sweet well of love!

The streams on earth I've tasted,

More deep I'll drink above! —Cousin

To know Christ, the Living Word, is to love the Bible, the Written Word.

2 Timothy 1:12, 14 He is able to keep my deposit ... The good deposit, keep.

There is a double deposit here, and the comparison comes out clear and marked in the Greek. When we give our most precious treasure into the custodianship of Jesus, He turns to honor us by entrusting his own treasure to our care. Oh that we might be as eager to keep that which He entrusts to us, as He is that which we entrust to Him; so that He might be able to say of us, "I know them in whom I have trusted, and am persuaded that they will never fail to do whatever needs to be done for my honor and glory."

Our deposit with Christ. — What is the true policy of life? How can I best spend these few years to the best advantage? What is there beyond, and beyond? Such questions come to all earnest souls, and greatly trouble them, till they entrust the keeping of their souls and the direction of their lives into the hands of the faithful Savior. We feel sure that He has the words of eternal life, and that all power is given to Him in heaven and on earth. At first there is something of a venture — we trust Him; next, there is the knowledge which comes from experience — we know Him; lastly, there is strong confidence — we are persuaded that He is able.

Christ's deposit with us. — And what is this? 1 Timothy 6:20, 14, and 4:16, suggest the answer. To every believer Jesus hands the custody of his honor, his Gospel, his Father's glory, his holy day, the ordinances which He bequeathed to the Church. As Ezra charged the priests to bear safely through the desert march the sacred vessels, so our Captain charges us, and throughout the whole Bible rings the injunction: "Be ye clean, ye that bear the vessels of the Lord." (**Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily**)

A Known Commodity

Joe Stowell

2 Timothy 1:12

"I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day." 2 Timothy 1:12

My new ministry was at a large, sophisticated church just outside of Detroit. I confess—at only 36 years old, I felt more than a little intimidated in this congregation populated with high-powered automobile industry executives. With my securities running full bore, like a fool rushing in where angels fear to tread, I dove in. And of course, everyone was outwardly very kind: "Oh, we are so glad you're here. Let's go forward for the Lord!" But inwardly, I'm sure their thoughts were more like: "Who are you? What will you do to us? Can we really trust you?"

The tipping point for me came about two years into the ministry as I was driving home from a board meeting. I sensed that something had been different in that meeting. The elders were listening to me. What I was saying seemed to be carrying some weight, and we were interacting on a deeper level. I had crossed the bridge of their initial uncertainties and had gained their trust. I was no longer a question mark in their hearts but a known commodity.

Paul talks about the importance of relationships being built on trust in his second letter to Timothy. His circumstances were anything but great. He was imprisoned for his proclamation of Jesus and was concerned that Timothy be able to effectively and accurately guard the precious message of the gospel. And yet in the storm of his circumstances, he found an anchor—his unwavering trust in Jesus; a trust that Paul had experienced personally in His walk with the Lord.

I love the fact that Paul expresses his confidence in Jesus in relational terms: "I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard that which I have entrusted to him for that day." Paul is all about doctrine, but at the very core of his belief structure is his unshakable trust in the person of Jesus. He tells the Philippians that everything else is "a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord (Philippians 3:8)." There is nothing dry or dusty about Paul's theology. It's all about what he knows and has experienced of Christ! And, in all that he has experienced—shipwreck, torture, imprisonment, ridicule—he is able to trust because he knows Jesus is true.

Having a proven sense of confidence in Jesus will change the way that you and I view life. The more you get to know Him, the more your trust will increase. The more you consider His character and the more you trace the pattern of His work across the pages of your life, the more you'll know and be convinced that He is worthy of your trust. We may not know where our circumstances are going to take us, and we may not know what the future holds, but if we know Him, that's enough.

Because He is, in the strongest, most wonderful terms possible, a known commodity!

YOUR JOURNEY...

How is Paul's passion for knowing Jesus expressed in Philippians 3:7-11?

How does that passion fuel his confidence when he writes to Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:8-14?

What tangible steps can you take to get to know Jesus better today?

Becoming A Mentor

By David H. Roper

2 Timothy 1:13-2:2

The things that you have heard from me ... , commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. —2 Timothy 2:2

According to Homer's *Odyssey*, when King Odysseus went off to fight in the Trojan war, he left his son Telemachus in the hands of a wise old man named Mentor. Mentor was charged with the task of teaching the young man wisdom.

More than 2,000 years after Homer, a French scholar and theologian by the name of François Fénelon adapted the story of Telemachus in a novel titled *Télémaque*. In it he enlarged the character of Mentor. The word mentor soon came to mean "a wise and responsible tutor"—an experienced person who advises, guides, teaches, inspires, challenges, corrects, and serves as a model.

Second Timothy 2:2 describes spiritual mentoring, and the Bible gives us many examples. Timothy had Paul; Mark had Barnabas; Joshua had Moses; Elisha had Elijah.

But what about today? Who will love and work with new Christians and help them grow spiritually strong? Who will encourage, guide, and model the truth for them? Who will call young believers to accountability and work with God to help mold their character?

Will you become one whom God can use to impart wisdom and to help others grow toward maturity?

THINKING IT OVER

Who has helped you to grow in your faith?

How did that person help you?

By teaching, example, or friendship?

To whom can you be a mentor?

God teaches us so that we can teach others.

2 Timothy 1:14 Guarding the "Good Deposit"

Earlier this past summer, a group of high school boys on an overnight church camping trip in Texas lost most of their food supply to raccoons that swarmed over the campsite after dark. The raccoons scaled an eight-foot pole to devour the food of some campers. They even opened one student's fishing tackle box and ate his rubber worms. This not-so-serious occasion helps to illustrate a very serious reality: the church's need to guard the ""good deposit"" of the gospel that Jesus Christ has entrusted to His body. Near the end of his life, Paul warned his spiritual son, Timothy, to hold to the truth against all opposition. (**Today in the Word**)

Be A Friend

By Herbert Vander Lugt

2 Timothy 1:15-18

The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me. —2 Timothy 1:16

I received an e-mail asking if I would spend some time with an ailing pastor. The writer said, "Even pastors need to be ministered to."

She is right. Everybody needs the encouragement of a friend. Even the courageous and deeply spiritual apostle Paul drew on the support of friends as he languished in a dungeon awaiting execution. This is evident from his desire that the Lord extend special mercy to the family of a friend named Onesiphorus (2 Tim. 1:16).

This man had gone to great lengths to find Paul, who was imprisoned in Rome. His visits to the apostle were a great encouragement. Paul expressed his gratitude for Onesiphorus, and he wrote, "The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day" (v.18). Since all believers will receive mercy when they stand before Christ, I believe Paul meant that God will give special recognition to those who have shown special kindness to His servants.

Many people are looking for a little encouragement from a Christian friend. A pleasant greeting, a verse from the Bible, or a simple prayer can do wonders. Onesiphorus was a special friend because he showed special kindness. Let's follow his example.

Our world around us surges—duties vie

For all our time, our energies, our care;

But greater duty urges: Don't pass by

A hurting heart whose burden we may share. —Gustafson

Kind words are always music to a heavy heart.

A Faithful Friend

By Herbert Vander Lugt

2 Timothy 1:15-18

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. —Proverbs 17:17

After one of my relatives had a stroke, she needed help to get around and could no longer remember recent events. One day, my wife Ginny suggested that we take her out to dinner. I wondered if we should, because afterward she wouldn't even remember what we had done. Ginny responded, "While we are with her she will know we love her." How true!

All of us need to know we are loved. I recall the answer I received when I asked a 90-year-old shut-in how his grandchildren were doing. He said, "I don't know. I never see them."

The apostle Paul was locked in a damp Roman dungeon, awaiting execution. He couldn't help but feel hurt that many former friends had deserted him. How grateful he was for the friendship of Onesiphorus!

This man left his family and an active ministry in Ephesus to befriend Paul. When he arrived in Rome, he searched diligently to find where Paul was imprisoned (2 Timothy 1:17). And he courageously visited the apostle again and again. Paul said of Onesiphorus, "He often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain" (v.16).

Remember, "A friend loves at all times," especially in adversity (Proverbs 17:17). Like Onesiphorus, let's commit ourselves to being faithful to our friends.

Someday I hope with you to stand

Before the throne, at God's right hand,

And say to you at journey's end,

"Praise God, you've been to me a friend." —Clark

Adversity is the test of true friendship.

2 Timothy 1:16-18 A Man Like Onesiphorus

Many Americans know the name of Nathan Hale, the Revolutionary War hero who was executed by the British on September 22, 1776, for spying. George Washington desperately needed information about the movements of General Howe, his British foe. Hale volunteered to go behind enemy lines, knowing what would happen to him if caught. Hale told a fellow officer he was ready to render whatever service was required of him. Onesiphorus had that same attitude. He sounds like the kind of man who would have given whatever service and sacrifice the gospel required.

2 TIMOTHY 2

2 Timothy 2:1-4

Audie Murphy was an unlikely hero. Weighing in at only 112 pounds and with the face of a child, Audie was 18 years old when he went overseas during World War II. Nothing about him suggested a hero in the making. Yet when called upon by his commanding officers to do the duty of a soldier, Murphy held nothing back.

By war's end, the quiet boy from Texas had fought with extraordinary bravery and saved the lives of countless fellow soldiers. He

returned home to an adoring public, was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, and received at least 36 other medals—more than anyone else in U.S. history, all because nothing meant more to him as a soldier than the will of his commanding officer. (**Today in the Word**, Moody Bible Institute)

2 TIMOTHY 2:1-13 -A strong desire to please God is the highest incentive for doing His will and shows a true understanding of godly fear. We may have other worthy motives, such as the inner satisfaction of doing what's right or the anticipation of heavenly rewards. But we bring the greatest glory to God when we obey and serve Him because we long to do what brings Him delight.

Craig, a first-grader, beamed with satisfaction as he handed me a spelling test on which his teacher had written a large "100—Good work!" Craig said, "I showed this to Dad and Mother because I knew it would please them." I could just see him riding home on the bus, hardly able to wait for the moment when his parents would express their excitement with how well he had done. His desire to make Dad and Mom happy obviously was a strong motivating factor in his life.

When Paul used the simile of a soldier serving with single-minded devotion to please his commanding officer (2 Tim. 2:3-4), he wanted Timothy to know the supreme reason for serving God, even when the going gets tough. Wholehearted devotion, marked by hard work and careful attention to God's rules, brings the greatest glory to the Lord when it comes from a yielded, loving heart. Our Savior, who in His humanity shrank from the prospect of being made the sin-offering for mankind, nevertheless prayed, "Not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42) Our motive, like His, should be the desire to please the Father. —H. V. Lugt

Man weighs the deeds; God weighs the intentions. ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Example That Encourages

By Albert Lee

2 Timothy 2:1-7

I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet ... I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. — John 13:14-15

The story is told that in the late 1800s a group of European pastors attended D. L. Moody's Bible conference in Massachusetts. Following their custom, they put their shoes outside their room before they slept, expecting them to be cleaned by hotel workers. When Moody saw the shoes, he mentioned the need to others because he knew their custom. But he was met with silence. Moody collected all the shoes and cleaned them himself. A friend who made an unexpected visit to his room revealed what Moody had done. The word spread, and the next few nights others took turns doing the cleaning.

Moody's leadership style of humility inspired others to follow his example. The apostle Paul reminded Timothy to "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others" (2 Tim. 2:1-2 niv). When we remember that our strength is a result of God's grace, that keeps us humble. Then in humility we pass on God's truth by being an example that encourages and inspires others to follow.

Jesus Himself is our example of servanthood. He gave His very life for us.

Lord Jesus, I know little about humility.

Show me and teach me as I read about Your

example in Your Word. Give me the grace

to humble myself and serve others.

Humility is the result of knowing God and knowing yourself.

Insight - Paul had been mentoring (Ed: better "discipling") Timothy as he pastored a church in Ephesus. Paul instructed Timothy not only in matters of faith (2 Tim. 3:14-17), but in matters of church etiquette and order, and in practical matters of conducting himself in a manner that reflected the grace of Jesus Christ. The importance of the last of these is reflected in today's passage (vv.3-6). But Paul didn't simply give direction and instruction; he modeled what he encouraged. Modeling Christ to those around us is one of the ways we demonstrate that He is our leader (vv.2-3). We see this principle also in 1 Corinthians when Paul told the Corinthian church to follow his example as he followed the example of Christ (11:1).

What Comes Naturally?

By Richard De Haan

2 Timothy 2:1-15

Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. —2 Timothy 2:1

The story is told about an elderly man who retired after many years in the British Army. One day a man who knew about his long and distinguished military career decided to play a prank on him. As the old soldier walked down the street with his arms full of packages, the jokester sneaked up behind him and shouted, "Attention!" Without hesitation, the military man dropped his arms to his side, and every package went tumbling to the sidewalk. Without a conscious thought, the veteran was doing what comes naturally for a soldier.

Similarly, as believers in Christ, we should respond in a manner that corresponds with our new life. Our behavior is to be more and more in line with the example of Jesus' life. We still must deal with sinful desires, so we need to discipline ourselves to be the kind of person God wants us to be. Like a soldier or athlete in training (2 Timothy 2:3-5), we need to practice repeatedly until doing what's right comes naturally.

Through faith in Christ we are children of the heavenly Father. By the power of the indwelling Spirit, therefore, let us develop the habit of submitting to God's Word. Then, in every situation of life we will increasingly find that obeying Him is "doing what comes naturally."

Lord, may our lips and lives express

The blessed gospel we profess;

So let our works and virtues shine

And speak of Him who is divine. —Anon.

When we walk with Christ, we become more like Him.

2 Timothy 2:2 - Passing the Baton

The list of people influenced directly or indirectly by Moody Bible Institute founder Dwight Moody seems endless. Another story found in the book *A Passion for Souls* concerns Rev. Clarence Chambers, a Baptist minister in Aberdeen, Scotland who heard Moody speak in 1874 and was "deeply moved and personally affected." Rev. Chambers shared that spiritual fire with his son Oswald... and through his incredible teaching, preserved by his wife in handwritten notes which were later published, the world is still benefiting from the personal devotions of Oswald Chambers. It's exciting to hear about the great ways God can use His faithful servants to touch lives. Paul and Timothy are prime examples of this. **(Today in the Word)**

The Value Of One

By David C. McCasland

2 Timothy 2:1-7

The things that you have heard from me ... commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. —2 Timothy 2:2

When Harvey Penick died at the age of 90, the world of golf lost one of its greatest teachers. Although his books have sold millions of copies, he was remembered most for his direct impact on people.

An Associated Press story stated, "Penick refused to teach methods or group lessons, instead applying his wisdom to the talents of individual players." Tom Kite, the leading money winner in PGA Tour history, was 13 when he began working with Penick. Ben Crenshaw began learning the game from Penick at the age of 6.

Penick, who could have spent his life speaking to crowds, chose to invest himself in people—many of them children—one at a time.

The apostle Paul modeled this kind of unselfish mentoring relationship with a young man named Timothy. Then he urged Timothy to do the same with others. He wrote, "The things that you have heard from me ... commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others" (2 Tim. 2:2).

Face to face—person to person—one to one. This is the most effective way of teaching. It goes beyond the telling of facts to communicating genuine interest and love.

Why not begin today to invest yourself in someone who needs a spiritual teacher, mentor, and friend?

To help another person grow,

You have to pay a price;

It takes the giving of yourself—

And that means sacrifice. —DJD

One who follows Christ is to lead the way for another.

2 Timothy 2:1-6 Chinese Proverbs

Read: 2 Timothy 2:1-6

Always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. —1 Corinthians 15:58

Chinese proverbs are common and often have stories behind them. The proverb “pulling up a crop to help it grow” is about an impatient man in the Song Dynasty. He was eager to see his rice seedlings grow quickly. So he thought of a solution. He would pull up each plant a few inches. After a day of tedious work, the man surveyed his paddy field. He was happy that his crop seemed to have “grown” taller. But his joy was short-lived. The next day, the plants had begun to wither because their roots were no longer deep.

In 2 Timothy 2:6, the apostle Paul compares the work of being a minister of the gospel to that of a farmer. He wrote to encourage Timothy that, like farming, making disciples can be continuous, hard labor. You plow, you sow, you wait, you pray. You desire to see the fruits of your labor quickly, but growth takes time. And as the Chinese proverb so aptly illustrates, any effort to hurry the process won't be helpful. Commentator William Hendriksen states: “If Timothy . . . exerts himself to the full in the performance of his God-given spiritual task, he . . . will see in the lives of others . . . the beginnings of those glorious fruits that are mentioned in Galatians 5:22, 23.”

As we labor faithfully, we wait patiently on the Lord, who makes things grow (1 Cor. 3:7).

Dear Lord of the harvest, help us to work faithfully as
we wait patiently on You for the fruit. Encourage us
when we are discouraged and strengthen us when we
are weary. Help us to persevere, for You are faithful.

We sow the seed—God produces the harvest.

INSIGHT: Timothy is first introduced in Acts 16:1. Paul and Silas had been working their way through the provinces of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) sharing the gospel of Christ. When Paul and Silas arrived in Lystra, they met Timothy (a follower of Christ) and Paul invited this young man to join them. Timothy became a student of Paul's and a pastor who, according to tradition, shepherded the church at Ephesus. Eventually, he received the two letters from Paul that bear his name. Each of those letters was intended to instruct and encourage the young pastor in his work with the congregation he served.

By Poh Fang Chia

He Did It

By David C. McCasland

2 Timothy 2:1-10

The things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.
—2 Timothy 2:2

At the memorial service for LeRoy Eims, longtime staff member with The Navigators, I pondered why hundreds of colleagues and friends had come from across the US to pay tribute. Why did so many people love him so deeply?

As a young Christian, LeRoy had been challenged to disciple others one-on-one. He took seriously Paul's charge to Timothy: "The things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). LeRoy embraced that clear, simple command of Scripture and practiced it faithfully for more than 50 years.

Scores of people who packed the church that afternoon had lived in LeRoy and Virginia Eims' home. They had been embraced, encouraged, and instructed by him. As his spiritual children, they had multiplied his ministry by investing themselves in others, just as he had in them.

One sentence in a written tribute captured the essence of the man: "His life was characterized by singleness of purpose, great creativity and a wonderful sense of humor."

LeRoy's example spurs us on to a lifetime of faithfully following the Lord. He did it! And by God's grace, so can we.

It is in loving—not in being loved—

The heart is blessed;

It is in giving—not in seeking gifts—

We find our quest. —Anon.

You can teach more with your life than with your lips.

The Next Generation

By David C. McCasland

2 Timothy 2:1-13

The things that you have heard from me ... , commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. —2 Timothy 2:2

A man who played double-bass in the Mexico City Philharmonic told me that the finest instruments are made of wood that has been allowed to age naturally to remove the moisture. "You must age the wood for 80 years, then play the instrument for 80 years before it reaches its best sound," said Luis Antonio Rojas. "A craftsman must use wood cut and aged by someone else, and he will never see any instrument reach its peak during his own lifetime."

Many important things in life are "next generation" matters—teaching, training, and parenting are among them. The apostle Paul invested himself in people whose spiritual influence would continue long after he was gone. He wrote to Timothy: "The things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). Paul, Timothy, "faithful men," and "others" represent four spiritual generations built on the enduring foundation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Are we living only for today and the short term, or are we giving ourselves to others who will continue the faith after our race is run? Living for Christ and making disciples are all about the next generation.

Day by day perform your mission,

With Christ's help keep at your tasks;

Be encouraged by His presence—

Faithfulness is all He asks. —Bosch

We influence future generations by living for Christ today.

2 Timothy 2:2a

Becoming A Mentor (Ed: Becoming a Disciple Maker)

2 Timothy 1:13-2:2

The things that you have heard from me ... , commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. — 2 Timothy 2:2

According to Homer's *Odyssey*, when King Odysseus went off to fight in the Trojan war, he left his son Telemachus in the hands of a wise old man named Mentor. Mentor was charged with the task of teaching the young man wisdom.

More than 2,000 years after Homer, a French scholar and theologian by the name of François Fénelon adapted the story of Telemachus in a novel titled *Télémaque*. In it he enlarged the character of Mentor. The word mentor soon came to mean "a wise and responsible tutor"—an experienced person who advises, guides, teaches, inspires, challenges, corrects, and serves as a model.

Second Timothy 2:2 describes spiritual mentoring, and the Bible gives us many examples. Timothy had Paul; Mark had Barnabas; Joshua had Moses; Elisha had Elijah.

But what about today? Who will love and work with new Christians and help them grow spiritually strong? Who will encourage, guide, and model the truth for them? Who will call young believers to accountability and work with God to help mold their character?

Will you become one whom God can use to impart wisdom and to help others grow toward maturity? —David H. Roper

THINKING IT OVER

Who has helped you to grow in your faith?

How did that person help you?

By teaching, example, or friendship?

To whom can you be a mentor?

God teaches us so that we can teach others. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

2 Timothy 2:3 - FISHING IN A TUB

Thou, therefore, endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 2 Timothy 2:3

The other day I read about a man who decided that his weekly fishing excursion was costing him too much money and causing him too much work. Therefore he purchased a large washtub, filled it with water, placed it under a shade tree in his backyard, pulled up a comfortable lawn chair and started his fishing. It seemed like a great idea. He thought of the money he was saving, and of the fact that he was no longer weary from hooking and unhooking his boat and loading and unloading his motor. He was also avoiding the bother of toting a gasoline can, tackle box, and supply of bait. Often he caught as many fish out of the tub as he did when he worked so hard on the lake or stream! (Exactly nothing!) However, this business of fishing in a tub gradually lost its appeal. He never felt the tingle of excitement that comes when the bobber disappears and a sudden tug is felt on the line. He also missed the fact that he no longer could tell stories to his friends about the large fish he caught, or the larger one that got away. Finally, he decided that although fishing in a tub is cheaper and easier, it is not nearly as rewarding as going to a lake or stream.

Christians who are primarily concerned with relaxation and ease will soon find that life without discipleship and zealous service is not very rewarding. It's like fishing in a tub! Paul knew this, so he exhorted Timothy to endure hardness like a good soldier, to strive to excel like a determined athlete, and to toil patiently like a faithful farmer. This is the kind of Christian life that pays dividends and produces inner joy and satisfaction. Only thus can one know the thrill of being a true "fisher of men" and of bringing a needy soul to Jesus Christ!

Fishers would you be of men?
Cut loose every shoreline then;
Listen to the Master speak:
"Launch out! Launch out into the deep!"— J. Oatman, Jr.

If you are not "FISHING," you are not properly FOLLOWING the Lord! ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

2 Timothy 2:3-13

A Consistent Father

Herbert Vander Lugt

If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us... He cannot deny Himself. —2 Timothy 2:12-13

I once knew a father who displayed an alarming lack of consistency. When he was in a happy frame of mind, he allowed his children to get away with anything short of complete mayhem. But when he was in a foul mood, the slightest provocation could ignite a severe reaction from him. His children learned to take a quick look at Dad when he walked in the door. Then they made themselves

scarce or greeted him enthusiastically, depending on what they saw. Even the dog seemed to notice the difference.

God is not like such a father. He is thoroughly consistent and just. This is the theme of the “faithful saying” Paul quoted in 2 Timothy 2:11-13.

God always rewards faith and perseverance. Likewise, He always punishes faithlessness and disobedience. The words “If we are faithless, He remains faithful” are a warning against presumption, not a reassuring word to the faithless. God’s faithfulness means that He follows through on His threats as well as His promises.

The one thing God cannot do is act contrary to His nature. Although He will fulfill His threats to those who continue to deny Him, He will also fulfill His promises to the faithful.

What a warning this is to the faithless! But what a comfort to those who put their faith in Christ!

For Further Study

What does Psalm 103:6-10 say about God's character?

What do verses 11-14 say about the scope of His mercy?

To whom is that mercy extended? (vv.17-18).

God keeps His Word—you can count on it!

Living Testament

By Dennis Fisher

2 Timothy 2:1-10

Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel. —2 Timothy 2:8

Watchman Nee was arrested for his faith in Christ in 1952, and he spent the rest of his life in prison. He died in his jail cell on May 30, 1972. When his niece came to collect his few possessions, she was given a scrap of paper that a guard had found by his bed. On it was written his life’s testimony:

“Christ is the Son of God who died for the redemption of sinners and was resurrected after three days. This is the greatest truth in the universe. I die because of my belief in Christ—Watchman Nee.”

Tradition says that the apostle Paul also was martyred for his faith in Christ. In a letter written shortly before his death, Paul exhorted his readers: “Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, for which I suffer trouble ... ; but the Word of God is not chained” (2 Tim. 2:8-9).

We may not be called upon to be martyred as witnesses to the reality of Christ—as millions of His followers through the centuries have been—but we are all called to be a living testament of Jesus’ work on our behalf. No matter the outcome, from a heart of gratitude for God’s gracious gift we can tell others what Jesus has done for us.

The Christ of God to glorify,

His grace in us to magnify;

His Word of life to all make known—

Be this our work, and this alone. —Whittle

Let your life as well as your lips speak for Christ.

An Attached Fuel Hose

By C. P. Hia

2 Timothy 2:1-7

No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life. —2 Timothy 2:4

Felipe Massa of Brazil should have won the Formula One Grand Prix in Singapore in September 2008. But as he drove off from a

refueling stop while in the lead, the fuel hose was still attached. By the time his team removed the hose, he had lost so much time that he finished 13th.

The apostle Paul warned Timothy of another kind of attachment that would cause him defeat—"the affairs of this life" (2 Tim. 2:4). He urged Timothy not to let anything slow him down or distract him from the cause of his Lord and Master.

There are many attractive things in our world that are so easy to get entangled with—hobbies, sports, TV, computer games. These may start off as "refueling" activities, but later they can take up so much of our time and thought that they interfere with the purpose for which God created us: to share the good news of Christ, serve Him with our gifts, and bring glory to Him.

Paul told Timothy why he ought not be entangled with this world's affairs: So that he could "please Him" (v.4). If your desire is to please the Lord Jesus, you will want to stay untangled from the world. As John reminds us, "The world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2:17).

For Further Study If you have questions about your life's purpose in this world, read online [Why In The World Am I Here?](http://www.discoveryseries.org/q0502) at www.discoveryseries.org/q0502

Although we live in this world, we must declare our allegiance to heaven.

2 Timothy 2:1-10 Faithful Service

You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. —2 Timothy 2:3

Having served in World War I, C. S. Lewis was no stranger to the stresses of military service. In a public address during the Second World War, he eloquently described the hardships a soldier has to face: "All that we fear from all the kinds of adversity . . . is collected together in the life of the soldier on active service. Like sickness, it threatens pain and death. Like poverty, it threatens ill lodging, cold, heat, thirst, and hunger. Like slavery, it threatens toil, humiliation, injustice, and arbitrary rule. Like exile, it separates you from all you love."

The apostle Paul used the analogy of a soldier suffering hardship to describe the trials a believer may experience in service to Christ. Paul—now at the end of his life—had faithfully endured suffering for the sake of the gospel. He encourages Timothy to do the same: "You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 2:3).

Serving Christ requires perseverance. We may encounter obstacles of poor health, troubled relationships, or difficult circumstances. But as a good soldier we press on—with God's strength—because we serve the King of Kings and Lord of Lords who sacrificed Himself for us!

Dear Father, help me to be faithful in my service to You. Thank You for the strength You provide to help me persevere through suffering.

Share this prayer from our Facebook page with your friends. [facebook.com/ourdailybread](https://www.facebook.com/ourdailybread)

God's love does not keep us from trials, but sees us through them.

INSIGHT:

The Bible often uses colorful metaphors to describe the Christian. Sheep (John 10:27), salt and light (Matt. 5:13-14), and ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20) are well-known examples. In today's reading Paul uses three common professions to describe the motivation and challenges of the Christian life. He speaks of the perseverance and allegiance of the soldier (vv. 3-4), the dedication and discipline of the athlete (v. 5), and the diligence and patience of the farmer (v. 6). Paul also uses these metaphors again in his letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 9:7,27).

By Dennis Fisher

2 Timothy 2:9

Locked In

By Dennis Fisher

Jean-Dominique Bauby's memoir, *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*, describes his life after a massive stroke left him with a condition called "Locked-In Syndrome." Although he was almost completely paralyzed, Bauby was able to write his book by blinking his left eyelid. An aide would recite a coded alphabet, until Bauby blinked to choose the letter of a word he was dictating. The book required

about 200,000 blinks to write. Bauby used the only physical ability left him to communicate with others.

In 2 Timothy we read of Paul experiencing a different kind of “locked-in syndrome.” Under house arrest, the apostle learned that his execution might be imminent. With this in view, he told Timothy: “I suffer trouble ... even to the point of chains; but the Word of God is not chained” (2 Tim. 2:9). In spite of his isolation, Paul welcomed visitors, wrote letters of encouragement, and rejoiced at the spread of God’s Word.

For some of us, circumstances may have isolated us from others. Lying in a hospital bed, serving time in a prison, or being a shut-in can make us feel that we are experiencing our own “locked-in syndrome.” If this is true for you, why not prayerfully reflect on some ways you can still reach out to others.

Give me to serve in humble sphere, I ask not aught beside! Content to fill a little place, If God be glorified. —Anon.

No deed is too small when done for Christ.

The Reason And The Risk

By Mart De Haan

2 Timothy 2:1-13

I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ. —2 Timothy 2:10

It was the kind of moment that people have nightmares about. A tanker truck filled with 2,500 gallons of propane gas caught fire while parked at a fuel storage warehouse. The flames shot 30 to 40 feet out of the back of the truck and quickly spread to a loading dock. Several large tanks nearby were in danger of exploding.

At that point, the plant manager, after helping to rescue the badly burned driver, jumped into the cab and drove the blazing truck away from the warehouse. His quick action and courage saved lives.

The apostle Paul also risked his life on behalf of others (2 Timothy 2:10). He was stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:19). On another occasion he was mobbed, whipped, and imprisoned (16:22-23). Three times he was shipwrecked, and he was beaten many times with lashes and rods (2 Corinthians 11:23-28). Why did Paul willingly endure such suffering? He was thinking in terms of eternal fire and eternal life, so he gladly undertook the risk.

Do we see the danger as clearly as Paul did? Do we take advantage of opportunities to go to the rescue of people who need the good news of Christ? Are we filled with the same sense of purpose that caused Paul to endure all things for the sake of the lost?

THINKING IT OVER

What risks do we take if we dare to tell others about Jesus? Physical harm? Verbal abuse? Rejection? Ridicule? Loss of possessions? Other?

It’s risky to go out on a limb—but that’s where the fruit is.

Saving Ourselves

By Julie Ackerman Link

2 Timothy 2:11

Inside, music was playing. Outside, leaves were falling. Catching a gust of wind, one of the last leaves of autumn blew briefly upward as I heard the phrase, “He is risen!” By the end of the song, however, the leaf had reached the ground. Gravity had overcome the breeze.

Later, I overheard three middle-aged women discussing diets, exercise, face-lifts, and other age-defying efforts. Like the leaf, they were trying to keep gravity from pulling them toward the inevitable.

Their conversation reminds me of the good works people do to try to save themselves from spiritual death. But just as leaves cannot keep from falling and people cannot keep from aging, no one can work hard enough to avoid the consequences of sin, which is death (Rom. 6:23).

At the crucifixion, mockers challenged Jesus to save Himself. Instead, He put His life into the hands of God, and God gave back to Him not only His own life but ours as well. To receive salvation, we too must simply put our lives into the hands of God, for if the

Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead lives in us, He will give life to us as well (Rom. 8:11).

The forces of sin outside cannot defeat the life of Christ inside.

Thank You, Jesus, for Your willingness

to surrender to Your Father's will.

For if You had chosen to save Yourself,

You could not have saved me. Amen.

Salvation isn't turning over a new leaf; it's receiving a new life.

The Danger Of Denial

By Richard De Haan

2 Timothy 2:12

We usually think that denying Christ is an outright act—like Peter's disavowal of Jesus in John 18. But Reginald Heber, the English writer of the hymn "Holy, Holy, Holy," pointed out that we can deny the Savior in more subtle ways.

Heber wrote: "We deny our Lord whenever, like Demas, we, through love of this present world, forsake the course of duty which Christ has plainly pointed out to us. We deny our Lord whenever we lend ... our praise, or even our silence, to [things] ... which we ourselves believe to be sinful ... We deny our Lord whenever we forsake a good man in affliction, and refuse to give countenance, encouragement, and support to those who, for God's sake and for the faithful discharge of their duty, are exposed to persecutions and slander."

Those who have been born again will consciously avoid any open, deliberate, and vocal denial of the Lord. But loving the world, failing to do as God directs, tolerating sin, and refusing to support our fellow believers are subtle ways we do, in effect, deny the One who has redeemed us.

Let's determine to live faithfully for Jesus so that no one will ever be able to accuse us of turning our backs on Him. Remember, we're always in danger of denial.

To openly deny the Lord

Is shameful and appalling,

But tolerating any sin

Forsakes our righteous calling. —Sper

You can't turn your back on Christ if you keep your eyes on Him.

2 Timothy 2:13 - Dropouts

Judging by the statistics on military "dropouts," something happens to a good number of soldiers between the recruiter's office and a healthy dose of army life. Official estimates indicate that out of the new recruits who enlisted in the army in 1997, fifteen percent will leave during the first six months. Thirty months after enlistment, the number of dropouts reaches twenty-two percent. And well over one-third of the recruits will not make it through three years of military service. (**Today in the Word**)

Guarding Hearts

By Randy Kilgore

2 Timothy 2:10-18

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth. —2 Timothy 2:15

For years I taught adult Bible-study classes in a local church and took great pains to consider Scripture carefully before answering questions during the lessons. Later, during a lecture in my first semester of seminary at age 40, I learned that I'd given a woman who

had attended one of my classes a terrible answer to her heartfelt question. I was certain my response had been causing her distress over the 2 years since I had seen her, and I was eager to correct myself for her sake.

Racing home, I called her and instantly burst into an apology. A long pause was followed by her saying in a puzzled tone: "I'm sorry, but I'm having trouble placing you right now." I was neither as memorable nor as damaging as I had believed! It was then I realized God is at work guarding His truth even as we grow in our understanding of His Word. I'm thankful He protected this woman's heart.

We are human and will make mistakes sometimes as we share God's Word with others. But we have an obligation to diligently seek His truth and exercise care when we talk about it (2 Tim. 2:15). Then we may boldly proclaim Him, praying that His Spirit will guard not only our hearts but also the hearts of those we seek to serve. God and His Word are deserving of the greatest care.

The words I spoke but yesterday

Are changed as I read Your Word;

I see more clearly Your perfect way,

And my heart is deeply stirred. —Kilgore

Let God's Word fill your memory, rule your heart, and guide your words.

Daily Diligence

By David C. McCasland

2 Timothy 2:3-16

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth. —2 Timothy 2:15

Internationally acclaimed violinist Midori believes that focused, diligent practice is the key to performance. While playing a rigorous schedule of 90 concerts a year, she still practices an average of 5 or 6 hours a day. Jane Ammeson, in NWA WorldTraveler magazine, quoted Midori as saying: "I have to practice for my job and I practice every day... It's not really the hours, but the quality of the work that needs to be done. I see with students, that they play and they call it practice, but they are not listening and not watching. If you have your textbook open, it doesn't mean that you are studying."

That same principle applies to our walk of faith. Paul wrote to Timothy, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). Diligence implies constant, earnest effort, and is the opposite of a careless, inattentive approach. It embraces every aspect of our relationship with God.

Just as a musician strives for excellence, we should want to serve God with confidence, seek His approval, and skillfully share His Word with others.

Am I diligently studying, praying, and listening to the Lord today?

When we live with expectancy, Awaiting Christ's return, Our diligent obedience Becomes our main concern. —Sper

God speaks to those who take time to listen, and He listens to those who take time to pray.

2 Timothy 2:15 - APPROVED!

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed. 2 Timothy 2:15

In Paul's exhortation, "Study to show thyself approved unto God," he encourages us to avoid the very thing he feared might happen to him personally; namely, that he might be set aside and no longer used in the Lord's service. He says in 1 Corinthians 9:27,

"I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

This word is a translation of the same Greek root rendered "approved" in 2 Timothy 2:15, only in 1 Corinthians 9:27 it appears in a negative form and means "disapproved."

When the apostle speaks of his dread of being a "castaway," he is really thinking of the shame of being a "disapproved" one, not of being lost again. His fear is that he might not receive approval as a workman. He has service in mind, not salvation!

I have been told that a huge block of stone lies in a Syrian quarry near Baalbek. It has been carefully cut, hewed, and squared. Sixty-eight feet long, fourteen feet high, and fourteen feet wide, its size is overwhelming. And yet, in spite of all the labor and effort which went into this gigantic piece of rock, there it stands. It was never fitted into that place in the temple for which it was intended! This massive stone seems to lift a voice of warning, repeating the words of the apostle, "lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

May we be faithful in our devotional life, obedient to the will of God, and zealous in our service for Him. In so doing, we will stand "approved"!

I want among the victor throng
Someday to have my name confessed;
And hear my Master say at last,
"You stand approved, you did your best!"—Simpson

Serving the Lord is much like riding a bicycle—either you keep moving forward, or you fall down. [Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

No More; No Less

By Bill Crowder

2 Timothy 2:14-26

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth. —2 Timothy 2:15

Recently I was reading about how easy it is to mishandle the message of the Bible. We may try to make it support what we already believe is true instead of allowing it to speak to us with God's intended message. Some people use the Bible to defend one side of an issue, while others use the Bible to attack that same issue. Both quote Scripture to support their views, but both can't be right.

It is important as we use God's Word that we are committed to saying no more and no less than the Scriptures actually say. If we mishandle the Word, we misrepresent it, which ultimately misrepresents God's character. This is why Paul challenged Timothy, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). A key priority for unashamed, approved workers for Christ is to accurately interpret ("rightly divide") God's Word. As we study, we can depend on the Spirit, who inspired it, to give us understanding and wisdom.

Through our words and actions, we have opportunity to represent God's Word in ways that genuinely reflect God's heart. That is one of the greatest privileges of the Christian life.

Father, thank You for giving us Your Word to guide

our lives. May we give it the serious care and

handling it so richly deserves, and may we live it

out daily through our actions and attitudes. Amen.

God's Word— handle with care.

Study To Live

By David C. McCasland

2 Timothy 2:14-26

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth. —2 Timothy 2:15

If you want to become one of the nearly 24,000 licensed taxi drivers in London, get ready to do a lot of studying. The only way to get behind the wheel is to master The Blue Book, the single manual for a course that takes between 2 and 4 years to complete. It may take only a few minutes for the driver of a traditional black cab to take you from one point to another—but knowing how to get there required years of purposeful study.

The apostle Paul reminded young Timothy of the importance of knowing God's Word (2 Timothy 3:14-17) and of carefully and diligently carrying out his ministry of teaching others (2:15). The goal of such teaching is not just learning, but Christlike living. Paul wrote, "Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife" (vv.22-23).

Today, and every day, let's make time to study God's Word with diligence and purpose. And let's take time to pray that what we learn will result in God-honoring behavior that points others to Christ. It does little good to know the best route to follow if we never get on the road. —DCM

The standards of the Word of God,

When used to test and guide,

Will show us how we need to live—

His strength He will provide. —Sper

The goal of Bible study is not just learning, but living.

The Shooting Panda

By Dennis Fisher

2 Timothy 2:1-15

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, ... rightly dividing the Word of truth. —2 Timothy 2:15

In her amusing book *Eats, Shoots & Leaves*, Lynne Truss bemoans the problem of poor punctuation in today's world. To illustrate, she tells the funny story of a panda who enters a café, orders a sandwich, eats it, and then pulls out a gun and starts shooting. When a waiter asks him to explain his behavior, the panda hands him a poorly punctuated wildlife guide and asks him to look up the description of a panda. It reads: "Panda. Large black-and-white bear-like mammal, native to China. Eats, shoots and leaves."

Having a comma after the word eats is an error that changes the whole meaning of the last sentence. The words shoots and leaves become actions, instead of plants to eat.

This idea of being careful with language is important in Bible study as well. Paul described this process as "rightly dividing the Word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). The phrase translated "rightly dividing" was used of a skilled craftsman cutting something straight. In the context of Bible study, it means taking the time for diligent and careful study, while prayerfully asking for the Holy Spirit's guidance. It means teaching the truth directly and correctly. Accurately discerning and passing on God's truth must be the priority of every conscientious believer.

Correctly handling the Word of truth

Takes diligence and care;

So make the time to study it

And then that truth declare. —Hess

Apply yourself to the study of the Bible and apply the Bible to yourself.

Rightly Dividing The Word

By Dennis Fisher

2 Timothy 2:14-19

Be diligent ... rightly dividing the Word of truth. —2 Timothy 2:15

In 1879, James Murray was hired as the editor of *The Oxford English Dictionary*. He had little advanced education, but he was a gifted linguist. Murray enlisted a large number of volunteers around the world to read widely and send him usages of assigned words. At Oxford, he and a small staff of scholars cataloged and edited the definitions they received.

During his lifetime, Murray was knighted and awarded an honorary doctorate from Oxford. Today, the 20-volume *Oxford English*

Dictionary is still recognized as one of the most accurate and comprehensive dictionaries in the world.

Murray's legacy of precision and accuracy with words reminds me of what the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, a young pastor of the Ephesian church: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). The phrase "rightly dividing" is a metaphor derived from the stonemason's craft of cutting stones straight to fit into their proper place in a building.

Precision with words is essential to an accurate interpretation of God's Word. Let's be people who care deeply about what the Bible says and what it means.

Correctly handling the Word of truth

Takes diligence and care;

So make the time to study it

And then that truth declare. —Hess

Rightly dividing the Word multiplies our understanding.

Strong—And Gentle

By Herbert Vander Lugt

2 Timothy 2:15-26

A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, ... in humility correcting those who are in opposition. —2 Timothy 2:24-25

There was a time in my life when I enjoyed debating with people who represented religious cults. When they said that Jesus is not God or that another book has equal authority with the Bible, I had them read Scripture passages that proved them wrong. I felt a bit smug when I saw them eager to end the conversation. But I never led any of them to the Savior.

I may have won an argument, but that's all. I'm afraid they saw me as arrogant, not the gentle and humble man I should have been as a servant of the Lord (2 Tim. 2:24). I really don't blame them. I find myself annoyed when a know-it-all tries to force his views on me.

We are not to be weak, though, bending to the winds of error. We can be firm in our convictions without coming across with an I'm-better-than-you attitude. We can communicate the truth without beating the other person over the head with it.

By dealing gently with people who have been caught up in religious error, I have seen some of them come to know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. When we humbly try to correct those who are deceived, we open the door for God to lead them to repent and to acknowledge the truth.

What wisdom lies in gentleness!

What force true meekness holds!

As truth combines with Christlike love,

God's wondrous grace unfolds. —DJD

The Good News shouldn't be shared in bad taste.

Swimming With Sharks

By David C. Egner

2 Timothy 2:15-26

Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace. —2 Timothy 2:22

A crewman on a South Seas fishing vessel found himself in the kind of situation no one ever wants to be—swimming with sharks!

He was hired to process fish, but the cantankerous captain didn't think he was working fast enough. One day a school of sharks was following the boat, and in an outburst of anger the captain ordered his slow-working crewman thrown overboard! The hapless fellow

swam as fast as he could, caught up with the ship, and was pulled on board.

This reminds me of a danger that we face as believers. Once in a while, we may find ourselves unexpectedly thrown into a situation where the ungodly are “swimming” all around us—at a business convention, at a party, in a dormitory, or even in the workplace—and temptation seems overwhelming. We are in real danger. In a spiritual sense, we’re “swimming with the sharks.”

When that happens, our best option is to “flee” temptation and choose to do what is right (2 Tim. 2:22). That may mean physically leaving a place or situation as fast as possible (Gen. 39:12). In any case, we need to reach out to God, calling on Him for help and protection—so we don’t become shark food.

The house of sin is brightly lit,

The door is open wide;

When voices urge you, "Come on in,"

Their call must be denied. —DCE

If you flee from sin, you won't fall into it.

Handle With Care

By David C. Egner

2 Timothy 2:14-18

In an excavation at Jerusalem, archeologist Gabriel Barkay uncovered a small copper scroll with writing on it from the Bible. This fragment of Scripture was brittle and tarnished with age. Barkay took it to his laboratory and worked with unbelievable patience and delicate care to unroll it without destroying it.

Dated around 400 BC, the scroll was a very important find because it contained the earliest written Hebrew name for God, Yahweh (or Jehovah). Apparently the scribe who copied it had broken with the practice of never writing that sacred name. Always before, because of their reverence for its holiness, Jewish scribes had felt unworthy to pen that special name.

The Bible is God’s holy, inspired, infallible Word, and we must handle its truths with the same care Barkay gave to his discovery and the same reverence the copyists gave to God’s name. Scripture comes to us from God’s heart. Therefore, we must guard its message with integrity by “rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). We must respect its every word. To take Scripture out of context or twist its meaning to serve our purposes or justify our own opinions is to dishonor God’s Word and His name.

Let’s always handle the Word of God with care.

The Bible stands, and it will forever

When the world has passed away;

By inspiration it has been given—

All its precepts I will obey. —Lillenas

Open your bible prayerfully, read it carefully, and obey it joyfully.

Imagine That!

By Anne Cetas

2 Timothy 2:15

My friends and I were anticipating a contemplative time looking at a collection of artwork about the prodigal son who returned home to a forgiving father (Luke 15). When we arrived at the information table, we noticed the brochures, books, and a sign pointing to the artwork.

Also on the table was a dinner plate with bread, a napkin, and a glass. Each of us privately pondered what the significance of the plate could be. We wondered if it represented communion fellowship between the prodigal son and his father when he returned home. But as we examined it more closely, we realized simultaneously: Someone had left a dirty plate on the display table. And it wasn’t bread, but leftover cookie bars! Our imaginations had been wrong.

We had a good laugh, but then it made me think about how sometimes we imagine more than what's really there while reading the Bible. Rather than assuming that our speculation is correct, however, we need to be sure our interpretation fits with the whole of Scripture. Peter said that "no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation" (2 Peter 1:20). As we depend on the Spirit's instruction, a careful study of the context, and the wisdom of respected Bible teachers, we'll avoid seeing things in the Word that aren't really there.

We must correctly hear God's Word,

Or we will be misled;

We must give careful thought and prayer

To what the Author said. —Hess

A text out of context is often a dangerous pretext.

2 Timothy 2:15

Truth Or Error?

By Anne Cetas

2 Timothy 3:14-17

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God. —2 Timothy 2:15

Steve often witnesses to his co-workers. But when he mentions something directly from the Bible, someone frequently responds: "Wait! That was written by men, and it's full of errors just like any other book."

The following letter to the editor in our local newspaper expresses a similar thought: "Believers cite that the Word of God is infallible, but I see no apparent reason to believe that the words written in the Bible by man are any more infallible than the words written in a science journal by man."

How do we respond when the Scriptures are so readily dismissed as being just man's words with errors? Most of us aren't biblical scholars and may not have an answer. But if we do some reading (2 Tim. 2:15), we'll find the evidence that it's God-inspired (3:16) and therefore trustworthy.

For example, consider this: Over a period of 1,600 years, 40 different authors wrote the 66 books of the Bible. There were 400 silent years between the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 of the New Testament. Yet, Genesis to Revelation tell one unified story.

While we accept the Bible by faith, there's plenty of evidence that it's true. Let's be diligent to study and share what we learn with others.

For Further Study To understand more about why we can trust the Bible, read [Can I Really Trust The Bible?](#)

In a skeptical world you can trust God's reliable Word.

2 Timothy 2:15a - WATCHING THE SIGNS

... rightly dividing the word of truth. 2 Timothy 2:15

How thankful we should be for the wonderful highways which crisscross our nation. This is truly a far cry from the early days of the automobile when paved roads were a rarity, and when the best of highways could be transformed within minutes from a ribbon of dust into a river of mud. Yet there are times when those primitive roadways seem good to me, especially when I arrive in a strange city on one of our superhighways and find myself surrounded by lanes of "speeding steel" and barraged by numerous signs indicating different routes and directions. It can be confusing! But I've found a way to overcome this frustration : know where you are going, and the number of the route that will take you there. Then watch for that alone! The other signs will tend to mix you up if they are not kept in proper relationship with that which really applies to you.

Many folks today are similarly perplexed and confused in their study of the Scriptures, simply because they don't know how to read the "road signs" of the Bible. They have never appreciated the admonition of Paul to Timothy about "rightly dividing the word of truth." If we would fully understand the Scriptures, we must know which passages are directed primarily to us. It is true that all of

Scripture is for us, for we read: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16); yet every verse was not written specifically to us. We have no right to claim for ourselves God's special promises to Israel, nor would we foolishly appropriate their curses.

Even as in traveling along a freeway we must determine which signs apply to us, so, too, in the study of the Word we must always consider to whom it was written and for what purpose. As we do this, the entire Book will become much more meaningful to us.

Ever present, truest Friend,
Ever near Thine aid to lend,
Guide us as we search the Word,
Make it both our shield and sword!—M. M. Wells, alt.

When you study the Bible "hit or miss," you MISS more than you HIT! [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

2 Timothy 2:15b -The Approval of the Master

There is a very well-known story told of a young boy in Austria giving his first violin recital. He had studied hard for years under the guidance of one of the greatest masters in all of Europe. The boy had tremendous talent, and he had learned his lessons well. As he stood on the stage before an audience of hundreds of lovers of good music, he performed with confidence and skill. Following each piece, the crowd cheered loudly. He was one of the finest young performers they had ever had to pleasure of hearing. And yet the boy seemed not to notice their expressions of approval. In fact, some later commented that he almost seemed annoyed by the applause. At the conclusion of the recital, the entire audience rose as one to give the young performer a standing ovation. They shouted "Bravo" and "Encore!" and other words of praise and appreciation. However, the young musician seemed not even to hear them. Instead, he stood looking up into the balcony where an old, withered man sat looking back down at him. Finally, the old gentleman smiled and nodded his head in approval. Only then did the lad seem to relax, and his face beamed with joy. You see, the cheers of the crowd meant nothing unless he had the approval of the master! It was only the latter that this young performer sought! This is a principle the Apostle Paul understood very well. At Lystra he was hailed as a god, and the people sought to offer up sacrifices to him (Acts 14:11–13). Even to this day, disciples of Christ often refer to this man as "the greatest Christian who has ever lived!" When we realize, as did Paul, that it is the Master whom we serve and seek to please, both the acclaim and criticism of mere men will pale in comparison! "Be diligent to present yourself approved unto God" (2 Tim. 2:15).—Al Maxey The Aloha Spirit

Agents Of Change

By Joe Stowell

2 Timothy 2:19-26

If anyone cleanses himself ... , he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. —2 Timothy 2:21

With 4 years of seminary under my belt, I walked into my first ministry with a long agenda. As a new pastor, I thought I was there to change that place. Instead, God used that place to change me.

The board members were supportive, but they relentlessly kept my feet to the fire in administrative details. I needed to learn how to work with lay leadership, how to be careful in my work, and how to dream with others.

We often think God has assigned us to change the world around us when in reality He is interested in changing us. Why? To make each of us "a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work" (2 Tim. 2:21). God often uses the most unlikely people in the most unlikely places to teach us some of life's most difficult lessons. And just when we think we've arrived, He is instructing us further.

Not long ago I entered a new season of ministry. I may be a "seasoned veteran," but I'm still learning, still growing, and still amazed at how God continues to shape this vessel for His noble purposes.

If you want to be an agent of change, don't resist the true Agent of Change. He has your best interest—and His—at heart!

What changes we would love to make

In others' lives, for Jesus' sake!

But first we must learn at His feet

The things that will make us complete. —Branon

Only when we are changed can we be agents of change.

2 Timothy 2:19 - Worldliness (Vance Havner)

Sermons on worldliness are rare these days. The new word is "secularism." Billy Sunday used to say that the term "worldly Christian" was a misnomer. Of course, Billy didn't put it that way. He said, "You might as well talk about a heavenly devil!" That is in line with the New Testament definition that the friend of the world is the enemy of God.

I am convinced that many people we call worldly Christians are not Christians at all. Our Saviour said, "My sheep hear my voice... and they follow me" (John 10:27). A sheep may fall into a mudhole but is not satisfied to stay there. A hog is at home in a mudhole, and Peter tells us that false teachers who revert to their evil ways belong in that category.

It is true that we are not to judge people. "The Lord knoweth them that are his" (2 Timothy 2:19), and I am glad that He does, otherwise some of them would be pretty hard to identify! That same verse goes on to declare that all who claim to be the Lord's should depart from iniquity... "Birds of a feather flock together," and where we feel most at home is where we belong. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (John 3:14). **(Vance Havner)**

2 Timothy 2:19a "The Lord knoweth them that are His" "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity"

This morning our desires go forth for growth in our acquaintance with the Lord Jesus. This was most blessedly perfect long before we had the slightest knowledge of Him. Before we had a being in the world, we had a being in His heart. When we were enemies to Him, He knew us, our misery and our wickedness. When we wept bitterly in despairing repentance and viewed Him only as a judge and a ruler, He viewed us as His well-beloved brothers. He never mistook His chosen but always beheld them as objects of His infinite affection. "The Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Tim. 2:19).

Christ will be master of the heart, and sin must be mortified. If your life is unholy, your heart is unchanged; you are an unsaved person. If the Savior has not sanctified you, renewed you, given you a hatred of sin and a love of holiness, the grace which does not make a man better than others is a worthless counterfeit. Christ saves His people, not in their sins but from them. Without holiness "no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2:19). If not saved from sin, how can we hope to be counted among His people? Lord, save me even now from all evil, and enable me to honor my Savior. **(Spurgeon, C H: Daily Help)**

God Remembers

By Richard De Haan

2 Tim. 2:19

I shall never forget the message Pastor Joseph Bower brought to the RBC Ministries staff in a chapel session a number of years ago. He used three Scripture texts (2 Timothy 2:19; Psalm 103:14; 2 Peter 2:9) to point out that God understands us perfectly—our weaknesses, our limitations, our very nature.

What I remember most vividly from Pastor Bower's sermon, though, was a personal experience he shared that illustrated Psalm 103:14. A man of great size and strength, he was active in the construction of church buildings in addition to preaching.

One day he wanted to move a steel beam weighing about 300 pounds, so he asked his son to grab the other end and set it in place. The young man tried to lift the huge girder, but he couldn't. In fact, he ended up in the hospital. Pastor Bower was heartbroken. Because of his own strength, he had overlooked his son's relative weakness. He went on to say that our heavenly Father will never overlook His children's weaknesses, for "He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust" (Psalm 103:14).

If you are under a heavy load today, take comfort in the knowledge that the Lord will never burden you with more than you can carry.

He knows our burdens and our crosses,

Those things that hurt, our trials and losses;

He cares for every soul that cries,

God wipes the tears from weeping eyes. —Brandt

God, who knows our load limit, graciously limits our load.

A Sense Of Dread

By Bill Crowder

2 Timothy 2:19-26

Avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. —2 Timothy 2:23

In Tennyson's classic poem "The Charge of the Light Brigade," valiant cavalry troops riding into battle are described by the imposing phrase, "Into the valley of death rode the six hundred." Those words portray a sense of foreboding that anticipated the tragedy that lay before them.

When I was a pastor, I sometimes felt a sense of dread when heading to church meetings. Being aware of current or potential areas of conflict can easily cause serious concern. But this does not need to be the case in the church.

To a young pastor struggling with the pressures of ministry, Paul wrote, "Avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife" (2 Tim. 2:23). This applies to pastors as well as church attenders. Our personal conduct can help to reduce the amount of friction instead of elevating it through unwise actions or words. We can model for others the biblical way to avoid, manage, and even resolve conflict. Verses 24-25 encourage us to be gentle, patient, and humble in relating to others.

As James says, "The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace" (James 3:18). Pursuing the goal of being a peacemaker can reduce the sense of dread that conflicts generate.

O Lord, help us to turn aside

From words that spring from selfish pride,

For You would have Your children one

In praise and love for Your dear Son. —D. De Haan

Christians at war with each other cannot be at peace with their heavenly Father.

Always Preparing

By Dave Branon

2 Timothy 2:19-26

If anyone cleanses himself from [dishonor], he will be a vessel for honor, ... prepared for every good work. —2 Timothy 2:21

While my son was home for an extended visit, he knocked on my office door one morning and asked me what I was doing. "I'm preparing for Sunday school," I told him. Then, thinking about all the time I spend in my office, I said, "It seems like I'm always preparing for something."

I'm grateful for the opportunities God gives me to reach out to others. There's some stress, though, when you're always getting something ready for somebody. It's hard to balance priorities with the pressure to prepare a lesson, a message, or a document continually on your mind.

This idea of constant preparation intrigued me, so I checked the Bible to see if it talks about the subject. I found that we are called to always be preparing. A heart dedicated to God must be prepared to serve Him (1 Sam. 7:3). We are to be ready to do good works (2 Tim. 2:21) and to defend scriptural truth (1 Peter 3:15). And Paul reminds us that even our giving takes planning (2 Cor. 9:5).

That's just a start. Living a life that pleases the Lord takes mental, spiritual, and physical preparation. But we don't need to stress, because He will enable us with His power. Let's ask God to guide us as we prepare to serve, honor, and tell others about Him.

Savior, like a shepherd lead us,

Much we need Thy tender care;

In Thy pleasant pastures feed us,

For our use Thy folds prepare. —Thrupp

The best preparation for tomorrow is the right use of today.

Hallowing Halloween

By Julie Ackerman Link

2 Timothy 2:19-26

He will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. —2 Timothy 2:21

The word hallow isn't used much anymore, and when it is, the uses have a broad range of meaning. Christians use the word when we say the Lord's prayer, as in "Hallowed be Thy name." Often the word is associated with the last day of October, which we in the US refer to as Halloween, a shortened form of All Hallows' Eve.

In Scripture, the word hallow is a synonym for the word sanctify. When we hallow or sanctify something, we set it apart as being holy.

The name of God is not the only thing that we are to hallow. We too are to be hallowed. Paul urged Timothy to be a vessel sanctified and useful for God by pursuing "righteousness, faith, love, [and] peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart" and by avoiding "foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife" (2 Tim. 2:21-23).

On this last day of October, children in the US will be carrying bags filled with sweets. Thinking of them can remind us to ask: "What is filling the vessel of my life? Is it a bitter attitude that leads to foolish disputes and strife, or is it a sweet spirit that leads to righteousness, faith, love, and peace?"

We can hallow today, and every day, by setting ourselves apart for God to be used by Him.

Lord, may our lives be set apart
And useful in Your hands,
Pursuing righteousness and faith
As we fulfill Your plans. —Sper

A Christian's greatest joy is to be used by God.

A Servant's Heart

By David C. McCasland

2 Timothy 2:19-26

A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient. —2 Timothy 2:24

George Washington Carver is well known as an African-American scientist who developed scores of products from the peanut. Dr. Carver was also a humble servant of God who took every opportunity to speak to others about the Savior he loved and served.

During the 1920s, members of the YMCA and the Commission on Interracial Cooperation asked Carver to address white student audiences at colleges and universities in the South. Carver spoke about the wonders of the natural world and the loving God who created the earth and all people.

As his goal for these meetings, Carver said he wanted the students to find Jesus and make him a daily, hourly, and moment-by-moment part of their lives. "I want them to see the Great Creator in the smallest and apparently the most insignificant things about them."

Dr. Carver sought to follow the words of Paul to a young pastor: "A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth" (2 Timothy 2:24-25). That approach underscores the power of the gospel and the winsome appeal of a servant's heart.

Let's follow Carver's example.

My life today I yield, O Lord, to Thee,

A channel for Thy love and grace to be;

Use me just as Thou wilt, I humbly pray,

To point some soul unto the Living Way. —Christiansen

Witnessing isn't just a job to be done, it's a life to be lived.

Say No And Yes

By Albert Lee

2 Timothy 2:20-22

Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. —1 John 3:10

When we wash our hands to clean off the grime and germs, do we actually clean them ourselves? No and yes. To be precise, the soap and water does the job—not us. But we make the choice to use the soap and water to clean our hands.

In 2 Timothy 2, the apostle Paul tells us, "Therefore if anyone cleanses himself ... he will be a vessel for honor" (v.21). This does not mean that we on our own have the power to cleanse ourselves from sin. Rather, we use the cleansing provided by Jesus Christ, who died for us on the cross.

Philippians 3:9 tells us that we are "found in Him, not having [our] own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith."

When we receive Christ, His death and resurrection sets us free from the penalty and the power of sin, thus enabling us to say no and yes in everyday life. We can say no to the desires of the flesh, or "youthful lusts" that Paul mentioned (2 Tim. 2:22). And we can say yes to "righteousness" (right behavior), "faith" (right belief), "love" (right response), and "peace" (right focus).

As we're cleansed daily, we'll be "useful for the Master, prepared for every good work" (v.21).

Lord, help us to think of the right and the true, The pure and the noble—it all points to You; For if we consider what's worthy of praise, We'll then want to live for You all of our days. —Fitzhugh

Right thinking leads to right living.

2 Timothy 2:21 Meet for the Master's use.

This I would be, O Lord, clay though I am. Be Thou my potter. Make of me what Thou canst and by what process Thou wilt, only let me be what Thou canst use.

Art thou able to drink the cup that I drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?

By thy grace I am able. Let me die with Thee; lie in the grave of obscurity and neglect; be counted as the off-scouring of all things; be broken on the edge of thy wheel; pass through the fire of thy hottest kiln — only let me be one whom Thou choosest and usest, constantly in thy hand; dipped down often into the brimming well, and back to thy dear lips, or to the lips of whom Thou lovest.

The spirit is willing, my child, but the flesh is weak.

I know it, I know it, Lord. But I desire to die to the weakness of the flesh, its ache, its tears, its faintness, that I may live in the Spirit. Is not thy grace sufficient? Is not thy strength perfected in weakness? Is not the residue of the Spirit with Thee, to give without measure? Heed not my weak cryings, but perfect that which concerneth me. Only make me a vessel that Thou canst use.

He that would be great, let him be as he that doth serve.

I understand thee, Master. Thou wouldst winnow my heart, and rid me of all that is proud and selfish. It is true that in the time past I have sought great things for myself: but that is gone now: I am but a weaned babe: my only desire is for Thee, for thy glory, for the magnifying of thy name: my one cry to be often, always, in thy hand. (Meyer, F. B. *Our Daily Homily*)

2 Timothy 2:22 "Flee also youthful lusts. "

Sins of the flesh are never to be reasoned or parleyed with. There is no more reasoning with them than with the winds. Understanding is nonplused, for lust, like a hurricane of sand, blinds the eyes. We must fly. It is true valor in such a case to turn the back.

What would you think of a man who went as near as he could to burning his house down, just to test how much fire it would stand? Or of one who cut himself with a knife to see how deep he could go without mortally wounding himself? Or of another who experimented as to how large a quantity of poison he could take? These are extreme follies, but not so great as that of a man who

tries to see how much sin he may indulge in and yet be saved. I pray you, do not attempt such perilous experiments. (**Spurgeon, C. H.**)

The Fatal First Step

By Richard De Haan

2 Timothy 2:19-26

Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace. —2 Timothy 2:22

Alypius, a fourth-century music theorist, was often urged by his neighbors to watch the gladiators in combat. He refused because he abhorred the brutality of those barbaric contests.

One day, however, he was coerced to attend. Determined not to witness the gory spectacle, Alypius kept his eyes tightly closed. But a piercing cry prompted him to peek just as one of the fighters received a fatal wound. Author J. N. Norton comments, “[Alypius] finer sensibilities were blunted, and he joined in the shouts and exclamations of the noisy mob about him. From that moment he was a changed man—changed for the worse; not only attending such sports himself, but urging others to do likewise.”

Even though Alypius had entered the arena against his will, his exposure to evil shows what can happen to the best of people when they get one small taste of destructive pleasure. Before they realize it, they become enslaved.

The apostle Paul told Timothy to flee from evil (2 Tim. 2:22), to nip it in the bud. He knew that replacing evil desires by pursuing the righteous things of God is the best way to stay out of trouble.

The step that's worst is often that fatal first!

We can't afford to play with fire

Or tempt a serpent's bite,

Nor can we ever think that sin

Will bring us true delight. —Anon.

Give sin an inch and it will take a mile

Ice-Cream Man

By Richard De Haan

2 Timothy 2:22

Little Jeff was trying his best to save money to buy his mother a present. It was a terrible struggle because he gave in so easily to the temptation to buy goodies from the ice-cream man whenever the brightly colored van came through the neighborhood.

One night after his mother had tucked him in bed, she overheard him pray, “Please, God, help me run away when the ice-cream man comes tomorrow.” Even at his young age he had learned that one of the best ways to overcome temptation is to avoid what appeals to our weaknesses.

All believers are tempted to sin. Yet they need not give in. The Lord provides the way to be victorious over evil enticements (1 Corinthians 10:13). But we must do our part. Sometimes that involves avoiding situations that would contribute to our spiritual defeat.

The apostle Paul admonished Timothy to run away from the evil desires of youth (2 Timothy 2:22). He was to keep his distance from the temptations that might cause him to yield because of their strong appeal. That's good advice.

If possible, we should never let ourselves be in the wrong places or with people who will tempt us to do the things we should be avoiding.

Be sure to run from the “ice-cream man”!

It's wise to flee when tempted—

A fool is one who'd stay;

For those who toy with evil

Soon learn it doesn't pay. —D. De Haan

We fall into temptation when we don't flee from it.

2 Timothy 2:19-26

Speaking The Truth In Love

A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all. —2 Timothy 2:24

There are times when we must "contend earnestly for the faith" (Jude 3). But in doing so, we must never be ungracious or antagonistic. The 17th-century English Puritans were right when they said that faith can never be foisted on another person. Consent must be gained by gentle persuasion and reason.

Today's Bible reading underscores that principle. Paul told Timothy that "a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all" (2 Timothy 2:24). He wanted Timothy to be thoughtful and relevant in proclaiming the truth, not defensive. When people opposed the truth, he was to gently correct them in the hope that God would "grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil" (vv.25-26).

What was true for a young leader like Timothy applies to all believers. Those who oppose us are not the enemy but victims of the enemy. They can be delivered, Paul insisted, but we are to speak the truth in love.

Truth without love is dogma that does not touch the heart. Love without truth is sentimentalism that does not challenge the will. When truth is spoken with love, God's Spirit can use it to change another's mind. —David H. Roper

To speak of the Savior in glowing terms,

To tell how He died in our place,

Will be unconvincing to those who hear

If we fail to show forth His grace. —D. De Haan

Truth spoken in love is hard to refuse. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Flee Temptation

By Richard De Haan

2 Timothy 2:14-26

Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace. —2 Timothy 2:22

According to Greek mythology, sirens (sea nymphs) inhabited certain Mediterranean coastal areas. As ships passed by, the sirens sang such enchanting songs that the sailors, drawn by the music, would jump overboard and drown.

Odysseus was on a ship that had to pass that way. Aware of the powerful allurement of those songs, he ordered that he be bound with ropes to the mast and that the crewmen's ears be sealed with wax to block out the tantalizing music of the sirens. Having taken such precautions, Odysseus and the rest of the crew were able to sail past without yielding to the lure of the sea nymphs.

As Christians, we should be prepared to resist any temptations to evil. We must hate sin and be so serious about not giving in to its allurements that we are determined to deny our desire to participate in it.

Are there recurring sins in your life that have been defeating you? Drastic measures must be taken. You must keep away from any enticements that you know would play into your weakness. The best protection against temptation is to heed the warning Paul gave to Timothy: "Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness" (2 Timothy 2:22). That was good counsel then; it's still good today.

It's wise to flee when tempted—

A fool is one who'd stay;

For those who toy with evil

Soon learn it doesn't pay. —D. De Haan

The best way to escape temptation is to flee to God.

2 Timothy 2:22-26

Silly Arguments

I was watching two sisters prepare Thanksgiving dinner. They had made their special stuffing, spooned it into the turkey, and were preparing to pop it into the oven. They got out the aluminum foil and were ready to cover the meat to help hold in the juices.

Betty had started to place the foil on the turkey, when Paula snapped, "That's not right! You're supposed to put the shiny side out."

"That's ridiculous," Betty replied. "Everybody knows the shiny side goes on the inside." A heated discussion followed, and I'm not sure who got her way. I found out later that both sisters were right. It makes absolutely no difference which side is out.

I have an idea that a whole lot of arguments among Christians are just as unimportant—like what color carpet we should buy for the church sanctuary or whether God can make a rock so big that He can't pick it up. Paul told Timothy to "avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife" (2 Timothy 2:23). Fundamental doctrines need to be guarded, but arguments about trivialities are not beneficial and only divide us and draw us away from God's purposes for us.

Remember to be "gentle to all" and to practice humility (vv.24-25). No more silly arguments! —David C. Egner

O Lord, help us to turn aside

From words that spring from selfish pride,

For You would have Your children one

In praise and love for Your dear Son. —D. De Haan

When we forget our priorities, we argue about trivialities. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

A Knightly Soldier

By Dennis Fisher

2 Timothy 2:1-4,24-25

Be gentle ... , in humility correcting those who are in opposition. —2 Timothy 2:24-25

Before he enlisted in the Union Army to fight during the US Civil War, Joshua Chamberlain was a quiet and unassuming college professor. In the crucible of military combat he distinguished himself for his heroism in holding the line on Little Round Top during the Battle of Gettysburg. He was later awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

To recognize Chamberlain's contribution to the Union victory, General Ulysses S. Grant designated him to receive the first flag of surrender at Appomattox Courthouse. The defeated troops of the South expected to be ridiculed and humiliated. Instead, Chamberlain showed them kindness and respect. For this, the Confederate commanding officer wrote in his memoirs that Chamberlain was "one of the knightliest soldiers of the Federal Army."

As a committed Christian, Chamberlain reflected the grace of Christ. We too need to stand for what we believe but also to be kind to those with whom we disagree. Paul exhorted Timothy, "as a good soldier of Jesus Christ ... be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition" (2 Tim. 2:3,24-25). In conflict and in reconciliation, our response should reflect the gracious heart of a knightly soldier of Christ.

Oh, to be like Him, tender and kind,

Gentle in spirit, lowly in mind;

More like Jesus, day after day,

Filled with His Spirit now and always. —Ellsworth

There is nothing so kingly as kindness; there is nothing so royal as truth.

Speaking The Truth In Love

By David H. Roper

2 Timothy 2:19-26

A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all. —2 Timothy 2:24

There are times when we must “contend earnestly for the faith” (Jude 3). But in doing so, we must never be ungracious or antagonistic. The 17th-century English Puritans were right when they said that faith can never be foisted on another person. Consent must be gained by gentle persuasion and reason.

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2 Timothy 2:24-25

Correcting Error

READ: 2 Timothy 2:22-26

Be gentle to all, ... correcting those who are in opposition, ... so that they may know the truth. —2 Timothy 2:24-25

A trio of well-dressed young men arrived at the door of my home. I knew right away they weren't there to sell me a vacuum cleaner. They wanted to convert me to their religion.

I engaged them in polite conversation, commending them for their dedication on a hot summer day. Then I said, "I know you're going to give me some literature, so please allow me to give something to you." I stepped inside the house and picked up some magazines that contained a clear gospel presentation.

They said they wanted to give me a book that is the basis of their beliefs. I told them that I already had a copy and had read portions of it. When they asked what I thought of it, I told them about the differences between it and the Bible, and why I thought their book contained error. No arguing, just a good conversation about truth and error.

When we're confronted by people who distort or deny biblical doctrines, we need to know what the Bible teaches. The goal, as stated by the apostle Paul, is to gently correct those who are in error "that they may know the truth" and "come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil" (2 Timothy 2:25-26). After all, our goal is to help people find the truth, not to win arguments. —Dave Branon

Be gentle to all, ... correcting those who are in opposition, ... so that they may know the truth. —2 Timothy 2:24-25

To reveal error, expose it to the light of God's truth. [Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

2 Timothy 2:24. THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT--GENTLENESS

"The Lord's servant must not strive, but be gentle towards all... forbearing."-- 2Ti2:24.

IT IS not easy to cultivate this fruit of the Spirit because it has many counterfeits. Some people are naturally easy-going, devoid of energy and ambition, at heart cowardly, or in spirit mean. Many of us are characterized by a moral weakness and decrepitude that make it easy for us to yield rather than contest in the physical or intellectual arena.

But in gentleness there must be the consciousness of a considerable reserve of force. The gentleness of God is combined with omnipotence. The movements of creation, in which there is neither voice nor language, prove the infinite forces which are at work. When a boy is trying to lift or carry a heavy beam, as likely as not there will be a great crash when he reaches the end of his task, and puts it on the ground. His strength is so nearly exhausted that he is only too glad to get rid of his burden, anyhow, and at any cost. But if a strong man shoulders the same burden, and carries it for the same distance, he puts it down gently, because he has not taxed his strength and has plenty left.

It is the prerogative of great strength to be gentle. Always remember that you are linked with the Infinite God, and that all things are possible to you. There must also be infinite pity. We must be tolerant and pitiful to those who abuse us, or have been embittered by disappointment, or have been ill-used. It must be our aim to make allowances for such, and always to be sweetly reasonable towards any brusqueness, rudeness and bad manners of their behaviour. Let us be willing to admit that much is due to congenital moroseness. Therefore, we bear gently with the erring, and with those who are out of the way, because we also are encompassed with infirmity.

It is necessary also that there should be a deep humility. Thomas a Kempis says: "If thou wilt be borne with, bear also with another. Endeavour to be patient in bearing with the defects and infirmities of others, what sort soever they be: for that thyself also hast many failings which must be borne by others." Our resentment against others should be always tempered by our remembrance of our own sins. So shall we be God's own gentlefolk.

PRAYER - O God, our behaviour has not manifested all the fruits of the Spirit, or been full of the graciousness and gentleness of

Christ. Forgive us, and enable us so to live that His beauty may be on our faces, the tone of His voice in our speech, the gentleness of His tread in our steps, the unselfishness of His deeds in our hands. AMEN. (F B Meyer. Our Daily Walk)

2 Timothy 2:22-26a - EASILY DISTRACTED

My son Steven is just beginning to learn the game of soccer. So we spend quite a bit of time kicking the ball around in the front yard. As I've tried to convey to Steven the little I know about the sport, he has developed some of his own strategy. For instance, he said, "I know how to get past my man. When I'm dribbling the ball, I can say, 'Hey, look over there!' When he does, I can dribble past him!"

As simplistic as this strategy of distraction sounds, it's similar to a scheme Satan uses on Christians -- and it works. He has developed hundreds of ways to say, "Hey, look over there!" All he has to do is distract us, and he has us doing something other than glorifying God.

One of the goals we should have as we strive to live for the Lord is to keep "looking unto Jesus" (Hebrews 12:2 [note]). We look away from Jesus when we put our attention on others to criticize them. We look away when we let everyday concerns make us worry. We look away when we neglect His Word.

Satan is the great distractor. Let's ignore his urgings and keep our eyes on Jesus. When we do, we will find it easier to live in a way that glorifies God. Then we won't be doing Satan's will (2 Timothy 2:26 [note]). -- J. D. Branon

There's victory for you over sin and its shame:
Look only to Jesus, there's power in His name.
The devil can't harm you nor cause you to sin;
By trusting the Savior the victory you'll win. - Anon.

Satan's ploys are no match for the Savior's power. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

2 TIMOTHY 3

2 Timothy 3:16a

The greatest proof that the Bible is inspired is that it has stood so much bad preaching. A. T. Robertson

The Struggle

By Dave Branon

2 Timothy 3

In the last days perilous times will come. —2 Timothy 3:1

Have you ever heard someone suggest that if you just trust Jesus, He'll solve all your problems and you'll float through life with riches and peace?

If that were the way God planned it for the people who serve Him, then what was Paul's problem? After his conversion, he was as godly as they come, yet he had problems galore. He was one of the greatest missionaries of all time—and what did he get for his trouble? Beaten up. Arrested. Nearly drowned. Run out of town.

Look at Joseph, Abraham, Job, Jeremiah, Peter—godly men one and all. Yet they all faced dangers and trouble none of us would ever desire.

So, why the struggle? Why is it that tragedy strikes Christians with the same blunt force that it strikes the most antagonistic atheists? Why are we not exempt from natural disasters, serious illness, interpersonal squabbles, and mistreatment by others?

Somehow, in God's way of making things work out, our troubles can advance His kingdom and purposes (Romans 8:28; Philippians 1:12). Our task is to glorify God, no matter what the circumstances. If we do, our struggle can direct others to the Savior as we make our way toward our ultimate goal of rest and reward in heaven.

To make us good ambassadors

God sends us trials along the way,

But we become true conquerors

When in life's struggles we obey. —Hess

God allows trials in our lives not to impair us but to improve us.

2 Timothy 3:1-9

February 26, 2007

Spray-On Mud

A British company has developed a product called "Spray-On Mud" so city dwellers can give their expensive 4x4 vehicles the appearance of having been off-road for a day of hunting or fishing without ever leaving town. The mud is even filtered to remove stones and debris that might scratch the paint. According to the company, sales are going well.

There is something within each of us that values how we look on the outside more than who we are on the inside. It causes some people to pad their résumés or embellish their memoirs. But it has no place in our lives as followers of Jesus.

Paul warned Timothy about people in the church who had a form of godliness but denied its power. "They will maintain a façade of 'religion,' but their conduct will deny its validity. You must keep clear of people like this" (2 Tim. 3:5, Phillips). The inward reality of Christ is what counts, because it will produce the outward signs of faith.

Paul's authority to instruct the church about spiritual authenticity came through his suffering, not by "spraying on mud." "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus," said the apostle (Gal. 6:17).

God calls us to authentic living today. —David C. McCasland

We fuss over form and we put on a face,

All the while showing God disrespect,

Not seeing how pride is eclipsing God's grace

That the light of Christ's life should reflect. —Gustafson

If you are true to God, you won't be false to others ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Counterfeit Reality

By David C. McCasland

2 Timothy 3:1-5,12-17

Evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. —2 Timothy 3:13

When people see a photograph or video today, they often ask, "Is it real?" A home computer can manipulate images to create a picture of an event that never happened. Images can be inserted into or removed from photographs. A video can be doctored to make it appear that a person was caught committing a crime or performing an act of heroism. The camera may not lie, but the computer can.

Centuries before such modern technology, the apostle Paul warned Timothy about counterfeit reality in the church. He said that in the last days people would be self-absorbed, "having a form of godliness but denying its power" (2 Timothy 3:5). He repeatedly emphasized the need to live a godly life, warning that "evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (v.13).

Paul charged Timothy to "continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of" (v.14). True godliness honors and obeys God while its counterfeit seeks pleasure and personal gain. One pleases the Lord; the other gratifies natural desire. Both are identified by their actions.

When people hear us say we are Christians, they may wonder if our faith is real. Our lives will answer the question by reflecting the

reality of Christ.

Dear Heavenly Father, Help me, I pray,

to honor You with all that I do today.

By Your Holy Spirit's power, may my words and actions

cause others to glorify Your Name. Amen.

A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. —Matthew 7:18

Why Keep the Faith?

By Dave Branon

2 Timothy 3

You must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of. —2 Timothy 3:14

Many Christians are on the front lines of some very important battles. Some are speaking out on social issues and moral decline. Others are helping to relieve suffering and battling the effects of poverty. Still others are trying to make a difference in government or entertainment.

Sometimes these battles are won, but often the other side gains ground. It can be a discouraging effort.

When we lose a skirmish on the front lines of today's battles, how does that affect us? We may feel discouraged, but we need not feel hopeless. We know Christ will win ultimately, and we can be encouraged because there are some things that cannot be taken away from us:

- Jesus Christ's continual presence with us (Heb. 13:5).
- The Lord's promise of eternal life (Titus 1:2).
- The Holy Spirit's indwelling (1 Cor. 6:19).
- Access to our heavenly Father through prayer (Eph. 2:18).
- Spiritual gifts to serve the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12).

It hurts to lose a battle in the daily fight for what is right. But as Paul made clear in 2 Timothy 3, it should come as no surprise. We are called only to be faithful. And when we contemplate what Christ has given to us, we'll never have to wonder why we should keep the faith.

Day by day perform your mission,

With Christ's help keep at your tasks;

Be encouraged by His presence—

Faithfulness is all He asks. —HGB

Having the Holy Spirit on the inside prepares you for any battle on the outside.

No Laughing Matter

By Bill Crowder

2 Timothy 3:12

As my wife and I were walking through a shopping mall, we came to a T-shirt stand. While browsing the shirts and their often humorous sayings, I noticed one with a disturbing message. It read, "So Many Christians, So Few Lions." That shirt, with its reference to the first-century practice of throwing Christians to the lions in the Coliseum in Rome, wasn't at all funny.

Persecution is no laughing matter. Not long before those brave Christians faced death in Rome's cruel sport, Paul wrote, "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). Persecution is inevitable, and it should be a matter of

serious concern for all believers. In fact, at this very moment fellow brothers and sisters in Christ around the world are suffering in Jesus' name.

What can we do about it? First, we can pray that God will comfort them in their suffering. Second, we can aid families left without support when loved ones are imprisoned. Third, we can pray now for courage should we face persecution. When the apostle Paul was put in jail for his faith, his courage led others to be bolder in their witness (Phil. 1:14).

Want to encourage the persecuted church? Pray. Then proclaim the message for which believers suffer.

The church of Christ can't be destroyed, Though many enemies have tried; Whenever persecution comes, The church is spread and multiplied. —Sper

We find courage to stand when we kneel before the Lord.

Spelling Problems

By Dave Branon

2 Timothy 3:10-17

Continue in the things which you have learned. —2 Timothy 3:14

My mother was moving from the house we had called home for 36 years, and we were cleaning out the treasures. As I rummaged through my stuff, I discovered something I felt would be instructive for Steve, my 10-year-old fifth-grader. It was my old fifth-grade spelling book. I thought I would show him how much tougher things were back in those days. But when Steve and I later compared his book with mine, we agreed that his words were harder!

As I considered this, I began to think about the culture in which our children are growing up. It is not just spelling that is harder. Life itself has added layers of toughness since my school days.

With so much overt sinfulness being pushed a child's way, it could be harder to resist temptation and to do what is right. New negative influences challenge a young person as he tries to make wise choices.

Yet the answer is the same as it has always been. "From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures"—that was how Paul characterized Timothy's training (2 Tim. 3:15). This is still the way it should be for our children. No matter how tough the times, the solutions are always spelled out in God's Word. It's one book that never changes.

Begin to train them early

To fear and love the Lord,

To carry on life's pathway

God's lamp, His holy Word. —Fennema

In a changing world you can trust God's unchanging Word.

2 Timothy 3:16 - All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.

Literally the words stand, All Scripture, God-breathed and profitable. It is a remarkable expression, reminding of the early record, "God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul." The breath of God has entered these holy words, and they live.

This makes Scripture fragrant. — I write these words beneath the leafy shadow of an oak-tree, on a ridge of hill commanding the Weald of Kent. The summer breeze is hurrying past. Since it left the southern sea it has passed over miles of fragrant country, imbibing the sweet scents of flower gardens, orchards, and hop-gardens; lading it with perfume, which makes it an ecstasy to inhale. Ah, fragrant breeze, how thou remindest me of those holy thoughts which are wafted to me from the orchards of Paradise, whensoever I open the sacred Word!

This makes it refreshing. — On this hot summer day the heat would be overpowering but for this delightful breeze, which fans the cheek and cools the atmosphere. The current is always changing, hence the refreshment. And the Word of God is always fresh and interesting, because the Spirit of God is perpetually passing into and through it, bringing his own life to us, and through us to the world.

This makes it beautiful. — The effect of the wind, in the music of the leaves above, the swaying of the grasses at my feet, the rustling of yonder golden corn across the beaten foot-path, adds an element of incomparable delight. There is new meaning, movement, music, in it all. And it is only as the Divine breath breathes through apostles and prophets, that, like great organ-pipes, they become resonant with heavenly music. (**Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily**)

2 Timothy 3:2 - One of the richest men in the world, oil tycoon Paul Getty, was being interviewed in London. "If you retired now," asked a reporter, "would you say your holdings would be worth a billion dollars?" Getty paced up and down the room, mentally adding. "I suppose so," he said, "but remember, a billion doesn't go as far as it used to."

Spray-On Mud

By David C. McCasland

2 Timothy 3:1-9

Having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! —2 Timothy 3:5

A British company has developed a product called "Spray-On Mud" so city dwellers can give their expensive 4x4 vehicles the appearance of having been off-road for a day of hunting or fishing without ever leaving town. The mud is even filtered to remove stones and debris that might scratch the paint. According to the company, sales are going well.

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That the light of Christ's life should reflect. —Gustafson

If you are true to God, you won't be false to others.

The Truth About Truth

By Vernon C. Grounds

2 Timothy 3:7

In 1692, Harvard College adopted as its motto *Veritas Christo et Ecclesiae*—"Truth for Christ and the Church." Its crest showed three books, one face down to symbolize the limitation of human knowledge. But in recent decades that book has been turned face up to represent the unlimited capacity of the human mind. And the motto has been changed to *Veritas*—"Truth."

The pursuit of knowledge is praiseworthy, yet learning can quickly lead to pride and a refusal to acknowledge any limits on our mental abilities. When that happens, biblical truth is ignored or rejected.

What, then, is the truth about truth? A wise king wrote centuries ago, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7). We must recognize the relationship between God and truth. Without the help of the Holy Spirit and the instruction of God's Word, man will be ever "learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7). When we acknowledge and obey His truth, however, we will be set free from spiritual ignorance and error (John 8:32; 17:17).

That's why we must be diligent in our study of the Bible (2 Timothy 2:15). It is the only book that tells us the truth about truth.

For Your holy Book we thank you;

May its message be our guide,

May we understand the wisdom

Of the truth Your laws provide. —Carter

Study God's written Word to know Christ the living Word.

Recalculating

By David C. McCasland

2 Timothy 3:10-17

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. —2 Timothy 3:16

On a road trip with a friend, we used his GPS navigation device to guide us as we drove each day. After entering our destination on the screen, a voice told us which road to follow, as well as when and where to make each turn. When we left the route, whether accidentally or deliberately, the voice would say, "Recalculating." Then it would tell us how to get back on the right road.

Second Timothy 3:16 describes the Bible as a spiritual navigation system for our journey through life. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." Doctrine tells us which road to travel; reproof tells us when we are off the road; correction tells us how to get back on; instruction in righteousness tells us how to stay on God's road.

The mistakes and choices that detour us from the Lord are not to be taken lightly. But failure is seldom fatal and few decisions are final. The moment we veer off on our own, the Holy Spirit is "recalculating" and urging us to return to the Father's way.

If we've drifted off course, there's no better time than right now to heed God's voice and return to His road.

We need God's guidance from above, His daily leading and His love; As we trust Him for direction, To our course He'll give correction. —Fitzhugh

To stay on course, trust the compass of God's Word.

Keep Going!

By Haddon W. Robinson

2 Timothy 3:1-16

Continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of. —2 Timothy 3:14

In his early years, British statesman Joseph Chamberlain (1836-1914) taught Sunday school. His favorite Bible verse was Genesis 12:5, "They went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came" (KJV).

That verse was a motto well-suited to a man of his iron will. It also gave him a biblical basis for citing two qualifications for success in life. One is to have the right destination—"They went forth to go into the land of Canaan." The second is to keep going after we have started—"into the land of Canaan they came."

As the apostle Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy, he knew that he would die soon, and he reflected on his life. He was not a leaf tossed about by the winds; he was an arrow headed for a target. Paul found his direction and destination in his relationship with Christ, and he wanted to cultivate in Timothy the virtues of a well-lived life. He offered himself as a model: "You have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance" (2 Timothy 3:10). "Stay with it," he seemed to be saying to young Timothy.

Keeping Christ uppermost in our lives will keep us headed right and will give us the strength to keep going.

My life, my love I give to Thee,

Thou Lamb of God who died for me;

O may I ever faithful be,
My Savior and my God! —Hudson
We conquer by continuing.

Lambs May Wade

By David H. Roper

2 Timothy 3:13-17

All Scripture ... is profitable. —2 Timothy 3:16

Author C. S. Lewis says that religious concepts are like soups—some are thick and some are clear. There are indeed “thick” concepts in the Bible: mysteries, subtleties, and complexities that challenge the most accomplished mind. For example, “[God] has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens” (Rom. 9:18). And yet, in the same volume there are thoughts that are crystal “clear”: simple, attainable, and easily grasped. What could ever surpass the simplicity of the clear affirmation in 1 John 4:16, “God is love”?

John Cameron, a 15th-century writer, suggests, “In the same meadow, the ox may lick up grass, ... the bird may pick up seeds, ... and a man finds a pearl; so in one and the same Scripture are varieties to be found for all sorts of conditions. In them, the lamb may wade, and the elephant swim, children may be fed with milk, and meat may be had for stronger men.”

All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in God’s Book, the Bible—ocean depths that can stir the most sophisticated mind, and shallow areas that can be negotiated by any simple, honest soul.

Why hesitate? “All Scripture ... is profitable” (2 Tim. 3:16). Jump in!

Thy Word is like a deep, deep mine, And jewels rich and rare Are hidden in its mighty depths For every searcher there. —Hodder

God speaks through His Word—take time to listen.

The “Mom Box”

By Cindy Hess Kasper

2 Timothy 3:14-17

From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, ... able to make you wise for salvation through faith. —2 Timothy 3:15

Each Christmas I give both of my daughters a “Mom box.” Each box contains items to encourage them to be the best mothers they can be. It might have craft books or special projects, devotional books or tapes geared toward young moms, first-aid kits, recipes for cooking with kids—and often something personal like bubble bath for a little pampering after a tough day of mothering! It’s become a tradition that Rosemary and Tanya have looked forward to every year for the last decade.

Encouraging our children to be good parents can begin even earlier. The best way is to start equipping them with the Word of God while they are still young.

The apostle Paul wrote that “from childhood” Timothy had known “the Holy Scriptures” (2 Tim. 3:15). And 2 Timothy 1:5 mentions the “genuine faith” of Timothy’s mother and grandmother. That faithful teaching and spiritual influence helped to enable Timothy to be a godly man.

The Bible is our richest resource to help us raise children who will know and love Jesus. Nothing is more essential than “the Holy Scriptures” to equip them for all of life’s challenges.

What are you doing to make the next generation “wise for salvation through faith”? (3:15).

Parents, give your children guidance

And instruction from God’s Word;

Then with wisdom and compassion

Teach them how to love the Lord. —Sper

The character of our children tomorrow depends on what we put into their hearts today.

Undiscovered Country

By Cindy Hess Kasper

2 Timothy 3:14-17

The Word of God is living and powerful. —Hebrews 4:12

I studied the map as my husband and I drove up the east coast of Virginia. We were looking for any road that would take us to the seashore. Finally, I found one and we turned toward the sun.

In only a few minutes, we were laughing in delight when—just before the seashore—we happened upon a national wildlife refuge. All around us were dunes and marsh and beach grasses and an abundance of gulls, egrets, and blue herons. It was active and loud and wonderful! We had arrived at Chincoteague and Assateague Islands—famous for the annual pony swim from one island to the other. Others had realized its value and beauty long before, but to us it was undiscovered country.

The Scriptures are like “undiscovered country” to many. They have never discovered the valuable treasures found in the eternal words of the Bible. The Bible is alive and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, exposing our innermost thoughts and desires (Heb. 4:12). It is like a lamp to illuminate our path (Ps. 119:105), and it has been given to equip us for God’s purposes (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Open the Bible and read it so you can find these treasures. It’s time ... to discover!

Exhaustless store of treasured gems

Within this Book I hold;

And as I read, it comes alive,

New treasures to unfold. —Mortenson

Rich treasures of God’s truth

are waiting to be discovered by you.

Profitable Reading

By Vernon C. Grounds

2 Timothy 3:10-17

You have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. —2 Timothy 3:15

Bible scholar William Barclay recalls the experience of a group of British soldiers during World War I. For a long time the men were in a relatively quiet standoff with the enemy. Among them was an atheist who, trying to fill up the empty days, went to the chaplain to ask if any books were available. The only book the chaplain had was the Bible.

The atheist refused the Bible at first, but then he took it and began to read the Old Testament at random. He came across the story of Esther and was so engrossed by it that he decided to read the whole Bible. As he did, he realized that what he was reading was true, and he received Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

The apostle Paul stated in 2 Timothy 3:16 that “all Scripture ... is profitable.” It gives people the wisdom that leads to “salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (v.15). Even passages that may seem boring and lacking in spiritual value have the power to transform people’s lives.

If in our own reading we come across passages that we find uninspiring at first, let’s trust the Holy Spirit to speak to our hearts and change our lives. Remember, when it comes to the Bible, all of it—from Genesis to Revelation—is inspired and profitable (v.16).

The Bible has power to arrest and convict,

To reveal God's truth to our soul;

For in it we find the good news of the One

Who alone can cleanse and make whole. —Fitzhugh

Many books can inform you; only the Bible can transform you.

Standing Or Falling?

By Richard De Haan

2 Timothy 3:10-4:5

You must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of. —2 Timothy 3:14

Part of the training to be a US Secret Service agent includes learning to detect counterfeit money. Agents-in-training make a thorough study of the genuine bills—not the phonies—so that they can spot the fake currency immediately because of its contrast to the real thing.

The child of God can learn a lesson from this. While it is helpful to study false religions and be fully aware of their dangerous dogmas, the best defense against such error is to be so familiar with God's Word that whenever we encounter error, we will spot it at once and won't fall for it.

Today many are being led astray because they don't recognize how they are being deceived. For example, if a person isn't solidly grounded in the teaching of salvation by grace, he may swallow the line of the legalists who inject human works into the matter of being saved. If he is not well instructed about the person of Christ, he might accept the error of those who deny the Savior's deity. A thorough knowledge of essential biblical doctrines is the only way to detect counterfeits.

Let's be diligent in our study of the Word of God. Then, instead of falling into error, we will stand firmly on the truth.

Lord, grant us wisdom to discern

The truth You have made known,

And may we not believe one word

Beyond what You have shown. —DJD

Beware! Error often rides to its deadly work on the back of truth! —Spurgeon

2 Timothy 3:14-15 Never Stop Learning

You must continue in the things which you have learned . . . and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures. —2 Timothy 3:14-15

Sheryl is a voracious reader. While others are watching television or playing video games, she is deeply engrossed in the pages of a book.

Much of this zeal can be traced back to her early childhood. Her family often visited a great aunt and uncle who owned a bookstore. There, Sheryl would sit on Uncle Ed's lap as he read to her and introduced her to the wonders and delights of books.

Centuries ago a young man named Timothy had his steps guided on the road to learning. In Paul's last recorded letter, he acknowledged that Timothy was first introduced to the Bible by his grandmother and mother (2 Tim. 1:5). Then Paul exhorted Timothy to continue in the Christian way because "from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures" (2 Tim. 3:14-15).

For the believer, learning about the spiritual life should never cease to delight us and help us grow. Reading and study can be a big part of that, but we also need others to encourage and teach us.

Who has helped you grow in your faith? And who in turn can you help? That's a great way to enhance our appreciation of God and strengthen our relationship with Him.

Lord, give us the desire to learn throughout life, so that we may grow increasingly closer to You each day. Thank You for those who have inspired us to learn about You.

Reading the Bible is meant not to inform but to transform.

INSIGHT: Timothy was of mixed parentage, having a Greek father and Jewish mother (Acts 16:1). Although his biological father probably did not play a significant role in his spiritual development, Timothy was taught the holy Scriptures from childhood and came to faith through the teaching and godly influence of his grandmother Lois and mother Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5). Timothy first met Paul in Derbe at the start of his second missionary journey (Acts 16:1), and Timothy soon became Paul's protégé. The apostle Paul affectionately called him "a true son in the faith" (1 Tim. 1:2) and "a beloved son" (2 Tim. 1:2).

By Dennis Fisher

2 Timothy 3:14 Better Or Worse?

January 1, 2015

Read: 2 Timothy 3:1-5,10-17

You must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of. —2 Timothy 3:14

At the beginning of each new year, experts give their predictions about the economy, politics, weather, and a host of other topics. Will there be war or peace? Poverty or prosperity? Progress or stagnation? People everywhere are hoping that this year will be better than last, but no one knows what will happen.

There is, however, something we can be certain about. A guest speaker at my church suggested that when we ask if the world will get better or worse, the answer is "Yes, to both!"

Paul told Timothy, "In the last days perilous times will come; . . . evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them" (2 Tim. 3:1,13-14).

The inspired Word of God instructs, corrects, and encourages us as we follow God's path (vv.16-17). J. B. Phillips described the Scriptures as our "comprehensive equipment" that prepares us fully for all branches of God's work.

As the spiritual darkness of our world grows deeper, the light of Christ shines more brightly through all those who know and love Him. Jesus is our joy and hope—today, tomorrow, and forever!

Heavenly Father, the trouble in this world can divert our eyes from You. Thank You for Your Word that helps us stay focused. May we find our delight in Your love and share it with others today.

The powers of evil around you are no match for the power of Jesus within you.

INSIGHT: In 2 Timothy, Paul is mentoring Timothy who is serving with the church at Ephesus. Having spent 3 years there himself, Paul was familiar with the Ephesian church and this would have helped him identify with the challenges that Timothy was facing.

By David McCasland |

2 Timothy 3:16 Profitable Knowledge

By Richard De Haan

Psalms 119:25-32

Make me understand the way of Your precepts; so shall I meditate on Your wonderful works. —Psalm 119:27

The Bible is unlike any other book. It was given by God's inspiration and is His revelation to man. On its pages we find everything we need to know to receive salvation and to live for the Lord. Paul declared that it "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16).

Some people, however, devote more time to learning about the Bible than to discovering its message. For instance, two men spent months compiling an impressive array of statistics about the Scriptures. They counted the number of chapters, verses, words, and even letters.

These facts may be interesting, and many hours of labor may go into gathering them, but how do they build us up spiritually? What did the psalmist have in mind when he asked God to help him understand the way of His precepts? (Psalm 119:27). He desired—

and we should strive for—an increased knowledge of God and His will.

Let's not get sidetracked by interesting statistics and unusual facts. Instead, let's prayerfully study the content of the Bible to discover what God is saying to us about Himself and His plan for our lives. That will make our Bible knowledge most profitable.

Thy Word is like a deep, deep mine,

And jewels rich and rare

Are hidden in its mighty depths

For every searcher there. —Hodder

The Bible tells us all we need to know so we can do all God wants us to do.

Eye Contact

By Mart De Haan

2 Timothy 3:10-17

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable. —2 Timothy 3:16

Researchers studying eye movement during normal conversation have found that sustaining eye contact for any length of time is difficult, if not impossible. Special cameras reveal that what appears to be a steady gaze at someone is actually a series of rapid scans of the face. Eye movement is essential because the nerves in the eye need a constant change of stimulation if we are to see properly. Studies show that if we look at the same spot continuously, the rest of our visual field will go blank.

We can experience a similar problem in our study of the Word of God. If we “stare” exclusively at certain biblical truths while excluding other important doctrines, our spiritual vision will begin to blur out. Some people, for instance, tend to look only at the love of God, or the wrath of God, or evangelism, or church growth, or the endtimes, or the devil, or sin. No matter what particular truth we are interested in, we need to be careful lest we lose our perspective.

The Bible tells us that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3:16) and is profitable for our spiritual development. Only as we see the big picture—how the many biblical doctrines fit together—will we avoid staring at some truths and becoming blind to others.

God's Word was given for our good

And we are to obey;

Not choose the parts that we like best,

Then live in our own way. —Hess

You can't enjoy the harmony of Scripture if you play just one note of truth

2 Timothy 3:15 - Permission to Backslide

As a teenager, J. Stephen Conn sensed God calling him to be a preacher. But he felt a certain disadvantage. Because he had been saved when he was 7 years old, he would never be able to hold an audience spellbound with stories of a wicked past. So he asked God for permission to backslide—just long enough to get some experience in a life of sin to “enhance” his preaching later on. Deep within he knew that God would not answer such a request, so he decided just to preach the Bible without a dramatic testimony.

Some time later Conn wrote, “For the past 11 years I've been pastoring a church. I realize now what a great testimony I really have. God not only has the power to deliver from sin, He has the even greater power to keep from sin. God not only saved my soul—He saved my entire life!” ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

2 Timothy 3:15b

The “Mom Box”

READ: 2 Timothy 3:14-17

From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, ... able to make you wise for salvation through faith. —2 Timothy 3:15

Each Christmas I give both of my daughters a “Mom box.” Each box contains items to encourage them to be the best mothers they can be. It might have craft books or special projects, devotional books or tapes geared toward young moms, first-aid kits, recipes for cooking with kids—and often something personal like bubble bath for a little pampering after a tough day of mothering! It’s become a tradition that Rosemary and Tanya have looked forward to every year for the last decade.

Encouraging our children to be good parents can begin even earlier. The best way is to start equipping them with the Word of God while they are still young.

The apostle Paul wrote that “from childhood” Timothy had known “the Holy Scriptures” (2 Tim. 3:15). And 2 Timothy 1:5 mentions the “genuine faith” of Timothy’s mother and grandmother. That faithful teaching and spiritual influence helped to enable Timothy to be a godly man.

The Bible is our richest resource to help us raise children who will know and love Jesus. Nothing is more essential than “the Holy Scriptures” to equip them for all of life’s challenges.

What are you doing to make the next generation “wise for salvation through faith”? (3:15). —Cindy Hess Kasper

Parents, give your children guidance

And instruction from God’s Word;

Then with wisdom and compassion

Teach them how to love the Lord. —Sper

The character of our children tomorrow depends on what we put into their hearts today. [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

2 Timothy 3:15c - The Story of John Pounds

It was a terrible fall, and it sickened those who saw it. John Pounds, a tall, muscular teen laborer at the docks of Portsmouth, England, slipped and plunged from the top of a ship’s mast, pitching headfirst into the bowels of the vessel. When fellow workers reached him, he was nothing but a mass of broken bones. For two years he lay in bed as his bones healed crookedly. His pain never ceased. Out of boredom, he began to read the Bible. At length, John crawled from bed hoping to find something he could do with his life. A shoemaker hired him, and day after day, John sat at his cobbler’s bench, a Bible open on his lap. Soon he was born again. John ultimately gathered enough money to purchase his own little shoeshop, and one day he developed a pair of surgical boots for his crippled nephew Johnny, whom he had taken in. Soon John was making corrective shoes for other children, and his little cobbler’s shop became a miniature children’s hospital.

As John’s burden for children grew, he began receiving homeless ones, feeding them, teaching them to read, and telling them about the Lord. His shop became known as “The Ragged School,” and John would limp around the waterfront, food in his pockets, looking for more children to tend.

During his lifetime, John Pounds rescued five hundred children from despair and led every one of them to Christ. Moreover, his work became so famous that a “Ragged School Movement” swept England, and a series of laws were passed to establish schools for poor children in John’s honor. Boy’s homes, girl’s homes, day schools, and evening schools were started, along with Bible classes in which thousands heard the Gospel.

When John collapsed and died on New Year’s Day, 1839, while tending to a boy’s ulcerated foot, he was buried in a churchyard on High Street. All England mourned, and a monument was erected over his grave, reading: “Thou shalt be blessed, for they could not recompense thee.”

Living Deceptively

By Albert Lee

2 Timothy 3:10-17

You have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. —2 Timothy 3:15

The year 2007 was labeled the “Year of Living Deceptively” for South Korea, because of the country’s numerous scandals involving fake academics and corrupt politicians. A survey of 340 professors selected the Chinese phrase “ja-gi-gi-in” (deceiving yourself and

others) to sum up the year.

It should not surprise us to hear of deception like that. The apostle Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:13, “Evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.” To deceive is to make others believe falsehood as truth and accept wrong as right.

Our defense against deception is to know God’s Word, for “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (v.16). Correction is to set right what is wrong, and instruction is to make known what is right. God’s Word not only makes us aware of wrongs, it also prompts and teaches us to do what is right.

Is your New Year’s resolution to walk rightly before God and others and to be “thoroughly equipped for every good work”? (v.17). Then read and apply God’s Word, asking the Lord to make you a person of integrity.

When reading God’s Word, take special care To find the rich treasures hidden there; Give thought to each truth, each precept hear, Then practice it well with godly fear. —Anon.

The more we meditate on Scripture, the more readily we’ll detect error.

Childhood Beginnings

By Cindy Hess Kasper

2 Timothy 3:14-17

Even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve. —Mark 10:45

Last summer, our church invited a young man to join the staff. As Caleb shared how he grew up in Costa Rica while his family was serving Christ there, he reflected on the words of 2 Timothy 3:14-17. From his childhood, he reminisced, he had known the Bible. His mother and father had taught him the truths of the Scriptures that were “able to make [him] wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (v.15). He acknowledged that his preparation to be a pastor had begun when he was still a child.

Our congregation had the opportunity to “meet” his family in Costa Rica via a video-conferencing call. Caleb’s dad challenged his son using the words of Jesus about Himself in Mark 10:45. He said, “Caleb, remember our family motto, ‘We are here to serve, not to be served.’” It was easy to understand how this young man had developed his maturity of faith.

The children God has entrusted to us are precious gifts. A good foundation will help them to develop into mature believers who are “complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:17). With God’s help we can pass on the baton of faith to future generations. What a great privilege to be servants like Jesus.

Begin to train them early

To fear and love the Lord,

To carry on life’s pathway

God’s lamp, His holy Word. —Fennema

Children are God’s precious jewels— help them shine for Christ.

The Revisable Edition

By Anne Cetas

2 Timothy 3:16

Randall Peterson, a retired autoworker, thinks there could be an interest for a new kind of Bible. He sarcastically says that a publisher ought to create an electronic Bible that would allow for editing from the pew. That way individuals and churches could make the Bible say what they want it to say. He says it could be called the “LAME” Bible: “Locally Adaptive Multifaith Edition” and “could be sold to any church regardless of what it believes.”

He’s making a point, of course, but we might be tempted by such a product. Jesus gives us some hard teachings! As believers, our desire is to be obedient to Him in our choices and attitudes, but at times we resist the Word of God and may wish we could soften His commands.

Some of Jesus’ hard teachings are found in the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 5, He says: “Love your enemies, bless those who

curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you” (v.44). That’s what He tells us to do, so we know we can’t just delete it. We need to apply it to our personal situation with the Holy Spirit’s enablement.

God’s Word is to be obeyed by His people. We’re the ones who need to be “revised”—not the Scriptures.

The laws of God are true and right;

They stand as firm today

As when He put them in His Word

And told us to obey. —Fasick

To love God is to obey God.

Hearing God

By Richard De Haan

2 Timothy 3:16

The first morning I heard the mockingbird practicing his bagful of imitations outside my window, I was thrilled by the beauty of his songs. Gradually, however, I began to take this early morning songster for granted. One day as I awoke, it dawned on me that I no longer appreciated my regular visitor. It wasn’t the mockingbird’s fault. He was still there. His beautiful song hadn’t changed, but I was no longer listening for it.

As believers in Christ, we may have a similar experience hearing God speak to us in His Word. When we are first saved, the Scriptures, with their soul-stirring instruction and vital spiritual food, are deeply satisfying. As time goes on, however, we routinely read those same portions over and over in a manner that no longer speaks to us. Our spiritual senses grow dull and lethargic, and God’s exhilarating Word becomes commonplace to us. But then, what joy we feel when a passage reveals an exciting truth, and once again we “hear” the Lord!

Are you reading the Scriptures out of a tired sense of duty? Or do you still possess the fresh expectancy you had when you first believed? Today, when you read God’s Word, listen closely for His voice.

I scanned the Scriptures thoughtlessly—

My haste had closed my ear;

Then prayerfully I read once more—

This time my heart could hear. —Gustafson

Without a heart for God, we cannot hear his word.

Learning From Mistakes

By Dave Branon

2 Timothy 3:16

The Bible is not a written record of perfect people (except for Jesus, of course). From beginning to end, God’s Word points out in painful detail the mistakes made by its characters.

Adam and Eve failed to obey God’s specific restrictions (Gen. 2:15-17; 3:1-7). Abram lied about his relationship to Sarai (Gen. 12:10-20). Moses grew angry and struck the rock in disobedience to God (Num. 20:7-12). David committed adultery and murder (2 Sam. 11-12). Solomon started out well but turned from God for a time (1 Ki. 3:5-9; 11:1-43). Peter denied knowing Jesus (Mt. 26:69-75).

The Bible’s honest portrayal of the troubles that its characters brought upon themselves and others reminds me of what humorist Sam Levenson once said: “You must learn from the mistakes of others. You can’t possibly live long enough to make them all yourself.”

It is for our instruction that the Bible records the sinful actions of many of its key figures. The old saying “Those who don’t learn from history are bound to repeat it” is true here as well. As we see the errors made by biblical characters, we can ask the Lord to protect

us from making similar mistakes.

The Bible is filled with example and teaching

On how to avoid all the pitfalls of sin;

And if we will learn from its people and precepts,

The struggles and battles of life we can win. —Hess

To the wise, the word is sufficient.

Godly Grandmothers

By Haddon W. Robinson

2 Timothy 3:10-17

From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures. — 2 Timothy 3:15

A little boy described grandmothers like this: “A grandmother is a lady who has no children of her own, so she loves everybody else’s. Grandmas don’t have to do anything but be there. If they take you for a walk, they slow down past leaves and caterpillars... They can answer questions like why dogs hate cats and why God isn’t married. When they read to you, they don’t skip parts or mind if it’s the same story again. Everyone should have a grandmother because they are the only grown-ups who have time for you.”

Timothy is a prime example of how a young life can be greatly influenced by a grandmother, especially if she is a godly woman. He held a position of great responsibility in leading the congregation at Ephesus. It was a difficult assignment for a young man who was timid by nature. To help his young protégé stand firm, the apostle Paul reminded him of the faith of his grandmother Lois (2 Tim. 1:5). It isn’t hard to imagine her playing with him when he was little, teaching him Scripture passages, putting him to bed with hugs and kisses and childlike prayers, and in the process nurturing the faith of her grandson.

God is a wise Father who knows how to help grandmothers—and all of us—to influence young lives.

TIPS FOR GRANDMOTHERS

Pray for your grandchildren.

Play with your grandchildren.

Pass on your faith to your grandchildren.

If you want your influence to last, put Christ first.

Jordan’s Idea

By Anne Cetas

2 Timothy 3:14-17

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, ... for instruction in righteousness. —2 Timothy 3:16

One spring day, Jordan began asking questions about Jesus’ resurrection as his mom was taking him to preschool. Realizing he thought Jesus was rising from the dead for the first time this Easter, she tried to correct him. She pulled the car over and told him all about Jesus’ death and resurrection. She concluded, “Jesus rose from the dead a long time ago, and now He wants to live in our hearts.” But Jordan still didn’t understand.

Unsure how she could make it any clearer, she said, “How about if we stop by the bookstore? I saw some books about Easter when I was there last week. We’ll get one and read through it together.” With a wisdom beyond his years, Jordan responded, “Can’t we just read the Bible?”

Jordan’s idea was right. Commentaries and books about the Bible are helpful tools. But they should never be used as a substitute for God’s revelation of Himself—His Word. No other book has been given to us “by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16). As author Eugene Peterson says, “God’s voice [is] speaking to us, inviting, promising, blessing, confronting, commanding, healing.”

Let’s follow Jordan’s idea and go first to the ultimate source of truth—the Bible.

Exhaustless store of treasured gems

Within this Book I hold;

And as I read, it comes alive,

New treasures to unfold. —Mortenson

Go to the Bible for your protection, correction, and direction.

God's Tool Kit

By Joanie Yoder

2 Timothy 3:13-17

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, ... that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. —2 Timothy 3:16-17

A friend of mine is a gifted handyman, but for years he was unable to develop his gifts. The reason was simple: He lacked the right tools. So for his birthday I gave him a tool kit that opens like a large book, containing the basic tools a handyman needs. As he examined each tool, his eyes shone with anticipation.

After completing his next job, my friend told me excitedly, "There's nothing more satisfying than having the right tools for the job." Then, applying that thought to his spiritual life, he added, "I know where I can find the right tool for every job—in the Bible!"

The apostle Paul, a tentmaker by trade and a "master builder" in God's kingdom (1 Corinthians 3:10), knew he needed the right spiritual tools. He understood that the most practical tool kit for meeting spiritual needs is the Word of God. In 2 Timothy 3, he declared that all Scripture is God-inspired (v.16). It's indispensable for teaching, rebuking, correcting, training, and equipping believers for every good work.

Open and use God's "tool kit" every day. Experience the deep satisfaction of finding in it the right tool for each spiritual task you have to do. It's the tool kit that has all you need. Just use it!

You cannot be successful as a worker

Unless you have the tools to fit your trade;

And you cannot be effective as God's servant

Until God's holy Word you have surveyed. —Hess

The Bible has all we need to know, so we can do all God wants us to do.

Worth The Effort?

By Philip Yancey

2 Timothy 3:16

I once resolved to read all 38 of Shakespeare's plays in one year. To my surprise, fulfilling the task seemed far more like entertainment than work. I expected to learn about Shakespeare's world and the people who inhabited it, but I found that Shakespeare mainly taught me about my world.

I went through precisely that same process in encountering the Old Testament. Why does it spend so much time on temples, priests, and rules about sacrifices that no longer exist? How can we make sense of the Old Testament, and how does it apply to our lives today?

As I worked past some of the barriers, I came to feel a need to read because of what it was teaching me. Eventually I found myself wanting to read those 39 books. They were satisfying a hunger in me that nothing else had. They taught me about life with God.

The Old Testament speaks to our hunger. It gives an advanced course of "Life With God," expressed in a style both personal and passionate.

The rewards offered do not come easily. All achievements require a similar process of hard work; we persevere because the

rewards will come.

A glory gilds the sacred page, Majestic like the sun; It gives a light to every age, It gives, but borrows none. —Cowper

The Bible gives us a picture of who we really are.

2 Timothy 3:16 A Hunger for God

Read: Deuteronomy 4:9-14

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness. 2 Timothy 3:16

A-poe-la-pi is an elderly member of the Akha, a hill tribe people who live on the mountain ranges of Yunnan Province in China. As we visited him on a recent missions trip, A-poe-la-pi told us that he had missed the weekly Bible study because of heavy rains. So he implored us, “Could you share God’s Word with me?”

A-poe-la-pi can’t read, so the weekly gathering is vital to him. As we read the Bible to him, he listened intently. His earnest attitude reminded me that when we listen carefully to the story of the inspired Scriptures, we honor the Lord.

In Deuteronomy 4, Moses urged the Israelites to listen carefully to the rules and regulations he was teaching them (v. 1). He reminded them that the source and inspiration behind the teaching was none other than God Himself, who had spoken to them “out of the fire” of Sinai (v. 12). Moses said, “He declared to you his covenant . . . which he commanded you to follow” (v. 13).

May A-poe-la-pi’s hunger to hear God’s Word encourage a similar desire in us. As the apostle Paul reminds us in 2 Timothy 3:15-16, the inspired Scriptures have been given for our good and growth—to make us wise in the salvation and ways of God.

Lord, give us a hunger to hear and understand the truth of Your Word. Help us show Your love to others by faithfully living out its instructions for us.

To know Christ, the Living Word, is to love the Bible, the written Word.

INSIGHT: Verses 11-12 of today’s passage refer to one of the most critical events in Israel’s history—the giving of the law at Mount Sinai. After the Israelites left Egypt, where they had been enslaved for over 400 years and then rescued by God’s intervention, they were led by Moses through the Red Sea and made their way to Mount Sinai. There the people met the God who had rescued them, and His power was displayed in remarkable ways (Ex. 19:16-19). This meeting between God and His chosen people was the first step in turning this large extended family (the twelve tribes of Israel) into a nation with laws—also provided by their rescuing God.

By Poh Fang Chia

Let’s Read It!

By David C. McCasland

2 Timothy 3:10-17

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.—2 Timothy 3:16

After 30 years as a pastor, a New Jersey minister concluded, “The Bible is the best-selling, least-read, and least-understood book.” In his view, “Biblical illiteracy is rampant.”

George Gallup, the foremost religion pollster in the US, agrees: “We revere the Bible,” he says, “but we don’t read it.” In a recent survey, 64 percent of those questioned said they were too busy to read the Bible. The average household has three Bibles but less than half the people in the US can name the first book in the Old Testament. One survey found that 12 percent of its Christian respondents identified Noah’s wife as Joan of Arc!

The solution? Read the Bible! Join me in a commitment to read the entire Bible through in the coming year. It will take about 15 minutes a day to follow the reading guide in this booklet. Are we too busy for that?

The goal is not information, but transformation. Someone summarized 2 Timothy 3:16 by saying: “God’s Word shows us which road to take (doctrine). It tells us when we get off track (reproof); how to get back on (correction); and how to stay on (instruction in righteousness).”

God's Word is a precious gift. So let's read it through this coming year.

If you've never read the Bible through,

There's a special joy awaiting you:

You could start the new year out just right

Walking with the Lord and in His light. —Hess

The Bible: The more you read it, the more you love it; the more you love it, the more you read it.

Profitable For Growth

By Anne Cetas

2 Timothy 3:10-17

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God. —2 Timothy 3:16

Which of the following quotes are in the Bible?

1. Cleanliness is next to godliness.
2. God helps those who help themselves.
3. Confession is good for the soul.
4. Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward.
5. Money is the root of all evil.
6. Honesty is the best policy.

Believe it or not, only one of those quotes is found in the Bible. The fourth one is from Job 5:7.

George Müller, a pastor and orphanage director in the 1800s, wouldn't have had trouble knowing which of those quotes were from the Bible. Why? Because he read through it more than 100 times! He said: "I look upon it as a lost day when I have not had a good time over the Word of God... I have always made it a rule never to begin work until I have had a good season with God and His Word. The blessing I have received has been wonderful."

We don't need to feel guilty if we don't read the Bible as much as Müller did. But consider with me reading it through at least once this coming year—not so that we can answer some trick questions about it, but because it was given to us by God and is profitable for our spiritual growth (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

God's Word is like refreshing rain

That waters crops and seed;

It brings new life to open hearts,

And meets us in our need. —Sper

Read the Bible to be wise, believe it to be safe, practice it to be holy.

No Alteration Needed

By Dennis Fisher

2 Timothy 3:16

In every era there has been a spirit of the age that challenges our acceptance of Scripture. The temptation is to remove or alter those portions that seem old-fashioned.

Whether it's the doctrine of hell or God's view on sexual behavior, many feel pressured to reject parts of the Bible. Inevitably, some truths will be offensive in every day and age.

Centuries ago, a Jewish king was handed a scroll with a message from God. As the document was read aloud, the king took offense, and with a small knife he cut out a portion of the scroll and threw it into the fire. Eventually the entire text was thrown into the flames, yet the king and his servants who had heard the words of the Lord “were not afraid” (Jeremiah 36:24). In the end, the king lost his kingdom because of his disobedience.

When we selectively edit the Bible to suit our fancy, or neglect its teachings, we show that we do not fear God. Rather than submit to what He says, we exalt our own finite reason and fallible conscience above the inspired text.

When you’re tempted to overlook or ignore a portion of the Word of God, remember: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16). It tells us all we need to know to live a life that pleases Him.

What is the meaning of life here on earth?

What is its purpose, and what is its worth?

God has the answers in His holy book;

That is the first and the best place to look. —Hess

In a changing world, you can trust God's unchanging Word.

A Book For Every Need

By Dave Branon

2 Timothy 3:16

When a co-worker gave me a brochure he had received by mail, I looked at it and thought, This can't be true. No book can do what this promises. The pamphlet was advertising a book containing 853 letters for “every conceivable personal and business need.”

Whether that book can deliver on its claims, I don't know. I didn't buy it. But the advertisement made me stop and think about another book that makes a similar promise.

Second Timothy 3:16-17 states, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” That's quite an advertisement! The apostle Paul was saying that God gave us the Bible to teach us about Himself, to give us practical instructions on how to live, and to equip us completely with everything we need to know in order to live a godly life on this earth.

The Bible delivers on its promises. I know, because I bought it, I've been reading it, and I'm trying to live by it. It covers all aspects of life. Its pages contain essential truths, instructions, and teachings. It alone is the book for every need. Have you read it lately?

The Bible gives us all we need

To live our lives for God each day;

But it won't help if we don't read

And follow what its pages say.—Sper

The Bible: The more you read it, the more you love it; The more you love it, the more you read it.

The Bible Stands!

By Richard De Haan

2 Timothy 3:16

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days. —Hebrews 11:30

Bible in a Year:

Psalms 89-90; Romans 14

Unbelievers have long scoffed at the biblical story of the fall of the ancient city of Jericho. That's why I was delighted to see this headline on the front page of the newspaper:

NEW STUDY BACKS BIBLICAL VERSION OF JERICHO'S DEMISE

The Associated Press article began, "The walls of Jericho did come tumbling down as recounted in the Bible, according to an archaeological study." Archaeologist Bryant G. Wood of the University of Toronto said, "When we compare the archaeological evidence at Jericho with the biblical narrative describing the Israelite destruction of Jericho, we find remarkable agreement." Wood noted that the Bible places the event after spring harvest and indicates that the Israelites burned the city—both facts confirmed by the archaeological remains. Once again, archaeology bears testimony to the truthfulness of Scripture.

Our belief in the authenticity of the Bible does not depend on scientific research but on its claim to be God's Word. As 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." We can therefore have complete confidence in what it says.

It's a fact—the walls of Jericho did indeed fall. The Bible stands!

To the wise, God's Word is sufficient.

A Map And A Compass

By Dennis J. De Haan

2 Timothy 3:10-17

All Scripture is ... profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. —2 Timothy 3:16

I was driving on the outskirts of Orlando, searching for the little town of Zellwood. I had carefully located it on the map, but I discovered that I was on an unfamiliar road. A glance at the compass attached to my windshield, however, assured me that I was headed in the right direction and would eventually cross the highway leading to Zellwood.

The Bible and the work of God's Holy Spirit are like a map and a compass. The Bible is our map. Paul assured Timothy that Scripture lays out the route of sound doctrine and righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16). But where is the compass in this passage?

The compass is the work of the Holy Spirit in Paul's "manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance" (vv.10,14). Because Timothy carefully followed Paul's Spirit-led example, he didn't lose his way.

Perhaps Bible reading, prayer, and Sunday worship were once part of your childhood, but you no longer practice them. Now you are wandering and don't know what to believe. Look to the map and compass again! Read the Bible and recall the life of parents, ministers, or friends who walked with Christ. Follow their example and soon you'll be back on the right course.

With God's Word as your map and His Spirit as your compass, you're sure to stay on course.

Fully Equipped

By Dennis Fisher

2 Timothy 3:14-17

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God ... that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. —2 Timothy 3:16-17

Karl Elsener, a Swiss designer of surgical equipment in the 19th century, worked for years on perfecting a military knife. Today his Swiss Army Knife is associated with excellence in blades and a variety of utilities. One model includes knife blades, a saw, scissors, a magnifying glass, a can opener, a screwdriver, a ruler, a toothpick, a writing pen, and more—all in one knife! If you are out camping in the wild, this one item can certainly make you feel equipped for survival.

We need something to equip us to survive spiritually in this sinful world. God has given us His Word, a kind of spiritual knife for the soul. Paul writes: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The word translated equipped means to "furnish or fit completely." How does the Bible equip us for life's journey? It provides spiritual truth in doctrine; reproof in showing our imperfections; correction by revealing our sinful failures; and instruction in living a righteous life. There's not a more valuable tool than God's Word to make us fully equipped for spiritual survival and personal growth.

Lord, thank You for equipping us with Your

inspired Word. You've given us the tools we
need to live for You. Help us to take time to read
it and to follow what You tell us. Amen.

The Bible contains the nutrients we need for a healthy soul.

Homemade Religion

By Dave Branon

2 Timothy 3:10-17

The Holy Scriptures ... are able to make you wise for salvation through faith. —2 Timothy 3:15

The idea is becoming increasingly popular—people thinking they can believe in Jesus while accepting unbiblical teaching. Although professing to have a relationship with Jesus Christ, some feel it's okay to also follow the teachings of Buddha or Krishna. They feel that having an additional belief is simply another step toward spiritual fulfillment.

Chuck Colson, who has examined this trend, says that “instead of adhering to a specific set of doctrines, they feel free to pick and choose from all the various belief systems, or to create their own tailor-made religion.” He cites studies to show that people claiming to be followers of Jesus Christ have embraced reincarnation, astrology, and communication with the dead.

This is dangerous ground. The true believer knows that Jesus Christ is the only way to God (Acts 4:12), and that the Bible, God's inspired Word, is the only true source of instruction (2 Timothy 3:15-16). All beliefs and practices relating to spirituality must be based on biblical truth—not on how appealing they may sound.

Don't trust a homemade religion that contains a little of this and a little of that. Make your faith all about Jesus, and test everything by God's Word. Then you can't go wrong.

The Bible is a lamp from God,

A sword of truth and light;

It searches heart and soul and mind,

And helps us know what's right. —Bosch

Examine all teaching in the light of God's Word.

Read All Of It

By Vernon C. Grounds

2 Timothy 3:16

Some Christian families follow the practice of reading through the whole Bible. After evening meals, they read a chapter or two. They read from Genesis to Revelation, skipping nothing. Even the genealogies with their hard-to-pronounce names are read aloud.

We might question the relevance of such a method for small children, but it does acquaint all the family members with the entirety of God's Word. It also exposes children to the sinful depths and spiritual heights of which we are capable, and it teaches them right and wrong.

If you've never done so, why not embark on your own program of reading the Bible straight through? Try doing it as a family or for your personal devotions.

There are two persuasive reasons for resolving to undertake such a program. One is Paul's declaration that all Scripture is God-breathed and profitable (2 Timothy 3:16). The other is the testimony of believers whose lives have been changed by following such a practice.

Read God's Word straight through and you'll begin to see the unfolding plan of God's redeeming grace, and that you were the object of His love even before you were born. Do it once, and you'll want to do it again.

Oh, may these heavenly pages be

My ever dear delight,
And still new beauties may I see,
And still increasing light. —Steele

Those who only sample the Bible never acquire a taste for it.

2 Timothy 3:16b

"Wreck" A Bible

READ: 2 Timothy 3:10-17

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction. —2 Timothy 3:16

The Bible is a remarkable book. Millions of copies are bought each year. It has been the number-one bestseller for decades. But tragically, the Bible is said to be the least-read bestseller of all time.

The apostle Paul taught that the Scriptures are given to us by God and are capable of bringing about transformation in those who take it seriously (2 Timothy 3:16). Evangelist and preacher D. L. Moody said, "The Scriptures were not given to increase our knowledge but to change our lives."

So why do we often neglect this source of transforming power? Writer and professor J. I. Packer said, "If I were the devil, one of my first aims would be to stop folk from digging into the Bible."

Do you use your Bible every day until it eventually falls apart? Bible teacher Alan Redpath advised believers to "wreck" a Bible every 10 years. Here's why: God wants to speak to us through the Bible, telling us how to live for Him and answering crucial questions. Through it He warns us about the dangers of sin and provides us with nourishing spiritual food.

Don't neglect your Bible. If you do, you will neglect your own spiritual health.

—Joanie Yoder

The treasures of the Word of God

Are great beyond compare;

But if we do not search them out,

We cannot use what's there. —Sper

A well-worn Bible is a sign of a well-fed soul. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

2 Timothy 3:16c - C. H. Spurgeon wrote

The Bible is the writing of the living God." He explained that though "Moses was employed to write his histories with his fiery pen, God guided that pen. It may be that David touched his harp and let sweet psalms of melody drop from his fingers, but God moved his hands over the living strings of his golden harp. Solomon sang canticles of love and gave forth words of consummate wisdom, but God directed his lips and made the preacher eloquent. If I follow the thundering Nahum, when his horses plow the waters; or Habakkuk, when he sees the tents of Cushan in affliction; if I read Malachi, when the earth is burning like an oven; or the rugged chapters of Peter, who speaks of fire devouring God's enemies; if I turn aside to Jude, who launches forth anathemas on the foes of God—everywhere I find God speaking. It is God's voice, not man's. (Thoughts for the Quiet Hour).

2 Timothy 3:16-17 - SPIRITUAL FOOD

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable... That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."-- 2Ti3:16-17.

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever."-- John6:51.

IT IS the artifice of many advertisers of the present day to secure customers for patent foods by associating the figure of some person in perfect health and strength with the article of diet they desire to recommend. It is certain that spiritual health and power can only be produced when the spirit is dieted on the Word of God.

From his earliest boyhood, the young Timothy had been instructed in the Holy Scriptures. When the Apostle first met him there was a rich subsoil of knowledge of the Old Testament, in which the seed of the Gospel message readily germinated. Perhaps the reason for the instability of some of our young people is that Eunice and Lois in our Christian homes fail to do for the children what mothers and grandmothers did for previous generations.

It is not necessary to discuss all that is involved in Inspiration, as the Apostle uses that term; nor is it necessary to be profoundly familiar with books of theology before we are able to pronounce on it. Inspiration is a quality which is apprehended by the spiritual taste, just as the tongue can detect sweetness or briny saltiness of flavour. The Bible is the Word of God, and the whole of it is profitable for one of the four uses mentioned in 2Ti3:16.

We should read the Bible daily, and it is helpful to use the references and discover the parallel passages. It is good sometimes to kneel down and turn what we read into prayer. We must get beyond the outside husk to the inner kernel, as we "read, mark, learn and inwardly digest." Ask the Spirit of God to give you some message directly for yourself.

There are some kinds of food which are destitute of the properties that sustain life. But Christ is all we want, and every faculty of our nature can be satisfied in Him. He is the Living Bread, on Whom we must feed if we would have eternal life. It is not the Bible only, but the Christ of whom it speaks who is the true spiritual food of the soul. "He that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst."

PRAYER

O Lord, open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law. Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. AMEN (**F B Meyer. Our Daily Walk**)

Packed With Power

Joe Stowell

2 Timothy 3:16-17

My wife, Martie, and I have some items of worth around our house that sit on mantles or behind glass doors. They are things we have collected over the years, things from special places we've been or from special friends we have known. Though these items may have a good deal of worth to us personally, in terms of function they're not worth much. My guess is that you have a few of your own prized dust collectors as well.

I wonder if you, though you might never admit it, feel that way about the Bible—It's an important book with great value but with little usefulness for the realities you face every day. After all, how could an ancient book written by religious zealots even begin to connect with the challenges of your often-too-complex life?

Here's the good news: When it comes to your life, nothing could be more helpful!

The Word of God has tremendous worth and plays an active role in our lives to effect change. Paul explained its power to Timothy when he said that the Bible is "useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

I think of my friend who told me of a time when he was away on a business trip. As he returned to his hotel one night and stepped on the elevator, two young, attractive women joined him. As he pressed the button to get off on his floor, they said, "Hey, mister, how about a little fun tonight?"

He told me that Galatians 6:8 immediately came to mind: "The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life." He said that verse was like a shade drawn between him and what could have been a persuasive temptation. In that moment, the correcting power of the Word of God kept him safe and on course.

Whether we realize it or not, throughout our lives we have been saturated with false values, and we need to be reprogrammed with truth. God's ways and wisdom are without peer. His Word really is like a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Psalm 119: 105). We need to know what to do with our time, energy, and money. We need to know what to do with our minds. We need to be taught what to do about friends and how to handle enemies. We need to be taught about family, work, and leisure. God's Word is jam-

packed with time-tested principles of success for every situation and issue of life.

More importantly, God's Word teaches us the wonderful truth that He cared enough to die for us when we were lost in our sin. In His Word we learn about His character and how we can cultivate a trusted relationship with Him. We learn things about Him through His Word that we cannot learn anywhere else.

The Bible is "living and active" (Hebrews 4:12) and packed with power. It's not meant to be a collector's item on your shelf. Go ahead—dust it off and discover for yourself how God can use His Word to guide, protect, encourage, and enrich your life!

YOUR JOURNEY...

What importance does the Bible have in your life? Would you describe it as "living and active"? If not, what steps can you take to change that?

Think through some circumstances where you can experience the unique usefulness of God's Word as it pertains to (1) teaching, (2) rebuking, (3) correcting, and (4) training in righteousness.

Like my friend at the hotel, have you experienced a time when God's Word came to mind at a critical moment? Share your story with someone who needs to be reminded of the living and active power of God's Word.

Choose a thought from Scripture to take with you today. And make it a daily habit!

2 TIMOTHY 4

2 Timothy 4:1 - The Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing.

Professor Rendel Harris reminds us that an early piece of Christian literature, called the Second Epistle of Clement, opens with these words: "Brethren, we ought to think of Jesus Christ as God, as the Judge of quick and dead. And we ought not to think meanly of our salvation; for when we think meanly of Him, meanly also do we expect to receive." In the view of this holy soul there was a very deep and necessary connection between creed and character. Those who esteem Him most worthily will derive most from Him.

Large thoughts of Christ are necessary to holiness. — Unless we think of Christ as the Ideal Man, in whom there was no flaw or stain, how can we make Him the model of our daily life? Unless we think of Him as the Son of God, able to subdue all things to Himself, how can we dare to hope to become like Him? "I should die, O my Lord," cried a saint in a moment of religious ecstasy, "if I thought that I should fail of loving Thee with all my heart."

Large thoughts of Christ are necessary to prayer. — He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is the Rewarder. Bethink thee well before thou openest thy lips in the first entreaty, who He is whom thou addressest, and forthwith great and far-reaching petitions will naturally form themselves within thine heart.

Large thoughts of Christ are necessary for Christian work. — The solid belief that Christ has redeemed our race, and that the Father has given Him the kingdom over all the world, is absolutely necessary before there can be any enthusiastic effort on our part to make Him King and secure for Him actually the kingdom, the power, and the glory. (**Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily**)

2 Timothy 4:2 "Preach the word ... reprove, rebuke, exhort."

I am sometimes accused of saying sharp things. The charge does not come home to my conscience with very great power. If anybody said I spoke smooth things, I think it would oppress me a great deal more. As long as there are evils in this world, God's ministers are bound to protest against them.

Little is that ministry worth which never chides you. If God never used his minister as a rod, depend on it, he will never use him as a pot of manna, for the rod of Aaron and the pot of manna always go together (Heb. 9:4), and he who is God's true servant will be both to your soul. (**Spurgeon, C. H.**)

Are You A Preacher?

By M.R. De Haan

2 Timothy 4:2

Preach the Word! Be ready in season and out of season. —2 Timothy 4:2

When challenged to speak to others about Christ, some believers excuse their silence by saying, "Well, I am not a preacher." But every follower of Jesus is (or at least should be) a preacher. We don't need a pulpit. It can be done in friendly conversation, by handing out a tract or portion of Scripture, by writing a letter, or by singing a song.

I received the following letter: "Several months ago, on a bus in Detroit, I picked up a copy of Our Daily Bread, which someone had left on the seat. I began reading it and became so interested I wrote to you asking for the current booklet. Through this I began listening to your radio program and was wonderfully saved. I am eager to get to heaven and find out who left that booklet on the seat in the bus!"

A dying woman testified that she was saved by reading a piece of wrapping paper in a package from Australia. The crumpled pages contained a sermon by British pastor Charles H. Spurgeon. The sermon, first preached in England, printed in America, shipped to Australia, and then sent back to England as wrapping paper, was the means of converting a precious soul in London where the sermon was first preached! That is the power of the Word! —M. R. De Haan, M.D. (founder of RBC Ministries)

We do not need a pulpit
From which to speak God's Word;
It only takes our willingness
To share what we have heard. —Sper

Jesus said, "Go into all the world" (Mk. 16:15). The world begins where your front yard ends.

2 Timothy 4:4

The Gospel Of Judas

They will turn their ears away from the truth. —2 Timothy 4:4

The recently discovered manuscript The Gospel of Judas alleges that Jesus asked Judas to betray Him. Supposedly, Jesus hoped that His death would free Him from this world of matter to become a pure spirit again.

There is a big problem with this ancient text. Judas could not have written this manuscript that bears his name, since it was written long after the time of Jesus. But because The Gospel of Judas has been newly discovered, it provides a novelty for those who like to speculate.

Proposing a fake story to replace the New Testament account is not new. Paul wrote, "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables" (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

There's a trend today to look for new theories to undermine the Bible. In 1 Thessalonians 5, Paul told us to "test all things; hold fast what is good" (v.21). Based on the questionable content and authorship of The Gospel of Judas, we know that it's a fable. The real gospel (good news) lies with the apostles, who walked with Jesus and wrote down His life-saving message in the New Testament. —Dennis Fisher

The Bible stands, and it will forever

When the world has passed away;

By inspiration it has been given—

All its precepts I will obey. —Lillenas

To trust God is to trust in His holy Word. [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

What Does It Say?

By Dave Branon

2 Timothy 3:14-4:6

They will turn their ears away from the truth. —2 Timothy 4:4

I was surprised to come home from work and find out that I was a violator. That morning, I had put out some wood I no longer could use, expecting it to be picked up with my garbage.

I thought I had carefully followed the instructions for trash pickup. I had cut the wood into 4-foot sections and attached garbage tags. But I must have wrongly interpreted the guidelines. What I thought they said and what they really said were two different things. So I ended up with the wood and a huge violation sticker.

What I learned from that incident is similar to what we need to learn about following scriptural guidelines. Our private interpretation of the Bible must line up with God's truth or we will be left with some dangerous error. Let me illustrate.

Some people reinterpret biblical guidelines in the area of sexual practices. To justify immorality, they say, "Well, that's how you interpret the Bible." When they are brought face to face with verses that clearly condemn sex outside of marriage, they "turn their ears away from the truth" (2 Tim. 4:4).

God's Word reflects His character, and we must obey it even when it says what we don't want to hear. That's why we must always ask, "What does it say?" —J D Branon

Some people make the Bible say what they want to hear.

The Time Will Come

By Marvin Williams

2 Timothy 4:1-8

The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine. —2 Timothy 4:3

Bible in a Year:

A USA Today article describes how parents today seek to initiate their children into a world of all faiths. Ema Drouillard, who runs a ceremony service, was asked by a couple to conduct a service for their baby, Greer. The mother said, "We just wanted a larger spirit to guide our daughter, but we didn't want to get specific. I wanted all her bases covered." The couple said, "We just do Christianity L-I-T-E" for Greer, who "believes in angels and fairies, leprechauns and Santa Claus." This illustrates the low value placed on scriptural truth that is so prevalent in our culture today.

The apostle Paul warned Timothy that a time would come when people would prefer "lite" spiritual meals and would not tolerate substantive teaching (2 Tim. 4:3-4). He predicted that false teaching would increase and be embraced by many because it caters to the needs of their flesh. They have a craving to be entertained and desire teaching that leaves them with good feelings about themselves. Paul instructed Timothy to combat this by teaching doctrines according to God's Word. The purpose of his instruction was to correct, rebuke, and encourage others (v.2).

As believers we are called to teach and obey the Word of God, not to scratch the itches of our culture.

Lord, teach us from Your holy Word All error to discern, And by Your Spirit's light help us From Satan's snares to turn. —Bosch

Stand on the Word of God and you won't fall into error.

Make It Known

By Albert Lee

2 Timothy 4:1-5

God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. —Romans 5:8

I told my doctor who is an agnostic that he should be glad God created us. Seeing a needle in his hands, I wondered, Perhaps I should keep quiet. But I added, "If we are still evolving, then you wouldn't know the exact spots to place those needles." He asked, "Do you really believe in God?" I replied, "Of course. Aren't we intricately made?" I was thankful for this opportunity to begin to witness to my doctor.

In today's Bible reading, Paul charged Timothy to point people to the Savior. "Preach the Word" (2 Tim. 4:2) is not addressed only to preachers, however. The word preach means "to make it known." God's people can do this over a cup of coffee or in school with friends. We can make known the good news of what God has done for us wherever, whenever, and to anyone who is open and

seeking. We can let them know that God loves us and sees our hurts, failures, and weaknesses. Through the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus, God broke the stranglehold of sin over us. And to all those who will open their heart to the Savior, He will come to live in them.

Let's not be afraid to make known what God has done for us.

We who rejoice to know You Renew before Your throne The solemn pledge we owe You— To go and make You known. —Houghton

Sharing the gospel is one person telling another good news.

Yeah, But ...

By Dave Branon

2 Timothy 4:1-8

They will turn their ears away from the truth. —2 Timothy 4:4

Grading university papers is full of surprises. Sometimes, one of my students will successfully handle a subject and display good writing style, and I feel as if my instruction was worthwhile.

Other surprises aren't so pleasant. Like the paper in which a student wrote, "The Bible says, 'Thou shalt not ____.'" He filled in the blank with the activity he was writing about—even though Scripture does not contain such a verse. I thought his biggest problem was not knowing Scripture, until he concluded, "Although the Bible says this is wrong, I don't see why, so I think it's okay."

It's dangerous and the worst kind of arrogance to think we know more about an issue than God does. Scripture predicted this kind of thinking. Paul said in 2 Timothy 4: "They will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires ... they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth" (vv.3-4). This points to people who set aside the inspired Word of God (3:16) in order to accept teaching they think is "okay."

When the Bible clearly spells out a principle, we honor

God by obeying Him. For believers, there's no room for "Yeah, but ..." responses to Scripture.

God who formed worlds by the power of His Word Speaks through the Scriptures His truth to be heard; And if we read with the will to obey, He by His Spirit will show us His way. —D. De Haan

The Bible: Read it, believe it, obey it!

Itching Ears

By Herbert Vander Lugt

2 Timothy 4:1-5

Because they have itching ears, ... they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. —2 Timothy 4:3-4

The apostle Paul warned Timothy that he would encounter people with an ailment he called "itching ears" (2 Tim. 4:3). Those who have this condition reject "sound doctrine" and look for teaching that suits "their own desires."

For example, if they're offended by Christ's declaration, "No one comes to the Father except through Me" (Jn. 14:6), they flock to a pastor who says there are many ways to God.

Or some people reject the biblical teaching that those who engage in sexual relationships outside of marriage are "fornicators and adulterers" whom "God will judge" (Heb. 13:4). So they look for a teacher who says that the sexual standards in the Bible are not binding in today's world.

I deplore what these people do, but I'm afraid that I too have "itching ears." I love to hear strong affirmations of biblical standards and sound doctrine. But I don't like to be confronted with Scripture about prideful, self-righteous attitudes or lack of love for others.

Undoubtedly, all of us have this malady. We need to ask the Lord to search our hearts and forgive us. He can change us so that we will listen to what His Word says and obey it. That's the only antidote for "itching ears."

Master, speak, and make me ready,

When Thy voice is truly heard,

With obedience glad and steady,

Still to follow every word. —Havergal

Obeying the truth is the remedy for itching ears.

2 Timothy 4:5 - Not Satisfied

Sometimes we are not satisfied with the responsibilities God has given us, thinking we are fitted for a larger ministry. Looking enviously at the size or scope of a fellow believer's calling, we think less of our own work and begin to neglect it. In his book *Be Faithful*, Warren W. Wiersbe illustrated how one Christian leader handled that problem. "A young preacher once complained to C. H. Spurgeon, the famous Baptist preacher, that he did not have as big a church as he deserved. 'How many do you preach to?' Spurgeon asked. 'Oh, about a hundred,' the man replied. Solemnly, Spurgeon said, 'That will be enough to give account for on the day of judgment.'"

The truth of Spurgeon's Statement is borne out in Paul's reminder to "make full proof of thy ministry," which means, "fulfill your ministry." The apostle was telling his young friend in the faith to do all that God has called him to do. But this did not mean that Timothy was required to do the same things Paul was called to do. Nor did it mean that he would accomplish as much as the apostle would. Rather, it meant that whether Timothy's task was large or small, in the limelight or behind the scenes, he was to fulfill his ministry in a diligent and commendable manner.

The same is true of us. Whether we are teaching three unruly boys in a Sunday school class, directing a girls club of hundreds, or preaching to thousands, we're to do the job faithfully. That's what God expects. And as we do, we will be fulfilling our ministry. -D. C. Egner ([Our Daily Bread](#), Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Bon Voyage

By David H. Roper

2 Timothy 4:1-8

The time of my departure is at hand. —2 Timothy 4:6

Paul's word departure in 2 Timothy 4:6 is freighted with significance. It means "loosing" or "unmooring." It's a word he uses again when he sighs, "I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ" (Phil. 1:23).

Departure is a nautical term that suggests "shipping out"—weighing anchor, slipping the lines that tether us to this world and getting underway. It's a marvelous metaphor for dying.

For believers in Christ, death is not an end but a beginning. It means leaving this old world behind and getting to a better place, completing the purpose for which we were made. It's a time for joy and excitement and a hearty "Bon Voyage!"

All voyages, however, are fraught with uncertainty, especially those that pass through waters never sailed before. We don't fear death so much as we do the passage. Who knows what dangers lie ahead?

But the journey is not uncharted. One has taken it before us, and He has returned to bring us safely through. Although we pass through the valley of the shadow of death, God is with us all the way (Ps. 23:4). His hands are on the helm as He guides us to the heavenly haven He has prepared for us (John 14:1-3).

Say not it's a dreadful journey

When the Savior leads the way;

It's but passing through the shadows

To the land of endless day! —Bosch

Those who fear God need not fear death.

A Last Farewell

By David C. McCasland

2 Timothy 4:6-22

I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. —2 Timothy 4:6

After being diagnosed with terminal cancer, 47-year-old Randy Pausch returned to Carnegie Mellon University to deliver a final lecture to colleagues, students, and friends. The professor of computer science thought that perhaps 150 people might show up. Instead the 400-seat auditorium was packed. For an hour, Randy opened his heart to them in a humorous, insightful, and moving farewell that was focused more on living than dying. Within weeks, the videotaped lecture had been seen by millions on the Internet and later became the seed of a bestselling book. Those facing death often have an unusually clear perspective on what is truly important in life.

The apostle Paul's last farewell has inspired countless followers of Christ through the centuries. "The time of my departure is at hand," wrote Paul. "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:6-7). Paul's instruction to Timothy spans the ages to challenge us as well. The letter begins and ends with God's grace (1:2; 4:22) and in between is a celebration of the unceasing faithfulness of God.

A message from the dying can give purpose to the living. Paul's triumphant finale, "To Him be glory forever and ever" (4:18), is a message we can all live by.

Do we live our lives for what will last

Or for what will fade away?

Are we striving for the world's praise

Or for Christ's "well done" one day? —Sper

If we are ready to die, we are ready to live.

What Are You Living For?

By Haddon W. Robinson

2 Timothy 4:6-18

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. —2 Timothy 4:7

Many people living in their twilight years suddenly realize how empty and pointless their lives have been. They've made some successful business deals and had some fun, but in terms of satisfying friendships or lasting accomplishments, their lives have been zero. They have climbed the ladder of success, only to discover that all the while it had been leaning against the wrong wall.

As the apostle Paul looked back on his ministry, he saw that it had been rewarding but not easy. Measured by the world's yardstick of success, his life seems almost insignificant.

Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy while languishing in a cold, damp dungeon awaiting execution. In a matter of weeks, the apostle would stand before Nero, the half-insane emperor of Rome, and his life would end. But he knew that after his death he would receive the crown of life from the King of kings. And we now know that the influence of his life changed the course of history itself.

An ancient historian would have written volumes about the splendor of Nero and probably never even mentioned Paul. Yet today we name our dogs Nero and our sons Paul. I guess what we live for is pretty important after all.

By the way, what are you living for?

One life to live for Christ my Lord,

One life to do my part,

One life in which to give my all

With fervency of heart. —Brandt

There are no losers with Jesus and no winners with the devil.

2 Timothy 4:7 - Fighting the good fight

At the height of WWII, Protestant theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer was imprisoned for taking a stand against Hitler. Yet he continued to urge fellow believers to resist Nazi tyranny. A group of Christians, believing that Hitler was the Antichrist, asked Bonhoeffer, "Why do you expose yourself to all this danger? Jesus will return any day, and all your work and suffering will be for nothing." Bonhoeffer replied, "If Jesus returns tomorrow, then tomorrow I'll rest from my labor. But today I have work to do. I must continue the struggle until it's finished."

2 Timothy 4:7a - It was said of the great racehorse Man o' War:

"Some horses led him at the first turn, some led him at the backstretch, a few led him at the far turn, but no horse ever led him in the homestretch."

Some Christians run nobly at the start of the race, some do well halfway, but blessed is the man who makes a good finish. Paul's batting average was good to the end of the season: "I have finished my course" (2 Tim. 4:7). (**Vance Havner**)

2 Timothy 4:7b -Finishing the Race

One of the most grueling of all bicycle races is the Tour De France. A contestant in that event, Gilbert Duclos-Lassalle, describes it in a National Geographic article titled, "An Annual Madness." The race covers about 2000 miles, including some of France's most difficult, mountainous terrain. Eating and drinking is done on the run. And there are extremes of heat and cold. To train for the event, Lassalle rides his bicycle 22,000 miles a year. What kind of prize makes people endure so much hardship and pain! \$10,000? \$100,000? No. It's just a special winner's jersey. What then motivates the contestants? Lassalle sums it up: "Why, to sweep through the Arc de Triomphe on the last day. To be able to say you finished the Tour de France." ([Sermon Illustrations](#))

A Worthy Effort

By Richard De Haan

2 Timothy 4:1-8

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. —2 Timothy 4:7

Have you heard about the "lawn-chair astronaut"? A 31-year-old truckdriver attached 40 large, helium-filled balloons to a lawn chair. Then, with a CB radio, an altimeter, a parachute, and a life jacket, he began his ascent into the "wild blue yonder." He also took a pellet gun so that he could shoot as many of the balloons as necessary when he was ready to come back to earth.

When he reached an altitude of 3 miles, he decided it was time to come down, so he started popping balloons with his gun. As he tried to land, he got caught in a power line. He later said, "My family used to think I was crazy. Now they want me to write a book, and my sister wants me to get an agent."

Well, I certainly would never encourage anyone to attempt a dangerous stunt like that. I can think of a number of other activities that will do more than simply get your name in the news. As a Christian, you must set out to do things that are worthy of the effort and risks. Your goal should be to fight the good fight, to finish the race, and to keep the faith (2 Timothy 4:7).

Striving to attain spiritual goals brings personal satisfaction, imparts blessing to others, and offers an eternal reward (v.8). That's a worthy effort!

O Thou who died on Calvary

To save my soul and make me free,

I'll consecrate my life to Thee,

My Savior and my God! —Hudson

Is what you're living for worth dying for?

2 Timothy 4:7c

Your Biography

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. —2 Timothy 4:7

When D. L. Moody was moving into old age, he was asked to grant permission for his biography. Moody refused, saying, "A man's life should never be written while he is living. What is important is how a man ends, not how he begins."

For better or worse, I have failed to follow that dictum. My biography has been published. Yet I agree with Moody that the way our lives end is the crucial test of authentic discipleship. Only if we remain in a steadfast relationship with the Savior can we be confident not merely of entering heaven, but of obtaining the victor's crown (1 Corinthians 9:25).

Paul was concerned about the possibility of being disapproved by his Lord (v.27). He was a redeemed believer who was serving the Lord, yet he feared that his service might prove to be wood, hay, and straw rather than gold, silver, and precious stones (1 Corinthians 3:12-13).

What will be the Lord's appraisal of our lives? Will someone evaluating us be able to say honestly that we continued to bear fruit in old age? (Psalm 92:14). Whatever vocation we pursue, with the help of the Holy Spirit we may be "steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). —Vernon C Grounds

Oh, may all who come behind us find us faithful,

May the fire of our devotion light their way;

May the footprints that we leave lead them to believe,

And the lives we live inspire them to obey. —Mohr

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For the ignorant, old age is as winter; for the learned, it is a harvest. —Jewish proverb [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

White Space

By Vernon C. Grounds

2 Timothy 4:6-8

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. —2 Timothy 4:7

For nearly 50 years, Ann Landers dispensed advice in a daily column carried by more than 1,200 newspapers worldwide. When she died on June 22, 2002, her daughter Margo Howard wrote a farewell column. She asked the editors to leave a blank space for the last part of the column as a memorial to her mom.

The idea came from a column written years earlier when Ann and her husband divorced after a long marriage. Ann had requested the editors to leave white space at the bottom as a memorial to a once-good marriage "that didn't make it to the finish line."

When somebody writes your last column, how much "blank space" will it include? When you come to life's end, will there be important things left undone? Will that white space bear silent testimony to goals you never reached, good habits (like consistent Bible reading) you never formed, help you never gave, kind things you thought about doing but never did? Will a sizeable empty space say that you intended to develop a deeper relationship with God, but that a close intimacy remained an unfulfilled ideal? Or will others be able to say of you that you "finished the race, [and] kept the faith"? (2 Timothy 4:7).

Let's make sure our white space is small!

Only the truth that in life we have spoken,

Only the seed that on earth we have sown;

These shall pass onward when we are forgotten,

Fruits of the harvest and what we have done. -Bonar

To get the most out of life, make every moment count for Christ.

Joyful Reunion

By Bill Crowder

2 Timothy 4:1-8

He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! —Revelation 22:20

Some years ago when our children were still small, I flew home after a 10-day ministry trip. In those days people were allowed to visit the airport boarding area to greet incoming passengers. When my flight landed, I came out of the jet-bridge and was greeted by our little ones—so happy to see me that they were screaming and crying. I looked at my wife, whose eyes were teary. I couldn't speak. Strangers in the gate area also teared up as our children hugged my legs and cried their greetings. It was a wonderful moment.

The memory of the intensity of that greeting serves as a gentle rebuke to the priorities of my own heart. The apostle John, eagerly desiring Jesus' return, wrote, "He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming quickly.' Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20). In another passage, Paul even spoke of a crown awaiting those who have "loved His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8). Yet sometimes I don't feel as eager for Christ's return as my children were for mine.

Jesus is worthy of the very best of our love and devotion—and nothing on earth should compare to the thought of seeing Him face-to-face. May our love for our Savior deepen as we anticipate our joyful reunion with Him.

And for the hope of His return, Dear Lord, Your name we praise;
With longing hearts we watch and wait
For that great day of days!
—Sherwood

Those who belong to Christ should be longing to see Him.

Mom's Finish Line

By Dennis Fisher

2 Timothy 4:1-8

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. —2 Timothy 4:7

When Jeff learned that his mother's health was rapidly declining, he immediately caught a plane to be with her. He sat at her bedside holding her hand, singing hymns, comforting her, and expressing his love for her. She passed away, and at her funeral many told Jeff what a blessing his mother had been. She was gifted in Bible teaching, counseling others, and leading prayer groups. These were vital parts of serving Christ until near the end of her life. She finished strong for Christ.

To honor his mother's life, Jeff participated in a 26.2 mile race. During the race he thanked God for her life and grieved her loss. When he crossed the finish line, Jeff pointed his index finger toward heaven—"Where Mom is," he said. She had honored Christ to the end, which reminded him of the words of the apostle Paul: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord ... will give to me on that Day" (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

We are involved in a "long-distance race." Let's run in such a way that we may obtain the prize of "an imperishable crown" (1 Cor. 9:25). What could be more desirable than to finish strong for Christ and to be with Him forever.

Run the straight race through God's good grace,

Lift up your eyes and seek His face;

Life with its way before us lies,

Christ is the path and Christ the prize. —Monsell

The Christian's race is not a sprint—it's a marathon.

Insight - Second Timothy is Paul's final letter, written from a Roman prison where he was awaiting execution (see 4:6). Taking the total sweep of this chapter, we find three distinct sections in what is regarded as Paul's last words. In verses 1-5, the apostle challenges and urges his young protégé, Timothy, to be faithful in carrying out the calling he has received—particularly the ministry of the Word. In verses 6-8, Paul gives his own testimony of service to Christ and his readiness to see the Savior. The bulk of the remaining verses (vv.9-18) deals with people who have disappointed Paul and how he has responded to that disappointment.

2 TIMOTHY 4:1-8 - FAITHFULNESS & FRUITFULNESS

I planted ... but God gave the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6).

A deacon rebuked an elderly preacher one Sunday morning before the service.

"Pastor," said the man, "something must be wrong with your preaching and your work. There's been only one person added to the church in a whole year, and he's just a boy."

The minister listened, his eyes moistening and his thin hand trembling.

"I feel it all," he replied, "but God knows I've tried to do my duty."

On that day the minister's heart was heavy as he stood before his flock. As he finished the message, he felt a strong inclination to resign. After everyone else had left, that one new boy came to him and asked,

"Do you think if I worked hard for an education, I could become a preacher—perhaps a missionary?"

Again tears welled up in the minister's eyes.

"Ah, this heals the ache I feel," he said.

"Robert, I see the Divine hand now. May God bless you, my boy. Yes, I think you will become a preacher."

Many years later an aged missionary returned to London from Africa. People spoke his name with reverence. Nobles invited him to their homes. He had added many souls to the church of Jesus Christ, reaching even some of Africa's most savage chiefs. His name was Robert Moffat, the same Robert who years before had spoken to the pastor on that Sunday morning in the old Scottish church.

Our service for Christ may sometimes seem fruitless. We wonder if anything significant is happening. But if we are faithful, God will give the increase. —D.J. De Haan

Faithfulness is God's requirement, fruitfulness is His reward. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

2 Timothy 4:2a - Putting God's Message First

"Reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with great patience and instruction" (2 Tim. 4:2b).

We had a country parson who told the story about a young minister just out of seminary. The first Sunday in his mountain church he preached against smoking and discovered the anger of many tobacco farmers. The second Sunday the young cleric spoke out against the evils of drinking and caught the ire of those who were making a living with their whiskey stills. The third Sunday the preacher condemned with conviction the evils of gambling and found that those he had not angered already were at his heels because they raised horses for the race tracks. The next Sunday he did his best. Waving his arms with authority, he expounded on the evils of deep-sea fishing outside the boundaries of international waters. Men-pleasers have a hard time preaching the gospel.—Purnell Bailey

Living For Eternity

By Richard De Haan

2 Timothy 4:1-8

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. —1 Corinthians 15:19

In a letter to his brother, agnostic Robert G. Ingersoll reflected on his life. He wrote, "I feel that we have passed the crown of the hill, and that the milestones are getting nearer and nearer each other, and now and then I catch glimpses of the great wall where the road ends. A little while ago, I pressed forward; now I hold back. In youth we woo the future and clasp her like a bride; in age we denounce her as a fair and beautiful liar and wonder at the ease with which we were duped. Pursuing that which eludes, gazing at that which fades, hoping for the impossible, regretting that which is, fearing that which must be, and with [nothing] worth having save the bliss of love. And in the red heart of this white flower there is this pang: 'It cannot last.'"

Compare those depressing words with the statement of Paul, who looked to the close of life with confidence because he knew Christ: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day" (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

Do you know Jesus as your Savior? Are you living for Him? Then you can anticipate a glorious future!

God leads us in the path of righteousness

For His name's sake, and as we walk that way

We know it leads at last to heaven above,

To which our souls will rise one glorious day. —Hess

What we go after here determines where we go hereafter.

The Gospel Of Judas

By Dennis Fisher

2 Timothy 4:1-5

They will turn their ears away from the truth. —2 Timothy 4:4

The recently discovered manuscript The Gospel of Judas alleges that Jesus asked Judas to betray Him. Supposedly, Jesus hoped that His death would free Him from this world of matter to become a pure spirit again.

There is a big problem with this ancient text. Judas could not have written this manuscript that bears his name, since it was written long after the time of Jesus. But because The Gospel of Judas has been newly discovered, it provides a novelty for those who like to speculate.

Proposing a fake story to replace the New Testament account is not new. Paul wrote, “The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

There's a trend today to look for new theories to undermine the Bible. In 1 Thessalonians 5, Paul told us to “test all things; hold fast what is good” (v.21). Based on the questionable content and authorship of The Gospel of Judas, we know that it's a fable. The real gospel (good news) lies with the apostles, who walked with Jesus and wrote down His life-saving message in the New Testament.

The Bible stands, and it will forever

When the world has passed away;

By inspiration it has been given—

All its precepts I will obey. —Lillenas

To trust God is to trust in His holy Word.

Magnifying Our Master

By Vernon C. Grounds

2 Timothy 4:6

As a man of unwavering steadfastness, the apostle Paul had a fixed ambition. He spelled it out in his letter to the Philippians: “Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death” (1:20).

No matter what Paul might be called upon to suffer, no matter what hardships he might undergo, he was determined that his life would be a means of magnifying Jesus. And without flinching, he held tight to that determination through peril, pain, and imprisonment, and even willingly offered his body as a sacrifice.

Some of us may not be able to see how Jesus could be magnified in our bodies. We may think that it can be done only during times of persecution for our faith. But that is not the case.

Our hands can magnify the Lord as we write letters of encouragement. Our feet can magnify Him as we go on simple errands of helpfulness. Our voices can magnify Him as we give our testimony and sing His praises. Our hearts can magnify Him as we express in prayer our love for the redeeming Christ. Our ears can magnify Him as we gratefully listen to sermons exalting His grace.

If we know Jesus, we can lift Him up to others in our daily lives.

Take my will and make it Thine-

It shall be no longer mine;

Take my heart-it is Thine own,

It shall be Thy royal throne. -Havergal

You are one of a kind-designed to glorify God as only you can.

2 Timothy 4:7 A Letter from the Battlefield

Read: 2 Timothy 4:1-8

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. —2 Timothy 4:7

For more than two decades, Andrew Carroll has been urging people not to throw away the letters written by family members or friends during a time of war. Carroll, director of the Center for American War Letters at Chapman University in California, considers them an irreplaceable link to tie families together and open a door of understanding. “Younger generations are reading these letters,” Carroll says, “and asking questions and saying, ‘Now I understand what you endured, what you sacrificed.’ ”

When the apostle Paul was imprisoned in Rome and knew his life would soon end, he wrote a letter to a young man whom he considered a “son in the faith,” Timothy. Like a soldier on the battlefield, Paul opened his heart to him: “The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

When we read the letters in the Bible that the heroes of the Christian faith have left for us and grasp what they endured because of their love for Christ, we gain courage to follow their example and to stand strong for those who come after us.

Lord, give us strength for the spiritual battles we face today, knowing that You have won the ultimate victory and that we will one day live eternally with You.

Run the race with eternity in view.

INSIGHT: Titus and 1 Timothy were probably written after the apostle Paul was released from house arrest in Rome (ad 61-62) and during his fourth missionary journey (ad 62–63; see Acts 28:30-31). When persecution broke out under Emperor Nero, Paul was imprisoned again. During this second Roman imprisonment, Paul wrote 2 Timothy (ad 65-67). This time he knew his death was imminent (4:6-7). Paul warns that a time is coming when Christians will not “endure sound doctrine” and will turn away from the truth (vv. 3-7). To counter false teaching, Timothy is to “preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching” (v. 2).

By David McCasland

Candlelight Wisdom

By Joanie Yoder

2 Timothy 4:1-8

I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls. —2 Corinthians 12:15

While traveling in Finland, I appreciated the Finns’ lavish use of candles. They never treat them as mere ornaments. Candles bring warmth and light into their homes during short winter days. The Finns know that a candle’s purpose is missed unless it is burned. But candles should burn at one end only—a lesson I needed to learn.

When my husband and I began our missionary work, I longed to burn out for God. Within several years I had burned out all right, but not for God. Mine was a classic case of useless burnout, brought on by many self-caused stresses.

One night I hit rock bottom and discovered that the rock was Christ. As He began teaching me dependence on Him for all things, the candle of my life was relighted for His use.

I now see a difference between so-called “Christian burnout” and “burning out for God.” Burnout stems from wastefully burning the

candle of our lives at both ends—hardly wise for candles or Christians. Burning out for God means our lives are spent wisely in His service—an echo of Paul's testimony in 2 Corinthians 12:15. Once used up for God, we'll be raised up for heavenly service (Rev. 22:3). It is for this purpose we were made!

Thinking It Over

What are you doing to serve God?

Do you rely on His strength or your own?

Ask God to help you depend on Him in everything.

What's important is not how much we do for God, but how much God does through us.

Dying With Certainty

By Herbert Vander Lugt

2 Timothy 4:6-18

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. —Romans 8:16

Over a period of a few months, I visited two dying people—a man of 82 and a woman of 52. Neither wanted to die. Both were greatly loved by their families. Each had many reasons for wanting to keep on living. Along with many others, I prayed earnestly for their healing, but God had other plans.

As soon as these two people realized that God wasn't going to heal them, I saw an amazing transformation in them. They both displayed a calm acceptance of death. Their faces took on a new glow, and from their lips came words of testimony and praise. They knew they were God's children and had the assurance that they would soon be with Jesus in heaven. The peace and joy they radiated brought comfort to their loved ones and friends.

What was the source of such absolute certainty in the face of dying? It wasn't what any of those who ministered to them said or did. It was supernatural grace imparted by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Paul put it like this: "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans 8:16).

Praise God! All who trust Christ and who walk in fellowship with Him need not dread the hour of death. —HVL

Heaven's glory shines before me,

I cannot linger here,

Although clouds may darken o'er me,

My Father's house is near. —Anon.

Death is not a period—it's only a comma.

2 Timothy 4:6-8 FINISHING

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." - 2 Timothy 4:7

It's easy to live a long life, at least in America. Look at the statistics: Out of every 100,000 persons, 88,361 reach 50 years of age, more than 70,000 people make it to 70, and almost 17,000 get to 85 or more. Staying around a long time, however, should not be our primary goal. Rather, we should be concerned with giving significance and value to all our years and not letting them end in shame and disgrace.

How we finish the race depends to a great extent on the pace we set along the way. Joseph Wittig remarked that when we write people's biographies we should start with their death, not their birth. After all, we have nothing to do with the way our life began, but we have a lot to do with the way it ends.

When Paul wrote 2 Timothy, he was in a Roman dungeon awaiting execution. He said, "I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand" (4:6). At that moment he could testify, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (v. 7).

We too can end the Christian race well, even if we began late, started slow, or faltered along the way. The secret is to stay true to

Christ to the last moment. -H W Robinson

Just live your life before your Lord,
Rise to that higher, nobler plane--
With single eye His glory seek,
And you shall His approval gain.

He who puts God first will have happiness that lasts. [Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

Your Biography

By Vernon C. Grounds

2 Timothy 4:7

When D. L. Moody was moving into old age, he was asked to grant permission for his biography. Moody refused, saying, "A man's life should never be written while he is living. What is important is how a man ends, not how he begins."

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What will be the Lord's appraisal of our lives? Will someone evaluating us be able to say honestly that we continued to bear fruit in old age? (Psalm 92:14). Whatever vocation we pursue, with the help of the Holy Spirit we may be "steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

For the ignorant, old age is as winter; for the learned, it is a harvest. —Jewish proverb

2 Timothy 4:7d - FINISH WELL

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith (2 Timothy 4:7).

In 1981 Bill Broadhurst entered the Pepsi Challenge 10,000-meter road race in Omaha, Nebraska. Ten years earlier, surgery for a brain aneurysm left him paralyzed on his left side. But on a misty July morning, he stood with 1,200 lithe-looking men and women at the starting line. The gun cracked. The crowd surged ahead. Bill threw his stiff left leg forward and pivoted on it as his right foot hit the ground. His slow plop-plop-plop rhythm seemed to mock him as the pack disappeared into the distance. Sweat rolled down his face, pain pierced his ankle, but he kept going. Six miles, two hours, and twenty-nine minutes later, Bill reached the finish line. A man approached from a small group of bystanders. Bill recognized him from pictures in the newspaper. "Here," the man said. "You've worked harder for this than I have." With those words, Bill Rodgers, the famous marathon runner, put his newly won medal around Broadhurst's neck, proclaiming him a winner.

The sight of Jesus hanging "helpless" on a cross looked like a tragic defeat. But three little words from His lips amounted to a victory shout: "It is finished!" Three days later the truth of His words would be known. The empty tomb confirmed His claim. He had finished His work by defeating death and atoning for sin.

The Christian life is not a race to see who comes in first, but an endurance run to see who finishes faithfully. Remaining faithful to the finish makes us true winners. —D J De Haan

We are judged by what we finish, not by what we start. [Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

Finishing Well

By Albert Lee

2 Timothy 4:1-8

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. —2 Timothy 4:7

I read a humorous story about a bloodhound. He started chasing a deer but a fox crossed his path, so he started chasing the fox instead. After a while, a rabbit crossed his path, so the hound chased the rabbit. Yet later, a mouse crossed his path and the hound chased the mouse into a hole. The hound, which had begun his hunt on the trail of a magnificent deer, ended up watching a mouse hole!

Most of us will laugh at the bloodhound. But if we stop and think, we'll realize that often we too are easily distracted. At times we may even be sidetracked from following Christ. It is so easy to start well but then run after things that cross our paths.

We need to take to heart the words of the apostle Paul. He told Timothy to focus on the purpose of his life and ministry (2 Timothy 1:6-13; 2:1-2,22-26; 3:14-17). He urged him to tell others about Christ and to warn them not to turn aside (4:1-5).

The values of this world can easily influence us, tempting us to despise "sound doctrine" and accept what is false (4:3-4). So we need to know and proclaim God's Word, persevere through hardships, and keep the faith (vv.2,5,7).

Yes, with God's help, we can keep our eyes on Christ, stay close to Him, and finish well.

Let me walk with You, dear Savior,

Side by side and hand in hand;

Keep me clean and pure and faithful

Till I reach the heavenly land. —Hess

You can't turn your back on Christ if you keep your eyes on Him.

Finishers

By Marvin Williams

2 Timothy 4:1-8

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. —2 Timothy 4:7

When I was a kid, I dreamed of becoming a black belt in karate. Several years ago, I began training and came close to fulfilling that goal. However, two belts away from my goal, I quit. There were two reasons—my teacher changed styles in the middle of my training, and I got so busy that I could not devote adequate time for training.

Almost every week, I am nagged by the thought that God wants me to be a finisher in all aspects of my life—but especially in my service for Him.

As Paul spoke of the conclusion of his life, he did not have any nagging thoughts of unfinished business about his ministry. In this final farewell (2Tim. 4:7), Paul used imagery-rich words to talk about finishing his service for Christ. He described his life and ministry in terms of a fight: "I have fought the good fight." The fight was good because he had engaged in it for God and the gospel. Then he used the imagery of a race as synonymous with his ministry: "I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." Paul affirmed that by God's grace he had finished all that God had given him to do.

As followers of Jesus, let us strive to be finishers, persevering in our service for Jesus Christ.

For every follower of Christ There is a race to run; And when we cross the finish line, We'll be with Christ, God's Son. —Fitzhugh

Run the race with eternity in view.

Win Or Lose

By David C. McCasland

2 Timothy 4:1-8

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. —2 Timothy 4:7

During the 2009 college football season, University of Texas quarterback Colt McCoy began every post-game interview by thanking God for the opportunity to play. When he was injured early in the national championship game, he was forced to watch from the

sidelines as his team lost.

The apostle Paul experienced God's deliverance many times, but he didn't insist on things going his way. From prison in Rome he wrote to Timothy: "I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand" (2 Tim. 4:6). Some might say that Paul had failed to accomplish his goals and that his life was ending in defeat. But he saw it differently: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (v.7). He looked forward to an eternal crown (v.8).

As we walk with God, we can praise Him for His faithfulness—win or lose.

I can always count on God, my heavenly Father, For He changes not; He always is the same. Yesterday, today, forever, He is faithful, And I know He loves me, praise His holy name! —Felten

In every change He faithful will remain. —Katharina von Schlegel

What Will Happen?

By Dennis J. De Haan

2 Timothy 4:1-8

There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord ... will give to me. —2 Timothy 4:8

In his book *Spirit Life*, Stuart Briscoe writes, "When I moved to the United States, I was impressed with the number of total strangers who visited my home to wish me well ... They all sold insurance!

"One day my visitor was talking about the necessity to be prudent in the preparation for all possibilities. 'If something should happen to you, Mr. Briscoe—' he started to say, but I interrupted with, 'Please don't say that. It upsets me.' ... He looked totally bewildered and said, 'I don't understand what I said to upset you.' 'Then I'll tell you,' I replied. 'It upsets me that you talk about [life's] only certainty as if it's a possibility. Death isn't a possibility, it's a certainty. You don't say "if," you say "when," whenever death is the subject.' Then I added, 'By the way, when something happens to you, what will really happen?'"

The apostle Paul was very open about his death (2 Timothy 4:6). He knew that its sting had been removed because Christ paid sin's penalty on the cross (1 Corinthians 15:55-57). Death would give way to victory (v.54); he would fully experience Christ's righteousness; and he would be with Christ (2 Corinthians 5:8). Jesus gives that same confidence to all who trust Him as Savior and Lord.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Read 1 Corinthians 15:35-58.

Find out more about life after death in [Where Do We Go From Here?](#)

Only if we are ready to die are we ready to live.

Christ Living In Us

By Albert Lee

2 Timothy 4:7-8

The Ironman Triathlon consists of a 2.4-mile swim, a 112-mile bike ride, and a 26.2-mile run. It is not an easy feat for anyone to accomplish. But Dick Hoyt participated in the race and completed it with his physically disabled son Rick. When Dick swam, he pulled Rick in a small boat. When Dick cycled, Rick was in a seat-pod on the bike. When Dick ran, he pushed Rick along in a wheelchair. Rick was dependent on his dad in order to finish the race. He couldn't do it without him.

We see a parallel between their story and our own Christian life. Just as Rick was dependent on his dad, we are dependent on Christ to complete our Christian race.

As we strive to live a God-pleasing life, we realize that in spite of our best intentions and determination, we often stumble and fall short. By our strength alone, it is impossible. Oh, how we need the Lord's help! And it has been provided. Paul declares it with these insightful words, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God" (Gal. 2:20).

We cannot finish the Christian race on our own. We have to do so by depending on Jesus living in us.

With longing all my heart is filled That like Him I may be, As on the wondrous thought I dwell, That Christ liveth in me. —Whittle

Faith connects our weakness to God's strength.

The Umpire

By Haddon W. Robinson

2 Timothy 4:6-18

There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day. —2 Timothy 4:8

In his book *Men At Work*, columnist George Will mentions the firm justice meted out by baseball umpires. He writes, "Toughness is not enough, but it is necessary. Once when Babe Pinelli called Babe Ruth out on strikes, Ruth made a populist argument. Ruth reasoned fallaciously (as populists do) from raw numbers to moral weight: 'There's 40,000 people here who know that last one was a ball, tomato head.' Pinelli replied with the measured stateliness of John Marshall: 'Maybe so, but mine is the only opinion that counts.'"

The apostle Paul knew that at the end of our days only one opinion will matter—that of the ultimate Umpire, the "righteous Judge" before whom we play the game of life (2 Tim. 4:8).

As he wrote his second letter to Timothy, Paul was sitting in a cold, damp dungeon. Like an athlete who had spent his strength to win the prize, Paul had persevered. During his 30 years of ministry, a thousand voices had urged him to cheat in the race, throw in the towel, compromise the faith. But Paul had decided that he would not listen to the voices of the crowd. He had only one Judge to please. He was ready to meet the Umpire of the universe.

Are you ready to meet Him too?

Just live your life before your Lord,

It matters not what others do—

Your actions will be weighed by Him

Who metes out judgment just and true. —Rae

God's verdict is the one that counts.

2 Timothy 4:7 Never Give Up!

Read: 2 Timothy 3:10–15

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 2 Timothy 4:7

Joop Zoetemelk is known as the Netherlands' most successful cyclist. But that's because he never gave up. He started and finished the Tour de France 16 times—placing second five times before winning in 1980. That's perseverance!

Many winners have reached success by climbing a special ladder called "never give up." However, there are also many who have lost the opportunity to achieve success because they gave up too soon. This can happen in every area of life: family, education, friends, work, service. Perseverance is a key to victory.

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." 2 Timothy 4:7

The apostle Paul persevered despite persecution and affliction (2 Tim. 3:10–11). He viewed life with realism, recognizing that as followers of Christ we will suffer persecution (vv. 12–13), but he instructed Timothy to place his faith in God and the encouragement of the Scriptures (vv. 14–15). Doing so would help him face discouragement and endure with hope. At the end of his life, Paul said, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (4:7).

We too can allow the Scriptures to strengthen us to press on in the race marked out for us. For our God is both a promise-making and promise-keeping God and will reward those who faithfully finish the race (v. 8).

Heavenly Father, give me strength of character and perseverance to serve you better. Help me not to get discouraged when things get tough but to rely on You to see me through.

Faith connects our weakness to God's strength.

INSIGHT: Paul experienced great persecution in the cities of Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. In Antioch, he faced aggressive opposition from the religious leaders (Acts 13:45; 15:1–2). In Iconium, Gentile and Jewish leaders conspired to have him killed (14:4–5). And in Lystra, he was stoned and left for dead (v. 19). Yet in his final letter to Timothy, Paul uses these three cities as examples of perseverance. He recounts these terribly painful events not to garner pity but to remind Timothy of God's faithfulness during times of hardship and pain.

By Jaime Fernández Garrido

Leaving a Legacy

Joe Stowell

2 Timothy 4:7

Do you ever wonder what kind of legacy you'll leave behind?

I remember an older gentleman from one of the churches I pastored. He was the epitome of grace toward others; and he was deeply loved by his wife, his daughters, and his sons-in-law. In fact, his sons-in-law kneeled by his bed as he died. Afterward, one of his daughters wrote me a letter. At the end of the note, she concluded with these powerful words: "Our world has lost a righteous man, and in this world, that's no small thing."

I love the legacy expressed in those simple words from the pen of an admiring daughter. It reminds me of the heart of Paul as he wrote to his friend Timothy. Paul had expended himself in the service of Christ and had a keen sense that he was nearing the end of his life. We know from his writings to other churches that he was not afraid of death. In fact, he clearly stated that if he were absent from the body, he would be present with the Lord (1 Corinthians 5:3). The resurrection had defeated the sting of death (1 Corinthians 15:55), and Paul couldn't wait to meet his Savior.

As Paul pondered the end of his life, he made three very simple statements about his legacy. He had "fought the good fight"—standing firm as a spiritual warrior, clothed in the armor of God, faithfully defending the truth of the gospel. He had "finished the race"—ensuring in the process that he was neither disqualified nor disheartened in the marathon of life and ministry. Most importantly, he had "kept the faith"—remaining true, committed, and loyal to the One who rescued him from sin and darkness.

Notice that Paul's brief statements here say nothing about the education he had received, the places he had traveled, the letters he had written, the people he had preached to, or the churches he had planted. He flat out wanted his legacy to be labeled as "faithful." I love that! It's what I want to aspire to as a follower of Jesus.

So, I have to ask myself, "If that's the kind of legacy I want to leave, how would I pursue it today?" Well, it means that my choices need to be more about "fighting the good fight." I need to put on the spiritual armor each morning, as Paul told the Ephesians to do, and live to be victorious in all that comes my way. I need to be running the race to win, putting off all that hinders and the sins that entangle (Hebrews 12:1). And, it means that in every situation I want my attitudes, my words, and my actions to be loyal and true to Jesus.

As Paul told the Philippians, "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Hebrews 3:13-14). There's no better time than the start of this New Year to set our sights on new goals that will, over time, develop a legacy worth leaving.

Building a legacy worth leaving behind begins today and is made one decision at a time. Live this year to hear Jesus say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." In my book, that's a legacy worth living for!

YOUR JOURNEY...

Spend a few minutes thinking about the legacy you would like to leave. How does that compare to Paul's desired legacy expressed in 2 Timothy 4:1-22?

What type of legacy will the current choices and priorities of your life lead to? Are there some changes that need to take place today to move you back toward a legacy of faithful service to Christ?

The good news for each of us is that God's grace is available to forgive, cleanse, and refocus us today! He can use whatever time you have left to bring glory and honor to Him.

Wreck-less Drivers

Joe Stowell

2 Timothy 4:7

I'm not sure who came up with the idea of driving around in circles on a small track in a tiny machine; nevertheless, riding go-karts is a popular pastime in America. Once when I took my son and nephew to a go-kart track, I was whizzing around—trying desperately to catch up with those two lightweight guys—and realized firsthand the futility of going in circles and cutting off everyone who got in my way.

A lot like life, I thought.

Then I found myself reflecting on a similar, more brutal activity: bumper cars. Have you ever noticed that they are driven by two kinds of people? The aggressive ones bump and bang everyone within range. They don't feel successful unless they have plowed as many people into the sideboards as time will allow. The other person shrinks from the conflict, seeking to avoid the drivers who have that killer look in their eyes.

Unfortunately, a lot of us tend to live in aimless, reckless ways like the go-kart and bumper car drivers of this world. Some of us seem content simply to follow a track going nowhere, hoping to finish first among others who are also frantically circling, going nowhere with their lives.

Then there are those who seem to think there is some spiritual merit to bumping and banging fellow followers of Jesus, while others go through life with passive avoidance, simply trying to stay out of everybody's way. They don't go anywhere or do anything significant; success for them is measured by just staying out of trouble.

If you recognized yourself in this list, I'm here to tell you that none of those tactics will lead to the progressive, productive life that Jesus called us to live. The essence of authentic Christianity is the pursuit of a goal. As Paul put it: "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14). Together, arm in arm, heart to heart, we are called to go somewhere for God.

As followers of Jesus, we have many wonderful and productive places to go—like rearing godly families, expressing sacrificial love in our relationships in the midst of a "me first" culture, and taking the healing power of Christ to the broken and oppressed.

It's when we take our eyes off the God-given goal and forget our destination that we settle back into the go-kart mentality, circling around the same track we've been on for years, or find ourselves hanging out in the bumper car arena looking for someone to attack or avoid.

It's time to get out of the amusement park and back on God's highway. And once on the highway, our goal is to be wreck-less drivers, following the rules of the road and avoiding conflict with other cars. It's time to get behind the wheel and get serious about going where God wants to take us—a place of usefulness and significant service for Him. Then, like Paul, we can say with confidence, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).

YOUR JOURNEY...

What are the pitfalls of the "go-kart mentality"? Have there been times in your life that seemed like a go-kart ride?

In the "bumper car arena," do you tend to be a passive or an aggressive driver in terms of relating to fellow drivers? How do you feel when others bump or avoid you? Make up your mind to step out of that arena to a more productive pursuit—following Jesus!

What is your destination in life? How does it align with what Jesus instructed His followers to do in Matthew 28:18-20?

2 Timothy 4:8 - He Read His Own Obituary!

Alfred Nobel opened his newspaper one morning in 1888 and was shocked to read his own obituary. The fact was that Nobel's brother had died, and a careless reporter had put the wrong man in the story. The incident left Nobel deeply disturbed for more than the obvious reasons. Through the erroneous obituary, he saw himself as the world saw him—a wealthy Swedish industrialist whose most enduring legacy was the invention of dynamite. Resolving to do something that would uphold his cherished ideals, Nobel used a portion of his great wealth to establish prizes that would reward people whose work benefited humanity. The Nobel Prizes were first awarded in 1901, and today they are still considered the most esteemed prizes in the world. The soul-searching that Alfred Nobel underwent as he reviewed his life is the same kind of self-examination Christians need to make regularly. Paul urged the Corinthians, "Examine yourselves" (2 Cor. 13:5).

“Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.” 2 Timothy 4:8

Dirty Windows

Joe Stowell

2 Timothy 4:8

A friend of mine, Bud Wood, founded Shepherds Home in Wisconsin for boys and girls with developmental disabilities. The original ministry opened its doors in 1964 to 36 children, providing them a loving residential environment and a school that would focus on their unique needs, helping them to reach their potential. Most importantly, this ministry started with a primary goal of sharing God’s love with the residents and encouraging them toward a personal and growing walk with Jesus. Many of those original residents, now adults, still reside at Shepherds. The home, now known as Shepherds Ministries, has grown to include vocational training and a variety of other ministries all clustered around that central passion for delivering and living out the gospel.

I remember Bud asking me one time, “Hey, Joe, do you know what our biggest maintenance problem at Shepherds is?”

“I have no idea,” I replied.

“Dirty windows. Our kids press their hands and faces against the windows because they’re looking to the sky to see if today might be the day that Jesus will return for them and take them to His home where they will be healed and complete.”

I love that! Talk about having your priorities in the right place. One of the hallmarks of a committed follower of Jesus is a longing for His return.

That’s what Paul anticipates as he writes to Timothy in the waning days of his earthly ministry. He acknowledges that he is “being poured out like a drink offering” and humbly states, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:6-7). But rather than spending his last days looking in the rearview mirror, Paul continues to look forward to the “crown of righteousness, which the Lord ... will award to me on that day” (2 Timothy 4:8).

Notice that the crown isn’t some merit award for Paul’s years of distinguished service. It isn’t the “Church Planter of the Year” trophy. And it isn’t exclusive to Paul. He makes that plainly clear when he adds, “and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.” The “crown of righteousness” is available to all followers of Christ who live righteously because they have organized their lives around longing for Him to return—with the expectation that it could be any minute now!

That longing and expectation will change our priorities as well. It will make us think a whole lot less about how to build our kingdom and a whole lot more about His. It will pull our attention away from materialism and the accumulation of earthbound possessions and point us toward investment in that which is eternally significant. It will lift us from our anxieties and even the weight of this life’s difficulties, reminding us each day that something better awaits us. And 1 John 3:2-3 reminds us that our hope in the Lord’s return will motivate us toward purity, so that we want to be righteously pure and ready when Jesus comes for us.

You may have decorated your windows for Christmas, but have you gone to them recently to see if the Jesus of Christmas is coming back again for you? Go ahead, smudge up a window or two! Life will be wonderfully different if you keep your eyes to the sky!

YOUR JOURNEY...

How often do you spend time thinking about the return of Jesus?

How would it change your plans for the next 24 hours if you genuinely believed that Jesus could arrive at any moment? How about the next week? What about the next year?

What steps can you take to regularly remind yourself that Jesus could be returning at any moment? What would it look like to “smudge up some windows” as you watch for Christ’s return in your home?

Ready To Go Home

By Haddon W. Robinson

2 Timothy 4:6-8,16-18

I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. —2 Timothy 4:6

Bible in a Year:

Because I have traveled widely in my ministry, I've had to spend a lot of time away from home. Although some hotels promise to make me "feel at home," few of them achieve it. In fact, some make me wish fervently that I was at home!

During his final days on earth, the apostle Paul had a deep longing for his heavenly home. His thoughts turned toward the warm welcome he would receive from the Lord, "the righteous Judge" (2 Timothy 4:8). Although he was facing death, thoughts of heaven kept his spirit hopeful.

This reminds me of an old man and his grandson who were sitting on a dock late one afternoon. The two chatted about everything, it seemed—why water is wet, why seasons change, why girls hate worms, what life is like. Finally the boy looked up and asked, "Grandpa, does anybody ever see God?" "Son," said the old man as he looked across the still waters of the lake, "it's getting so now I hardly see anything else."

Aging should be like that. Praying should come more easily. Communion with the Father in heaven should be as natural as breathing. Thoughts of seeing Jesus and going home should increasingly occupy our minds. That's how we'll know we're ready to go home.

When, by the gift of His infinite grace,

I am accorded in heaven a place,

Just to be there and to look on His face

Will through the ages be glory for me. —Gabriel

As life's shadows lengthen, thoughts of God should deepen.

The Promised Prize

By David C. McCasland

2 Timothy 4:1-8

There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord ... will give to me on that Day. —2 Timothy 4:8

Recently I received a magazine sweepstakes letter that addressed me by name and repeatedly mentioned a \$500,000 prize. It spoke of instant wealth and a lifetime of leisure. Finally, at the bottom of page 2, in very small print, I found the part I was looking for. As required by law, the letter told me that the approximate numerical odds of my winning the prize were 1 in 80 million. Now that's remote!

Contrast that with Paul's anticipation of what awaited him in heaven: "There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8). Note his assurance: "There is laid up for me." Not "there might be" or "there's a slight chance"—"there is."

J. Oswald Sanders writes, "This crown is awarded to those who have completed the Christian race with integrity, with eyes fixed on the coming Lord. It is the reward for fulfilling the ministry entrusted to one."

If you have welcomed Christ into your life, long for His appearing, and are faithfully running your race, then the same prize awaits you. Count on it, plan on it, anticipate it! It's a promise from God.

Run the straight race through God's good grace,

Lift up your eyes and seek His face;

Life with its way before us lies,

Christ is the path, and Christ the prize. —Monsell

Our present choices determine our future rewards.

2 Timothy 4:8a

What Will Happen?

2 Timothy 4:1-8

There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord ... will give to me. —2 Timothy 4:8

In his book *Spirit Life*, Stuart Briscoe writes, "When I moved to the United States, I was impressed with the number of total strangers who visited my home to wish me well ... They all sold insurance!

"One day my visitor was talking about the necessity to be prudent in the preparation for all possibilities. 'If something should happen to you, Mr. Briscoe—' he started to say, but I interrupted with, 'Please don't say that. It upsets me.' ... He looked totally bewildered and said, 'I don't understand what I said to upset you.' 'Then I'll tell you,' I replied. 'It upsets me that you talk about [life's] only certainty as if it's a possibility. Death isn't a possibility, it's a certainty. You don't say "if," you say "when," whenever death is the subject.' Then I added, 'By the way, when something happens to you, what will really happen?'"

The apostle Paul was very open about his death (2 Timothy 4:6). He knew that its sting had been removed because Christ paid sin's penalty on the cross (1 Corinthians 15:55-57). Death would give way to victory (v.54); he would fully experience Christ's righteousness; and he would be with Christ (2 Corinthians 5:8). Jesus gives that same confidence to all who trust Him as Savior and Lord. —Dennis J. De Haan

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Read 1 Corinthians 15:35-58.

Find out more about life after death in [Where Do We Go From Here?](#)

Only if we are ready to die are we ready to live.

2 Timothy 4:8b - TWO VIEWS OF LIFE

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness 2 Timothy 4:8

Every year thousands of people commit suicide; in fact, the number of such deaths has been increasing at an alarming rate. The reason is not difficult to discover. Most educated people who do not know Jesus Christ believe we are the accidental products of evolution. They say there is nothing that has lasting value, and our actions whether good or bad are not of eternal consequence. In other words, they reject the idea of Heaven or Hell after death. As a result, most of these individuals are wretchedly unhappy, even though they may give themselves quite unreservedly to sensual pleasures. Without faith in God, life is absurd, tragic, and meaningless. Although it is popular to think in terms of living without God, it is becoming increasingly evident that human beings, created in the likeness and image of God, can-not live with such a concept

We see evidence of this in modern art. Many of us have laughed as we stood before such so-called "masterpieces." All we could see was an apparently meaningless mixture of lines, blots, and blurs. Yet these works are considered great from the artistic point of view because through them the painter has expressed his utter frustration with life as he sees it. They exhibit the feelings of his tortured soul. Indeed, some artists have committed suicide right after the completion of such a painting. The world is going mad because men who have been made for God are trying to live without Him!

How utterly different was Paul's concept. Because of Jesus Christ, life for him had real meaning. He looked forward to Heaven where he would receive a glorious reward for earthly faithfulness (2 Tim. 4:8). If you know Christ, thank God for the difference He makes. Then share this good news with others.

"To live is Christ," and death is "gain,"
If for the Lord we spend each day!
"Redeem the time" —'tis God's own gift,
Let us not squander it away! —Bosch

Life is the seedtime of eternity! ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The Lord and You

By Dennis J. De Haan

2 Timothy 4:9-22

At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me... But the Lord stood with me. —2 Timothy 4:16-17

In her book *Lincoln's Daughters of Mercy*, Marjorie Greenbie tells about Mother Bickerdyke, who worked with General Sherman during the Civil War. She brought relief to thousands of wounded and dying Union soldiers.

Once, when Mother Bickerdyke was giving special attention to a man considered worthless by his comrades, she was asked, "Why do you waste your time on trash like that?" "Because," she replied, "when there's any creature around here so miserable that there's nobody to care for him, he still has two friends in this army. One is God, and the other is me."

Paul certainly wasn't considered worthless by his co-workers, but there were times when he felt alone. Demas had forsaken him; Crescens, Titus, and Tychicus were all away traveling (2 Tim. 4:10,12). Yet God and one person, Luke, sustained Paul when he stood at his final defense in Rome. As the trial that would lead to his execution got underway, only Luke was with Paul (v.11). He and the Lord gave Paul the support he needed to maintain a clear witness.

The Lord works through people. With Paul, He used Luke. Some struggling person in your life today may need the Lord—and you!

To those in darkest night

Go be a kindly friend;

Pour love and sunshine on their cares

And broken lives you'll mend. —Zimmerman

All around are needs to meet: Be God's heart and hands and feet.

2 Timothy 4:9-21

One cold January morning in 1864 a man was found lying in a heap in the seedy Bowery section of New York, bleeding from a slashed throat. He had staggered to a wash basin, which fell and shattered. A doctor at the scene used black sewing thread somebody found to suture the wound. The man—an almost penniless drunkard—was admitted to Bellevue Hospital, where he languished unknown for three days before dying.

Later, someone seeking him was directed to the local morgue. The friend knew that the man he sought was much more than a derelict. He was a genius whose songs captured the hearts of generations of Americans: "Swanee River," "Camptown Races," "Oh, Susanna," "Beautiful Dreamer," and two hundred more. His name? Stephen Foster. (**Today in the Word - Moody Bible Institute**)

Be A Stander

By Bill Crowder

2 Timothy 4:9-18

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. —Proverbs 17:17

Western novelist Stephen Bly says that in the days of America's Old West there were two types of friends (and horses): runners and standers. At the first sign of trouble, the runner would bolt—abandoning you to whatever peril you were facing. But a stander would stick with you no matter the circumstances. Unfortunately, you wouldn't know which kind of friend you had until trouble came. And then it was too late—unless your friend was a stander.

Rather than being concerned with what kind of friends we have, however, we ought to consider what kind of friends we are. In the final days of Paul's ministry, as he awaited death, some who had ministered with him turned into runners and abandoned him to face execution alone. In his last letter, he listed some (like Demas) who had run off, then simply stated, "Only Luke is with me" (2 Tim. 4:11). Luke was a stander. While undoubtedly disappointed by those who had deserted him, Paul must have been deeply comforted to know he was not alone.

Proverbs tells us that "a friend loves at all times" (17:17). During times of adversity, we need friends we can rely on. When the people we know face trouble, what kind of friend will we be—a runner or a stander?

Dear Lord, help us to be the kind of friend who doesn't run when our friends are in need. Give us the courage to stand by them, the wisdom to know what to say, and the ability to serve them. Amen.

A true friend stands with us in times of trial.

Ant World

By Joe Stowell

2 Timothy 4:9-18

Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world. —2 Timothy 4:10

One of the highlights of my work as a college president is commencement. One year, while walking to the graduation ceremony, I was excited by the thought that our graduates were ready to go out to engage the world with the transforming power of the kingdom of Christ. On my way, I noticed some industrious ants busily going about their routine. I thought, There are much greater things happening than the building of sand piles!

It's easy for us to get lost in "ant world"—to be so busy with our routines that we miss the joy of personally embracing the bigger picture of God's great work around the world. The work of the Spirit is sweeping across South America, thousands in Africa are coming to know Christ daily, persecuted Christians are thriving, and the Asian Rim is throbbing with the pulse of the gospel! Do those thoughts ever capture your heart? Your prayer life? Your checkbook?

Our preoccupation with lesser things reminds me of Paul's report that "Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world" (2 Tim. 4:10). I wonder if Demas regretted abandoning the gospel for the sand piles of this world?

Let's get out of "ant world" and engage our hearts and lives in spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Lord, I love You and want to be a part of Your work around the world. Give me an open heart to know which opportunities You want me to be a part of and wisdom in knowing how to carry that out. Amen.

Don't let smaller things distract you from the bigger work of God around the world.

2 Timothy 4:10 Demas, Charmed by the World

1. Who was Demas?

Two ... references (Col. 4:14, Philem. 24) tell us that he was an associate and fellow worker with Paul.

2. What about Demas?

"Demas hath forsaken me."

3. Why did Demas forsake Paul?

He loved this Present world—this world which, if a man love, he is the enemy of God, and the love of the Father is not in him; this world which hated my Lord and will hate us; this world which knows us not/ because it knew Him not; this world whose wisdom is foolishness with God; this world that our Lord died to save.

4. One question remains: Where did Demas go?

"Demas hath forsaken me and is departed unto Thessalonica." I do not know why he went there or what he did when he arrived. There was a good church in Thessalonica. It was the first gospel broadcasting station: "For from you sounded out the word of the Lord . . ." we read in 1 Thessalonians 1:8, but I do not think Demas went there to preach. The devil always has a Thessalonica for a Demas when he is trying to escape the reproach of a Roman prison and a **Pauline Christianity**. If you have a king other than Caesar, Rome is a hot spot to live and preach in. Demas and all his sort want their crowns now and they will get them in Thessalonica. They have their reward. All who follow Paul will wait for theirs till that day. They have only two days on their calendar, today and that day. The Day shall declare it. (See 1 Corinthians 3:13.) If we are living just for today, we will go with Demas to Thessalonica. If we are living for that day, we will stay with Paul and exchange the old rugged cross one day for a crown. (Vance Havner)

Learning From The Past

By Herbert Vander Lugt

2 Timothy 4:11

Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry. —2 Timothy 4:11

We all have some regrets about the past and try to forget our sins and mistakes. We feel a lot like the Peanuts comic strip character Linus, who said, "Maybe we should think only about today." Charlie Brown disagreed, "No, that's giving up. I'm still hoping yesterday will get better."

We know that we can't change what happened yesterday. But we can learn from yesterday's sins and mistakes, and with God's help we can use that knowledge to make a better tomorrow.

That's what John Mark did. He had started on a missionary journey with Paul and Barnabas, but when they entered Asia Minor he abandoned them and went back home (Acts 13:13; 15:38). We're not told why he left, but the apostle Paul saw it as a shameful desertion.

Later, Mark became a co-worker with Barnabas (15:39). We don't know the details, but at some point Mark must have changed and reconciled with Paul (Colossians 4:10-11). When Paul was in prison awaiting execution, he asked Timothy to come and to bring Mark with him. He indicated that Mark was "useful to me for ministry" (2 Timothy 4:11).

We cannot erase yesterday, but we can learn from it. When we take our sins and mistakes to the Lord and seek His help, we can be better today and tomorrow.

For Further Study

How do we know that God forgives us? (1 John 1:9-2:1).

Read the online version of the booklet [When We Don't Measure Up](#)

Failure is never final if you begin again with God.

2 Timothy 4:11

Learning From The Past

READ: Acts 15:36-41

Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry. —2 Timothy 4:11

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Failure is never final if you begin again with God. [Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

2 Timothy 4:11 - FAILURE

But Paul insisted that they should not take [him] (Acts 15:38).

Get Mark, ... for he is useful to me (2 Timothy 4:11).

Although we can never undo a failure, we can learn from the experience and profit by it. A baseball pitcher who loses a game because he throws a fastball right where the batter wants it may come back four days later and hurl a shutout. He'll never erase the lost game from his record, but his failure can teach him valuable lessons that will help him to chalk up more wins than losses.

In Acts we read that John Mark accompanied Paul and Barnabas when they started their first missionary journey (Acts 13:5), but he soon departed from them (Acts 13:13). While he was at home, he apparently regretted what he had done, so he asked to be included the next time his older friends set out. Barnabas wanted to give him another chance, but Paul didn't, so they parted company and formed two teams—Barnabas taking Mark, and Paul taking Silas. Young Mark couldn't erase his first failure, but he must have learned from it because he became a respected Christian leader of his day. Further-more, God used him to write one of the four gospels; and Paul, in his second prison epistle to Timothy, asked for Mark, saying, "He is useful to me for ministry."

It doesn't do any good to brood about what went wrong. Wishing we could do something over is an exercise in futility. Each day is new. With God's help we can succeed, if we learn from yesterday's failure.

Christians live in "the land of beginning again." —H. V .Lugt

Failure doesn't mean you'll never succeed; it will just take longer. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Reading And Remembering

By Dennis J. De Haan

2 Timothy 4:13-18

My soul faints for Your salvation, but I hope in Your Word. —Psalm 119:81

My elderly aunt was having difficulty with her memory. She tried to recall Scripture verses she had learned earlier in life, but they weren't coming to mind. This bothered her. I told her that God understands our weaknesses. He remembers His promises even when we can't. It's more important that we rest in His faithfulness.

Author Lillian Helm learned that lesson too. At 91 she spent an hour each day reading her Bible and Christian literature. Her friends asked, "What good does all that reading do if you can't remember much of it?" She replied by recounting her blessings and saying, "My cup runneth over. I'm not concerned about my memory. I just do my reading and God does the remembering."

Paul was in prison awaiting execution when he wrote to Timothy, "Bring ... the books, especially the parchments," (2 Tim. 4:13). He knew the importance of keeping his mind filled with God's truth. All of us need to do that every day of our lives.

But Paul's confidence wasn't in his books. It was in God, who would lovingly care for him and preserve him for His heavenly kingdom (v.18). That's true for all of us, even if we can no longer read or remember.

I'll trust in God's unchanging Word

Till soul and body sever;

For though all things shall pass away,

His Word shall stand forever. —Anon.

Memory may fail, but never God's promises.

Right And Wrongs

By David H. Roper

2 Timothy 4:14-18

At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them. —2 Timothy 4:16

It's crucial to distinguish between personal wrongs, which we must be willing to forgive, and deliberate attacks on the gospel of Christ, which the Lord will judge. Paul drew that distinction in his letter to his young friend Timothy.

First, Paul wrote with respect to an opponent of the gospel: "Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works. You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words" (2 Timothy 4:14-15).

The "harm" Alexander had done to Paul was not to him personally but to his message, and he was now engaged in stirring up opposition to Timothy's proclamation of the gospel.

Then, as if to plainly contrast and distinguish between those who oppose God's work and those who personally wrong us, Paul followed with these gracious words: "At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them" (2 Timothy 4:16).

How sad that Paul's fellow Christians would desert the apostle in his hour of deep need! What should be done to them? Surely they're deserving of his righteous anger. Not so. Paul said, "May it not be charged against them."

Lord, help us to be gracious too.

You sacrificed Your life for us—

You shed Your blood so we could live;

So help us, Lord, to follow You,

To love each other and forgive. —Sper

Treat others' faults as graciously as you do your own.

Realistic Expectations

By David H. Roper

2 Timothy 4:16-18

No one stood with me, but all forsook me... But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me. —2 Timothy 4:16-17

One of the things I've learned as I've grown older is not to expect too much from people. It's possible to pour a good deal of energy and love into a friend or family member and see no growth or receive no gratitude for our efforts. It's even possible that others may receive credit for the work we've done.

If we expect everyone to recognize and appreciate what we have done for them, we will certainly be deeply hurt. We'll start asking ourselves: "Is this all the thanks I get?"

It's good in those times of disappointment to look at our motives. Do we have an unholy sense of entitlement, or a passion to be seen and applauded for our efforts? Can we give freely and allow others to take responsibility for their own responses? The apostle Paul went through times in his service for the Lord when everyone forsook him. Yet his focus was on the strength that God gave him "so that the message might be preached fully" through him (2 Timothy 4:16-17).

We should never expect to gain from others what only Jesus can give. To do so is to be utterly unrealistic. Our task is simply to give and leave the results to our Master, knowing that in time we will receive His reward: "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21).

The service that we do for God

May go unpraised by men;

But when we stand before the Lord,

He will reward us then. —Sper

Work done well for Christ will receive a "well done" from Christ.

2 Timothy 4:18 - "To whom be glory forever"

This should be the single desire of the Christian. I take it that he should not have twenty wishes, but only one. He may desire to see his family brought up well, but only that "to God may be glory forever." He may wish for prosperity in business, but only so far as it may help him to promote this: "to whom be glory forever." He may desire to attain more gifts and more graces, but it should only be

that "to him may be glory forever." This one thing I know, Christian: You are not acting as you ought to do when you are moved by any other motive than the one motive of your Lord's glory. (**Spurgeon, C. H.**)

Love for the World

Joe Stowell

2 Timothy 4:18

It was a cold December morning. Dressed in a white execution gown, he was led to the wall of the prison courtyard with the others. Blindfolded, he waited for the last sound he would hear: the crack of a pistol echoing off the prison walls. Instead, he heard fast-paced footsteps, then the announcement that the czar had commuted his sentence to 10 years of hard labor.

So intense was that moment that he suffered an epileptic seizure—a malady he would suffer the rest of his life.

Fyodor Dostoevsky was sent to prison, where he had only a New Testament to read. In it he discovered something more compelling than his socialistic ideals. He met Jesus, and his heart was changed. Upon leaving prison, he wrote to a friend that the Lord was so dear to him that if he were to find out that Jesus was not in the realm of truth, he would rather have Jesus than the truth.

Dostoevsky returned to civilian life. He wrote feverishly and produced the novels *The House of the Dead* and *Crime and Punishment*, followed by his personal memoirs and many other works.

The sorrowful end of this story is that he never grew as a believer in Jesus. His church attendance was sporadic. He neglected Bible study and the fellowship of other believers. He began to drink heavily, and gambling left him penniless. He had left prison with his heart aflame for Jesus, but he died with nothing more than smoldering embers.

As a writer, Dostoevsky left a legacy that places him among the literary greats. One wonders what impact his life could have had if he had stayed faithful to God. In the words of the great poet John Greenleaf Whittier, "Of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: 'It might have been!'"

Keeping on track for Jesus in good times and in bad is the only way to finish life and face eternity with few regrets.

YOUR JOURNEY...

What things in my life have sidetracked my passion and enthusiasm for Jesus?

Why is it so hard to stay faithful to Him?

What will I do differently today to reflect my love for Jesus?