

Weekly Devotional

[Pass It On]

A Study in 1st and 2nd Timothy



June 20-24, 2011

Study Questions

Please note: Because of the nature of the sermons (they jump from 1 Timothy to 2 Timothy and back as the topic dictates), the devos will not always tie in directly. We will, though, be reading through all of 1 and 2 Timothy.

2 Timothy 3-4

1. What commands does Paul give to Timothy in these chapters? Why?
2. What expectations does Paul have of Timothy?
3. What do you learn of Paul's priorities, desires and affections?
4. Go through the list of descriptions Paul gives in 2 Timothy 3:1-5. Are there people around today who fit each one? If so, do the words of Paul at the end of verse 5 mean that we should not try to oppose these people? (Why or why not?)
5. Review the list at the end of 2 Timothy 3:16 of the four things for which the Scriptures are useful or profitable. Which of these four has the most value or importance in your life right now?
6. What did Paul want Timothy to be prepared for in 2 Timothy 4:2? How do these apply to your life?
7. How do Paul's instructions in 2 Timothy 4:5 get played out in your life?
8. What is the "Crown of Righteousness"?



Monday

2 Timothy 3:1-5



Recently I read this quote: “Our youth now love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority; they show disrespect for their elders, and love chatter in place of exercise. They no longer rise when elders enter the room. They contradict their parents, chatter before company, gobble up their food and tyrannize their teachers.” Does this sound like what Paul is writing about? These words were actually written 500 years before by Socrates. The problem is they still ring true today and all too often by those of us in the church.

Take a moment and re-read slowly 2 Timothy 3:1-5. Pause after each action and ask God: “God, is there some of this in me? How might you want me to change?” These verses name four different loves that might dominate our lives: the love of self, the love of money, the love of pleasure, and the love of God. The behaviors listed are produced by the distorted values of the first three loves. Misdirected love is at the root of all evil.

The verse that I have always found the most troubling is verse 5: “Having a form of godliness but denying its power.” The power of God is to change one’s life, to become born again as Jesus. Often we find ourselves asking Jesus to come into our lives as an end rather than a beginning. We are content to say a prayer and then ask Jesus to bless all we do. Asking Jesus into our lives is a beginning from which we ask for the power to be a blessing in the lives of others. When I seek to love God first over self (either having it my way or making sure I look good to others), money, or momentary pleasure, I find myself in situations beyond my ability to handle. In those times I am forced to pray and rely on the Holy Spirit, the power of God, to help me either as I witness, pray for another, love beyond my abilities, or give up some sin that has control in my life.

Where do you see God’s power displayed through you and in you?

Pray for those serving God as missionaries and especially for those who have retired and returned home after years of service.

Tuesday

2 Timothy 3:6-17



What does it mean that all Scripture is “God-breathed”? How did the Bible come about anyway? Are there mistakes?

It is important to remember that Scripture is not meant to teach us science. It is meant to lead us to a personal relationship with God. It is meant to tell us of the heart of God, His plan for the world, and give us a glimpse of His workings in the world. I once heard Jack Hayford (a retired Four Square pastor) say something along the lines that Scripture is reasonable enough to be understood, but miraculous enough to demand faith. Just looking at the first chapter of Genesis shows us this. Rationally we can believe that there is a creator God; but understanding how He existed before time, why He created in the first place, and what the actual details of creation were demand faith.

One does not go to seminary without being challenged with regards to whether the Bible is a book written by men or Word that has come directly from God. After years of study, I am more convinced than ever that what we call the “Bible” is God’s unique Word to us, His unique revelation. But what is miraculous is that He used the stories, the writings, and the testimonies of men and women to bring Scriptures into being. I do not believe that God dictated the Bible word by word. I do, though, believe that what we have today is exactly what God wants us to have, nothing less, and nothing more. I also believe that as we read it, the Holy Spirit speaks to us personally, making the Scriptures alive and active, sharper than a double-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12) that brings comfort, wisdom, and conviction of both sin and salvation. It is this work of the Holy Spirit that allows us to read the same chapter over and over again, discovering something new each time we read it.

The real question is: Do we read God’s Word? We not only need to read small sections daily and devotionally; we also need to read large sections in order to get the big picture of who God is and what He is doing. Have you read the Bible all the way through? Do you force Scripture to do more than it is intended to do? Do you allow it to be a double-edged sword in your life?

Pray for those who work with Wycliffe Bible Translators.



Wednesday

2 Timothy 3:6-16; Matthew 5:10-12; John 15:18-27

Many believe that only one of the original disciples died of old age (John). The rest (other than Judas who took his own life) were martyred. Why is it that we do not expect the same? Why is it that we are not persecuted? If you knew that being a Christ-follower would end up in your dying an untimely death, and the fate of your children might be the same, would you still follow Jesus? At the beginning of Chapter 3, Paul wrote that there will be terrible times in the last days. Are we prepared for such times? Why not? Why do we believe that somehow our fate will be different than Jesus'?

Those in the early church were persecuted because they challenged the foundation upon which people built their lives. When we challenge the values people hold, they feel threatened and often push back. Some of the philosophies of our modern world are: Rationalism (where people allow reason, science, education to replace God's speaking into our lives), Politicism (where the State becomes God, trusting in governments and militaries to provide provision and protection), Subjectivism (where one's experience becomes the foundation for what is true and untrue), Mysticism (where intuition and feeling dictate truth), Pragmatism (where getting desired results becomes the foundation for making decisions), Ecumenicalism (where having an uncritical spirit of cooperation with all beliefs is seen as supremely loving and right), some form of "Phariseeism" (where right beliefs take the place of a personal relationship with God), or even the church can be an "ism" (where we put our trust in our attendance and work for the institution rather than seeing the "church" as the gathered family of believers).

We all are susceptible to the philosophies of this world. We all have a tendency to not challenge the philosophies of others—much like we do not challenge how other adults parent their own children. The early church, though, shared the good news so much and lived such an alternative lifestyle that their philosophies were challenged. What would happen if we questioned more often? Would we too find life a little less comfortable?

Pray for those presently undergoing persecution around the world.

Thursday

2 Timothy 4:1-8; Romans 12

What do you long for? What does this passage teach us about what Paul longed for? How does one finish strong?

First, it helps to know that one is “called.” Paul was called by God and given a specific mission to do what no one else was uniquely qualified to do. But each one of us has a calling on our lives. Psalm 139 says we are all “fearfully and wonderfully made,” that God planned out our days even before one of them came into being. Even those things about my life that I desire to hide are part of my unique calling. We each have unique strengths, weaknesses, experiences (good and bad) that mixed together place us in a unique ministry. Rather than denying that which you wish to hide, why not ask God how He might want you to use it? What unique gifts has God given you? If we do not do our unique part, a hole is created in God’s Kingdom work, much like a missing piece in a jigsaw puzzle creates a noticeable hole. Don’t wait to be asked—step out and do, step out and experiment.

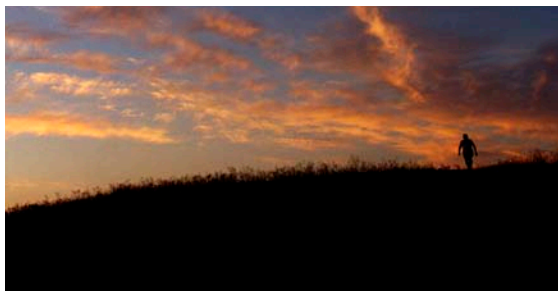
Once Paul knew his calling, then he worked to fulfill that calling. He had an ever watchful eye on the things that might derail him. He endured hardship as he did the work of an evangelist. All of us have unique gifts. Some are uniquely gifted in sharing Jesus with others, but all are called to share. Likewise, all are called to give, but some have the gift of giving and are able to give above and beyond without a second thought. It’s the same with faith; we are all called to have faith, but some seem to have that unique gift that encourages others when doubting begins to set in.

Finally, Paul was able to endure because he kept his eyes on the finish line. He longed for Jesus’ return. His joy was not in his accomplishments in the here and now, but in hearing, “Well done, thy good and faithful servant.”

I once heard of a missionary who returned home after years of service overseas. No one came to greet him when he landed. Discouraged, he cried out to God, “God, where is my homecoming party?” To which God replied, “You are not home yet.”

What rewards are you working for? Keep your eyes fixed on the finish line so that you do not come up short.

Pray for the elderly that they would finish well.



Friday

2 Timothy 4:9-22



In these final verses, we get a sense of the “man” Paul. Often when we read about men and women of great faith in Scripture, we tend to allow them to become larger than life. Even though Paul was a great apostle, we are called to emulate him and learn from him. This passage helps us do just that.

Paul has the same needs we have. He needs his friends around him. None of us are meant to go it alone. In fact, throughout the New Testament we see ministry not being done by “lone rangers” but, at the very least, by pairs of people. We do not “go” to church; we “are” the church. We Christians are called to be a family walking with and supporting one another. This means we are not only to help others but allow others to help us.

We see that Paul had a need for physical comfort. When we pray, “Give us this day our daily bread,” we are asking God to provide for our physical needs. These needs are not in some way less spiritual. Taking care of one’s physical needs (rest, proper diet, and exercise) is a part of good discipleship.

We see that Paul needed intellectual stimulation. Here is Paul at the end of His life; in a short time, he will be beheaded. But still he needs the Scriptures to comfort him. He still desires to grow and be challenged. We are called to be life-long learners. Our vacation-oriented, entertainment society robs us of some of the deep intellectual feeding we need to be of the greatest use to God.

Summer is a great time to pick up a book, whether it is to read it or to listen to it on tape. It is a great time to get together with friends. It is a great time to get some needed rest in order that we have the needed refreshment to be of use to God.

Paul also knew betrayal. People will betray us, but God never will. He will always provide what we need when we need it. People betrayed Paul because they loved this world with its pleasures and comforts more than God. They betrayed Paul because they were more at home in their earthly life than looking towards the next life—eternal life. To withstand such betrayals and temptations, we need to keep in mind that we have been bought with a price, that we have been called to a mission, and that the Spirit is present to help if we would just rely on Him.

Pray for Christians as they gather in predominantly Muslim countries to worship.



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