

Keep Calm and Carry On

2 Timothy Life Group Studies

Introduction

2 Timothy is one of the group of New Testament letters known as the 'Pastoral Epistles' (along with 1 Timothy and Titus), written to encourage leaders and ministers in the local church.

While the authorship of the letter has sometimes been contested by biblical scholarship, it is written as though it is from the Apostle Paul to his colleague Timothy, who was a leader in the church at Ephesus which Paul founded. Timothy was one of Paul's closest friends, and might even be described as his 'right-hand man' (see mentions of Timothy in Acts 16:1-3, Rom 16:21, 1 Cor 16:10, 2 Cor 1:1, Phil 2:19-24).

Paul wrote 2 Timothy towards the end of his life and ministry, while in prison in Rome. It is a letter of encouragement to Timothy to persevere in preaching and teaching the gospel, to trust in Christ, and to stand firm amongst the difficulties that he was facing in the church. Paul is particularly concerned that Timothy resist the false doctrines that were permeating the church at the time.

At the heart of his message is his confidence in the 'gospel', which may be summarised as follows: 'God has acted in grace and mercy through the death of Christ with an offer of forgiveness to which people must respond in faith, turning from evil, receiving empowerment through God's Spirit, and looking forward to eternal life'.¹

¹ William Mounce, Word Biblical Commentary.

These studies will focus on the various ways that Paul encourages Timothy to remain focussed on the gospel, and how this can shape our own response to the challenges of Christian discipleship.

Suffer for the Gospel - 2 Timothy 1:1-18

1. Have you ever suffered for being a Christian? If not, do you expect that you will?
2. How would you define 'the gospel'? How might Paul define it (vv10-11)?
3. What does Paul thank God for in Timothy's life (vv2-5)?
4. What is the 'gift of God' (v6)? How could Timothy 'fan it into flame'?
5. What have Christians been called to (v9)?
6. What three roles does Paul name for himself in v11? What do these different roles mean? Do you identify with any of them?
7. Why is Paul confident in the midst of suffering (v12)?
8. Do you think that you would be ashamed if you were in prison for your faith as Paul was?
9. What does Paul urge Timothy to do in vv13-14? Why is this so important to him?

10. How can we prepare ourselves to persevere through suffering?

Pass the Gospel On – 2 Timothy 2:1-13

1. Share again with each other your definition of the gospel from last week.
2. Where (or from whom) did you first hear the gospel?
3. What is Paul telling Timothy to do in v2?
4. Why does he emphasise the 'many witnesses' who have heard what he said?
5. What do the metaphors of the soldier, athlete and farmer in vv4-7 mean?
6. What is Paul's 'gospel' (v8)?
7. Why does Paul say that 'God's word is not chained' (v9)?
8. What are the promises in vv11-13?
9. Do you feel 'qualified to teach others' in the Christian faith? What would you need to learn in order for that to be the case?

Remember the Gospel – 2 Timothy 2:14-26

1. Remind each other again of what the 'gospel' is, as you discussed in previous weeks. Why does Paul think it is so important for Timothy to do this for the church in Ephesus (v14)?
2. Have you ever heard something that you would describe as 'false teaching' regarding the Christian faith?
3. Paul's warning against 'quarreling about words' (v14) probably refers to arguing about the content of the gospel. Why would he think that this is of 'no value'?
4. What is 'godless chatter' (v16)?
5. The false teachers such as Hymenaeus and Philetus are saying that the resurrection of believers had already taken place (v18), which probably refers to the belief in a 'spiritual' resurrection (a change of heart) rather than the resurrection of the body. Why would Paul be troubled about this teaching?
6. Paul gets his 'inscription' in v19 from the story in Numbers 16. What parallels can you see with that story and the situation Paul is addressing?

7. Can you think of 'household items' in your own home that would match with Paul's description of special and common articles in vv20-21? What is this metaphor about?
8. What are the duties of the 'Lord's servant' in vv24-26?
9. How can your group encourage each other to 'remember the Gospel' on a regular basis?

Continue in the Gospel - 2 Timothy 3:1-17

1. How long have you been a Christian? Has there ever been a time when you have felt like giving up?
2. Are the 'last days' that Paul talks about in v1 suppose to be in the future or the present?
3. What situation is being described in vv6-9? Why is Paul so concerned about it?
4. 'Jannes and Jambres' are the Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses in Exodus chapter 7. Why would he make this comparison with the false teachers in the church at Ephesus?
5. Is it true that 'everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted' (v12)? Does this match your experience?
6. What is the 'Scripture' that Paul refers to in vv15-17? What does Paul say about the Scriptures?
7. In v16 Paul says that Scripture is 'God-breathed' (sometimes translated 'inspired'). What is the difference between the Scripture being 'inspired' and it being 'inspiring'?

8. How have you made study of the Bible part of your own daily life?
Can you learn anything from each other about this?

9. What are some other practical ways that we can help each other
'continue in what we have learned' (v14)?

Proclaim the Gospel - 2 Timothy 4:1-22

1. Do you find it scary, anxiety-provoking, etc. to speak about Jesus with those who don't follow him?
2. What is the 'charge' that Paul gives Timothy in v2 (explain it in your own words)?
3. Why is this an urgent task for Timothy to undertake (vv3-4)?
4. What does the image of 'itching ears' mean in v3?
5. 'I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith' (v7). What would it mean for you to be able to say that at the end of your life?
6. What does this passage have to say to people who are not preachers and teachers in the church?
7. What is the 'crown of righteousness' that is in store for Paul and others who serve Christ (v7)?
8. What does Paul put confidence in as he proclaims the gospel (vv17-18)?

9. What opportunities and situations do you have where you can proclaim the gospel? What obstacles are there to stop that happening?

Notes