

2 Timothy

WHAT'S THIS BOOK ABOUT? More encouragement for a young pastor—with a tinge of urgency, as Paul senses his time is getting short.

❖ **WHO WROTE IT?** The apostle Paul.

❖ **WHEN DID IT HAPPEN?** Around A.D. 66.

❖ **WHERE DOES THIS BOOK FIT?** This is probably the last letter Paul ever wrote. He was beheaded not long afterward.

THE BREAKDOWN

- Chapter 1: Paul's loneliness and concern for Timothy
- Chapter 2: Admonition to be strong in the Lord
- Chapter 3: Warnings about the last days
- Chapter 4: Final advice

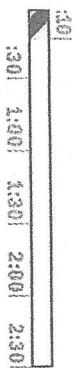
KEY CONCEPTS

- Remember
- Discipline
- Holiness
- Teach
- Work hard

SCORECARD

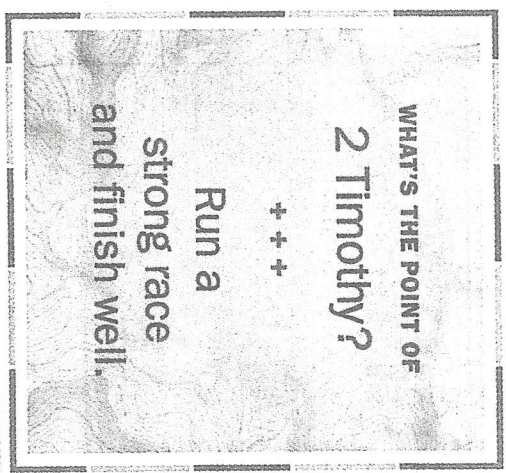
- **Paul:** The writer
- **Timothy:** Paul's son in the faith
- **Eunice:** Timothy's mother, who taught him the faith when he was a child
- **Lois:** Timothy's grandmother, his other spiritual teacher
- **Onesiphorus:** A Christian brother who went out of his way to find Paul in Rome

READING TIME



WORTH MEMORIZING

- 1:7 God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.
 - 2:2 Teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others.
 - 2:22 Run from anything that stimulates youthful lusts. Instead, pursue righteous living, faithfulness, love, and peace. Enjoy the companionship of those who call on the Lord with pure hearts.
 - 3:16-17 All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.
 - 4:7-8 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his appearing.
- ### THE MASCULINE PERSPECTIVE
- **SELF-DISCIPLINED LIFE.** Paul uses several vivid word pictures (2:3-7) to communicate the discipline that the Christian life requires. We are to be tough and focused like soldiers, to compete according to the rules like athletes, and to work hard like farmers. Self-discipline makes a difference—in all of life.



THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO

TIMOTHY

PRISON IS THE LAST PLACE from which to expect a letter of encouragement, but that is where Paul's second letter to Timothy originates. He begins by assuring Timothy of his continuing love and prayers, and reminds him of his spiritual heritage and responsibilities. Only the one who perseveres, whether as a soldier, athlete, farmer, or minister of Jesus Christ, will reap the reward. Paul warns Timothy that his teaching will come under attack as men desert the truth for ear-scratching words (4:3). But Timothy has Paul's example to guide him and God's Word to fortify him as he faces growing opposition and glowing opportunities in the last days.

Paul's last epistle received the title *Prosa Timotheon B*, the "Second to Timothy." When Paul's epistles were collected together the *B* was probably added to distinguish this letter from the first letter he wrote to Timothy.

WATCH WORDS

- **sound mind** (moderation, self-control, reason)—1:7
- **rightly dividing** (cutting straight, correct, and right)—2:15
- **inspiration of God** (that which is God-breathed)—3:16
- **fight** (compete, strive, work toward a goal)—4:7



If you read the last words of dying people, you'll find sayings both preposterous and profound. Playwright Oscar Wilde, for example, said as he died in a drab hotel: "Either that wallpaper goes, or I do."

Well, there was no drivel from Paul's pen as he recorded his last words in 2 Timothy. Confined to Rome's Mamertine Prison, Paul told Timothy: "The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith . . . Be diligent to come quickly . . . to come before winter" (2 Timothy 4:7, 9, 21).

Many of Paul's companions had abandoned or turned against him. He needed Timothy's help—as well as a coat and some books—while awaiting execution. So as we read 2 Timothy, we feel we're reading a final letter from a father to his son, giving us Paul's last testimony and final instructions.

Second Timothy emphasizes faithfulness. Paul spoke of his own faithfulness and exhorted Timothy to be faithful to his calling and gifts, particularly to preaching the Word. He tells us to persevere like a soldier in the army, an athlete in the games, or a farmer in the fields.

None of us knows if we'll have the opportunity for last words. But we can live a life of faithfulness now, leaving a legacy for those who follow, as we fight the good fight and keep the faith, looking forward to the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give us on that day.



KEY THOUGHT:

In perilous times, we must be steadfast and determined to fight the good fight, finish the race, and keep the faith.



KEY VERSES:

"God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel."
2 Timothy 1:7-8



KEY ACTION:

"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



KEY PRAYER:

Lord, You are faithful. In good times, and bad. You are faithful.

someone you
should know?

Demas

Nobody Likes a Deserter

IN 1812 NAPOLEON UNWISELY INVADED RUSSIA. When his subjects in France began objecting noisily to the campaign, he grew worried and rushed back home virtually unaccompanied, leaving his soldiers to fend for themselves. At a certain river crossing manned by a Russian ferryman, Napoleon anxiously inquired whether any deserters had come that way. "No," the man sneered, "you are the first."

No one likes a deserter. No one respects a deserter. The very word speaks of cowardice, disloyalty, and spinelessness. Deserters run away not only from battlefields but from all kinds of difficult situations—including the challenges of a walk of faith. Paul's account of a man named Demas illustrates how some men allow "the good life" to turn them into deserters.

Demas started out well. He not only made a commitment to Christ but also followed up with practical acts of service. The apostle Paul called Demas one of his "co-workers" (Philemon 1:24) and told one church that Demas sent

them his greetings (Colossians 4:14). Demas apparently had joined the apostle in the hard work of spreading the gospel and had made himself a valuable asset to the cause of Christ.

But as time went on and the work became more difficult, something changed. By the time Paul landed in a Roman jail near the end of his life, Demas had disappeared. He turned tail and ran.

"Demas has deserted me," the apostle wrote to his faithful friend, Timothy. For what cause? Did Demas fear for his life? Did he worry that he, too, might wind up in prison? Not

exactly. Paul wrote that Demas had deserted him "because he loves the things of this life" (2 Timothy 4:10). Demas wasn't running from danger; he was running toward the comfort offered by the world.

The apostle John had a few things to say to men like Demas. "Do not love this world nor the things it offers you," he wrote, "for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave" (1 John 2:15-17).

Jesus, too, commented on those of Demas's ilk. He compared them to a well-seeded plot of ground that failed to produce a crop. All too quickly, he said, the Christian message in their lives gets "crowded out by the worries of this life and the lure of wealth" (Matthew 13:22). And so they desert.

No matter what the situation, nobody likes a deserter. And ironically, deserters always wind up losing in the end.

By the time
Paul landed
in a Roman
jail near the
end of his life,
Demas had
disappeared.

THE POINT: Comfort may lure a man away from faith as easily as danger.

BASIC SURVEY

2 TIMOTHY

AUTHOR: The apostle Paul (1:1).

DATE: Probably the mid-60s.

IN TEN WORDS OR LESS

The apostle Paul's final words to a beloved coworker.

DETAILS, PLEASE

Second Timothy is the last known letter of Paul. Addressed to "Timothy, my dearly beloved son" (1:2 KJV), the book warns the young pastor against false teaching and urges him to live a life of purity before his congregation. Timothy should expect trouble ("All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," 3:12 KJV), but God will be faithful ("The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom," 4:18 KJV). Paul begs Timothy to join him as quickly as possible, as "the time of my departure is at hand" (4:6 KJV).

QUOTABLE

> You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (2:3 NKJV).

UNIQUE AND UNUSUAL

Paul tells where the Bible comes from in 2 Timothy: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (3:16 KJV). The connotation of the word *inspiration* is "breathed out."

SO WHAT?

We should all live life in a way that we can say, like Paul, "I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith" (4:7 KJV).

READ 2 TIMOTHY 1 AND PSALMS 137-138.

- One-Month Course: your next reading is on page 250. →
- Three-Month Course: your next reading is on page 250. →
- Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 248. →

CLOSER LOOK

PAUL'S ROMAN IMPRISONMENTS

After Paul arrived in Jerusalem in AD 57, he was in the temple when some of his enemies saw him and stirred up the crowd. They dragged Paul out and began to beat him, but the Roman soldiers entered the crowd, arrested Paul, and bound him with chains. From there he was transported to the Roman city of Caesarea, where he spent the next two years in prison.

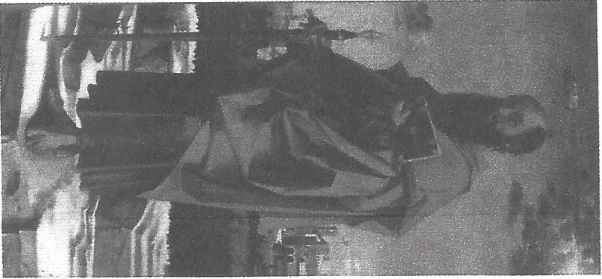
Governor Festus asked Paul if he was willing to go back to Jerusalem and stand trial, but Paul answered: "I have not done any wrong to the Jews. . . . No one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!" (Acts 25:10-11 NIV). Roman citizens had the right to be tried by Caesar himself, so Paul was shipped to Rome, where he spent two years under house arrest (Acts 28:30). When he appeared before Emperor Nero in AD 62, Nero was still under the influence of wise counselors, so he released him.

Paul had previously planned on evangelizing Spain (Romans 15:24, 28), and indeed the Muratorian Canon (an early Christian document) says that "Paul went from the city of Rome to Spain." After evangelizing there, Paul returned to the eastern Mediterranean. He was arrested in Troas (2 Timothy 4:13) and was taken to Rome in chains. The city had burned in AD 64, and Nero had accused the Christians of starting the fires.

Paul was sitting in the Mamertine dungeon in AD 67, facing the end, when he wrote his second epistle to Timothy. Not long after, he was beheaded.

READ 2 TIMOTHY 4 AND PSALM 119:137-176.

● Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 250.



Paul, who is depicted here in Scott Paul by Bartolomeo Montagna (1450-1523), was beheaded shortly after he wrote his second epistle to Timothy.

HIDDEN TREASURE

TEACHING OTHERS

Paul wrote Timothy, "You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others" (2 Timothy 2:2 NLT). In that day, most Christians were illiterate, so they depended on word-of-mouth teaching to help them grow in their understanding of the faith. Paul said to make sure to pass on solid biblical teaching. Today, most Christians are literate and can read the Bible themselves. But we still need Bible studies by competent, godly teachers—not only to ground us in the Word, but to teach us genuine Christianity by their personal example. "Be an example to the believers in word, in conduct" (1 Timothy 4:12 NKJV).

READ 2 TIMOTHY 2 AND EXODUS 18.

HIDDEN TREASURE

THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE

Paul reminded Timothy, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16 NASB). The NIV translates the opening phrase literally from the Greek, stating, "All Scripture is God-breathed." What this means is that scripture is inspired because it comes from the very mouth of God. It is the very word of God. That's why it can accurately instruct us how to live righteous lives. Here's another verse that brings out the Bible's divine inspiration: "Prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21 NKJV). (See also 1 Thessalonians 2:13.)

READ 2 TIMOTHY 3 AND PSALM 139.

2 TIMOTHY

DID YOU KNOW?

▶ Timothy is mentioned in more of Paul's letters than any other of his ministry companions.

INSPIRATIONS

In the first part of this letter, Paul reflected not only on the service of his own ancestors but on the faith of Timothy's mother and grandmother as well. He also encouraged Timothy to follow his own examples of life and doctrine.

In the Word

In his second letter to Timothy, Paul continued to encourage and instruct Timothy as a young minister, and he provided further teachings on growing in service to the Lord.

BY THE NUMBERS

4 CHAPTERS
83 VERSES
1,723 WORDS

Farewell in the Faith

Many consider this letter to be Paul's farewell message, written during his Roman imprisonment near the end of his days.

KEY PASSAGE

"In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his Kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage - with great patience and careful instruction" (4:1-2).

INTRODUCTION TO 2 TIMOTHY

BACKGROUND

Second Timothy was written at the end of Paul's life. Sensing that he will soon be executed for his faith in Christ (4:6-8), he writes to Timothy, his son in the faith, a protégé, and a dear friend. At the conclusion of Acts, Paul was under house arrest, where visitors could come and go, and he had the hope of release. He did continue his ministry with additional travels, but now he is back in Rome, in a dank prison. He writes to his friend in Ephesus to tie up some loose ends and even to request that when Timothy visits, he bring along a cloak and some special parchments (4:1-3). Acts 16:1 says that Timothy's father was Greek and his mother Jewish. Here in 2 Timothy we learn that his mother, named Eunice, raised him, along with his grandmother Lois, to know the Hebrew Scriptures (1:5; 3:15), which fortified his Christian faith.

MESSAGE

Paul's words are full of encouragement

OUTLINE

- I. Greetings and Advice
- II. Persevere in Difficult Times
 - A. Endure all things
 - B. The foundation is sure
 - C. The coming perilous times
- III. An Approved Workman
 - A. Trust Scripture
 - B. Preach the word
- IV. Final Words

and instruction, despite the bleakness of the days ahead. He tells Timothy of his continual prayers and love for him, then reminds Timothy of his godly heritage and his responsibilities. Paul charges Timothy to remain steadfast in the faith, for only those who persevere in the things of God will be rewarded by God. There is also a warning against those who would attack Timothy for his teachings, men with "itching ears" (4:3) who desert the truth of God's word to seek false doctrines. If ever a man had an example to follow, it was Timothy, for Paul remained true to the end despite the knowledge that he would die for what he believed.

TIME

Paul wrote this second epistle to Timothy in A.D. 67 during his second imprisonment, by the Roman emperor Nero. Paul hopes that Timothy can "come before winter" (4:21). Timothy likely received Paul's letter from Tychicus at Ephesus (4:12).

- 1:1-18
- 2:1-18
- 2:19-26
- 3:1-9
- 3:10-17
- 4:1-8
- 4:9-22

2 Timothy

BOOK INTRODUCTION

Historians describe Rome's Mamertine Prison as a former cistern—a dungeon in a well that was a dozen feet below ground. It was also the last stop for prisoners condemned to die. If they were Roman citizens, they could not be thrown to the lions, so they were often dropped into this small, dank, dark, stone-cold cell.

Tradition and strong evidence tell us that the apostle Paul spent his last days in such a place before being beheaded by Emperor Nero. And in those final days, Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy—the last letter of his life—from his dungeon cell.

By any measure, Paul knew his life was coming to an end: “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand” (4:6). And he had no regrets: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (4:7). This imprisonment only represented the last in a long list of events by which his faithfulness as an apostle was marked (2 Cor. 6:3–10; 11:23–33).

When a dying man speaks of death, we do well to listen. Paul died as he lived: fully confident that the Lord would deliver him “from every evil work” and preserve him “for His heavenly kingdom” (4:18). To die with such great hope is to have lived with great faith.

WHAT IT SAYS | *A Kindred Spirit with Proven Character*

There is probably no more intimate method of communication than a letter, even in this technological age. Paul's writings are not “books.” They are personal disclosures from his heart to friends in the ministry.

One of those recipients was Timothy, who some scholars have suggested had a timid personality (1:7; 1 Tim. 4:12). Whether or not this is true, he was the newly installed pastor of a large church, and he would need courage to confront error and defend the truth. He would also need to prepare himself to suffer for the gospel (3:12).

Several years before his final imprisonment, Paul had written of Timothy's like-mindedness and “proven character,” how “as a son... he served with me in the gospel” (Phil. 2:22). Paul saw something in this young man—perhaps a depth of understanding that flowed from being raised by a Christian mother and grandmother (1:5).

From Paul's point of view, no one else understood and shared his heart for the churches like Timothy. When he sent his protégé into a community of believers, Paul's perspective was: “Receive Timothy, and you receive me.” That mutual concern is no doubt the primary

2 TIMOTHY

reason Paul put Timothy in charge of the church at Ephesus where he had spent nearly three years (1 Tim. 1:3).

As Paul writes from the depths of a prison cell, you can hear the emotion and urgency in his poignant words to his protégé: “Be diligent to come to me quickly... Do your utmost to come before winter” (4:9, 21). Many of Paul's closest companions had abandoned him. His one-time associate Alexander had turned against him with vengeance. At Paul's trial, not a single friend had stood with him. Paul needed Timothy's strength and encouragement—as well as the coat and books Timothy could bring—to help sustain him (4:9–13). So while 1 Timothy is filled with instructions and exhortations for a young pastor-leader overseeing his first flock, 2 Timothy is more about the words of a master to his apprentice—or more accurately, a father to his son.

WHAT IT MEANS | *Final Instructions*

What does a Christian leader write in a final letter? Encouragement and affection... a challenge to be strong in the faith... and a solemn charge. Paul's charge to Timothy could be summed up: “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2:15).

In his instructions to Timothy, Paul emphasized:

- **Faithfulness:** Paul reminds Timothy of his ancestors (1:3–7), the surety of the gospel (1:8–10), and his own example, and then encourages him to be loyal to the faith (1:13–18). Above all, Paul exhorts the young pastor to be faithful to his calling and gifts, and particularly to the preaching of the Word (3:1–4:6).
- **Endurance:** Serving Christ is hard work. It requires endurance and perseverance, like a soldier serving in the army, an athlete training to compete, or a farmer who labors for his crop (2:3–6; 4:7). Yet eternal rewards await every believer (4:8, 18).
- **Depravity:** Paul reminds Timothy of the hostile and sinful world in which he will carry out his ministry (3:1–9). Timothy would have to counter this by living conformed to the gospel (3:10–17).
- **Legacy:** As Timothy receives the torch of the gospel, he is to carry on Paul's ministry of teaching and training others to advance the cause of Christ (1:13; 3:10; 4:1). Timothy is the link between Paul and the next generation of Christians.
- **Friendship:** The need for human companionship and the nature of friendship—in both its finest hours and most disappointing moments—are prominent themes in Paul's letter (1:16–18; 4:10–16, 21). Committed friends like Onesiphorus and Timothy are lauded; betrayers and deserters like Alexander and Demas are warned against. Yet even amid the relational challenges of ministry, the Lord's presence is ultimately the Christian's source of strength (4:17, 18).

WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU | *Rescued and Delivered!*

Paul apparently knew he would never get out of prison alive. Yet he knew that better days—wonderful, indescribable days—were right around the corner, in the presence of Jesus. In the deepest sense, nothing could really touch him or harm him. It is the same for all who are in Christ.

Our pressures may be great or our circumstances terribly perplexing. Still, we have the hope of our final, glorious journey, and *nothing* in this life can cancel it (4:18). We are already citizens of heaven; everything has been prepared for our arrival (Phil. 3:20; John 14:2, 3).

If we know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, we can have complete confidence that our future is utterly, finally, and joyously assured. The Lord will rescue us, deliver us, remain close to us through all our days on earth, and keep us safe until we finally arrive at that last, great destination: heaven.

2 TIMOTHY

- A. GREETINGS (1:1 - 2)
- B. ENCOURAGEMENT TO PERSEVERE (1:3 - 2:26)
 - 1. The Need to Be Faithful (1:3 - 18)
 - 2. The Reality of Hardships (2:1 - 13)
 - 3. The Need to Behave Responsibly (2:14 - 26)
- C. EXHORTATIONS CONCERNING THE LAST DAYS (3:1 - 4:8)
- D. PAUL SHARES HIS OWN PERSONAL NEEDS (4:9 - 22)

Essential Facts

- PURPOSE:**
To encourage a faithful but discouraged Timothy in continuing to do God's work.
- AUTHOR:**
The apostle Paul.
- AUDIENCE:**
Timothy, a young pastor.
- DATE WRITTEN:**
Sometime between AD 66 - 67, shortly before Paul's death during the reign of Emperor Nero.

- SETTING:**
When Paul wrote this letter, he was virtually alone in prison; only his friend Luke was with him. This is a very personal letter, showing Paul's vulnerability and loneliness. It also reveals his inner strength as he continued, even in his desperate situation, to encourage young Timothy.
- KEY VERSE:**
"Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2:22).
- KEY PEOPLE AND RELATIONSHIPS:**
Paul with Timothy, Luke and Mark.

THE BIG PICTURE

When a loved one is about to die, we strain to hear any whispered words of blessing or advice, knowing these may be the last words we will ever hear from this person. In this letter, Paul shared his deathbed communication to Timothy, his son in the faith, passing along his final words of blessing, advice and comfort.

As he wrote this letter, Paul was awaiting his execution in a Roman prison. Paul expected death to come soon, so he penned these words of guidance and encouragement to his young protégé in Ephesus. Paul wanted to give Timothy all the tools he needed to be an effective minister of the gospel. Paul urged Timothy to develop his relationship with God and to serve God faithfully. Paul knew that Timothy would face many problems as a church leader, so he encouraged Timothy to persevere in his faith. Challenging the young pastor to be faithful to his duties, Paul reminded Timothy to use the gifts God had given him, to hold on to the truth of God's Word, to teach others and to be willing to suffer for the sake of Christ.

Paul had made mistakes in his past, but that didn't disqualify him from helping Timothy. He had much he wanted to share with Timothy. Our mistakes don't disqualify us from reaching out to others either. Rather, God wants each of us to share something from our experiences in life. Through our spiritual renewal, God has given us important insights from which others can benefit. And sharing those insights with others is an important part of our own spiritual journey.

SPIRITUAL RENEWAL THEMES

GOD'S WAY CAN BE DIFFICULT

Change is always a challenge, especially when we are trying to give up old habits we have relied on for some time. The changes required for spiritual growth are sometimes uncomfortable or even painful. Some of us would rather suffer in a known situation rather than risk moving into the unknown. Though our spiritual growth may involve some pain, we can be assured that the sacrifices we make will be worthwhile in the end.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITHFULNESS

We will face opposition as we pursue spiritual renewal, but that is not all bad. Opposition often signals that important changes are taking place in our lives. Not everyone likes to see us change, even if those changes are good and healthy for us. Some may be afraid that they will lose an old friend

because of these changes. Others may begin to feel guilty about their own way of life and try to stop our progress. We don't have to understand why people oppose our spiritual growth; our part is to faithfully seek God and surrender to his will. Paul was faithful to God, and he urged Timothy to follow his example. God wants each of us to do the same.

THE POWER OF GOD'S WORD

One of the primary sources of strength and guidance for us is God's Word. Paul challenged Timothy to understand God's Word and know how to apply its teachings to his life (see 2 Timothy 2:15). God's Word teaches us what is true, makes us realize what is wrong in our lives, points us in the right direction and helps us do what is right (see 2 Timothy 3:16). Our prayers and thoughts should be focused on God's Word, for it instructs us in the way that God wants us to live.

THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES : BIBLE STUDY AND MEDITATION

BEING MOLDED BY GOD'S WORD

2 Timothy 3:16

ur outlook on life depends very much on our "in-look." If worldly assumptions, fears and pressures shape our perspective, we will fall prey to anxiety, anger and depression. But if we meditate on the Bible and allow it to take root in our hearts, we will experience the peace and goodness that God's Word brings.

In 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul outlines four ways that God's Word moves us toward spiritual maturity. Each of these ways transforms our thinking.

- God's Word teaches us what is true. We live in a world of uncertainty and contradiction. Principles based on opinions rather than on spiritual truth often govern our lives. The Bible, however, proclaims the truth about God, nature, humanity, evil, salvation, justice, love, judgment, eternity and many other things.
- God's Word rebukes our sinfulness. A good coach will tell athletes what they're doing wrong so that they can improve their performance. In the same way, God's Word shows us where we have sinned. What the world calls normal is often not what God calls moral. God's Word defines morality and rebukes sin.
- God's Word corrects us. Rebuke points out that we have left God's path. Correction shows us how to get back on it. The Bible not only points out our mistakes, but it also points the way to restoration. We learn how to confess our sins and make restitution, how to forgive and guard against bitterness, and how to break sinful habits and develop godly ones.
- God's Word teaches us to do what is right. Christ calls us to do certain things in his name as much as he calls us not to do other things. God's Word reminds us that we should perform acts of love and compassion, reaching out to the poor and seeking justice for the oppressed.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Review the four ways God's Word can change you. How have you experienced each of these? Consider which one God may be emphasizing in your life right now. What verses can help shape your life in this area?

For more on Bible study and meditation, turn to Hebrews 4.

Why does the church exist today? Biblical passages such as 2 Timothy 2:2—where Paul charges young pastor Timothy to “commit these [truths that you have been taught] to faithful men who will be able to teach others also”—give insight into the purpose of the church worldwide. Understanding what the church is not can help, too.

The church is not the NT, modern-day continuation of the nation of Israel, God’s “chosen people.” Israel did not morph into the church. Israel was, is, and always will be the “apple of God’s eye” (Jer. 31:35–37; Zech. 2:8) with a specifically appointed, eternal purpose. The church is also not an organization created by man to ensure that a Christian version of religion endures through time. Yes, there are “religious” aspects of the church, but its purpose is greater than religion. Finally, although all true members of the church should be members of a local Christian fellowship, the church is not just the people who gather in houses of worship on the weekends.

Instead, the church is first and foremost an invisible, spiritual reality. It is the organic union of all who have been given new birth by the Holy Spirit as a result of faith in Jesus Christ. As Paul writes, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13).

When Paul introduced the body as a metaphor for the church, he indicated something else about the church’s purpose: that the union of Jesus’ followers would now be the body of Christ on earth. While He was on earth, Jesus possessed a physical body. After the Resurrection, He was given an immortal body (all Christians will be given one too, at Christ’s return [1 Cor. 15:50–54]) and then returned to heaven (Acts 1:9). Paul used the body metaphor to say that because Jesus’ physical body has left earth, He will work now through the physical bodies of His followers to accomplish His purpose on earth.

So the purpose of the universal church is to continue the work Christ began on earth until He returns at the end of the age. By extension, we can then say that the purpose of individual, local churches (gatherings of Christ followers) is to carry out the purpose of the universal church in their communities. Jesus hinted at this during His time on earth.

He spent three years training a group of 12 disciples (the future apostles) by sending them out on ministry trips to do what they had seen Him do. First, those 12 were sent “to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick” (Luke 9:2). Then a larger group of 70 disciples was sent to “heal the sick” and proclaim, “The kingdom of God has come near to you” (Luke 10:9). Later, Jesus explained to His disciples why He was going to leave the earth: first, because there were “greater works” to be done than He could do in the limitation of His physical body (John 14:12); and second, so the Holy Spirit could fill them with Christ’s life and bind them together into one body of power and purpose in His absence (John 16:7–15). All of this happened at Pentecost (Acts 2), as the Holy Spirit baptized the disciples and fellow believers into one body (1 Cor. 12:13), and as the church grew in Jerusalem. It continues to this day.

Put simply, the church is to be the hands and heart and eyes of Jesus on earth while He is in heaven (1 Cor. 12:14–20). Christ, however, remains the head of the church, giving nourishment, direction, and instructions to the members of His body on earth (Eph. 4:12; 5:23; Col. 1:18; 2:19) as they “go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” teaching them to observe all that He commanded (Matt. 28:19, 20; Acts 1:8).

For Further Reading: John 4:23; 13:35; Acts 2:42; Gal. 6:2; Eph. 4:12

What Does It Mean that God “Inspired” the Bible?

Tommy Dapporto

Second Timothy 3:16 says “All Scripture is inspired by God,” but what exactly does “inspired” mean? We hear of musicians being inspired to write a song or we hear of an artist’s inspiration behind a painting. Is biblical inspiration the same thing? In a word, no. The Bible means something very specific when it claims to be inspired—it means we hold the actual words of God in our hands.

“Inspired” Means the Source Is God

The word translated “inspired” in the passage above only shows up once in all of Scripture. It literally means “God-breathed”—that every word is as authoritative as if it came directly from the mouth of God Himself. Once Adam and Eve sinned, they and their descendants were blinded to God’s ways. God needed to tell us who He is and how to live lives that please Him. Peter states that no “prophecy of Scripture” originated from an author’s personal opinion, but authors were moved by God’s Spirit to write what He wanted them to write (2Pt 1:20). So biblical inspiration means the Bible—word for word—is God’s word speaking to us.

“Inspired” Means Given through Men

Although the inspired word is truly God’s word, God chose people to compose the Bible, and they did so using their own voices and perspectives. The Bible isn’t divine dictation. The writers weren’t in some kind of trance. God knew each person’s personality and thought process, and prepared each to write the things He wanted using their individual styles. Think of a master painter who knows exactly the picture he wants to paint. He has many different brushes that he uses for different purposes: a coarse brush for rough textures, a thin brush for fine lines, and a wide brush for bold strokes. In the master’s hand, the brushes do exactly what he wants. The final work is the picture he wanted to paint, but with the characteristic of each brush showing through. In a similar way, God used different people with their distinct personalities, vocabularies, and experiences to produce the different books of the Bible. The end result is that we have the exact message God meant to give us.

“Inspired” Means the Bible Is True

Since people wrote the Bible and people can have wrong ideas, does this mean parts of the Bible could be wrong? No, it doesn’t. If the ultimate source of Scripture is God Himself, then the Bible can’t be wrong in its assertions. That doesn’t mean people don’t sometimes misunderstand what is written. But since the Bible comes from God, we can be assured that it “is true and reliable in all the matters it addresses” (Article XI, *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* © 1978 International Council on Biblical Inerrancy).

The Bible, then, is all of what God wanted to reveal to us. It should teach us, guide us, correct our errors, and train us up to become men and women pleasing to God.

Tony's Frustration: How Can the Bible Be Written by God?

Tony grew up in church and heard Bible stories since before he could read. As a teen, Tony became skeptical about the Bible. "How can the Bible be written by God? It's a good book. But like any other book, wasn't it written by people?"

Church members who heard Tony's doubts expressed their frustration with him. "The Bible is God's Word because it says it's God's Word," they would answer impatiently. Tony could not accept this reasoning. After all, anyone could write a book that said, "This book is from God." Where is the evidence that the Bible is God's Word? Tony did not require scientifically exact proof that the Bible is really God's Word; he simply desired to understand how Scripture could be from God.

In college Tony ran into a campus minister named Alan who listened to his frustration and took the time to talk through the issues. Over coffee, Alan explained that the Bible was indeed written by men, but that these men were led by God's Spirit (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pt 1:21). They also saw that features such as fulfilled prophecy demonstrated God's authorship. With Alan's help, Tony came to believe that the Bible was physically written by men whose thoughts and words were ultimately directed by God. Thus the Bible is both human and divine in origin.

Now a youth pastor himself, Tony helps students find answers to important questions about the Bible.

THE "FAITHFUL SAYINGS" IN THE PASTORAL EPISTLES • 2:11-13

Paul references five "faithful sayings" in his letters to young pastors (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus).

Each one emphasizes a key truth of the Christian life and its authority for the believer.

- "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15).
- "If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work" (1 Tim. 3:1).
- "For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8).
- "For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself" (2 Tim. 2:11-13).
- "But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:4-7).

2 TIMOTHY 3:3

FOR REFLECTION Why We Need the Word • 3:16, 17

The Bible is good for all things—for saving us, teaching us, correcting us, restoring us, and training us—because it is from God. As the inspiration of God, the Scriptures are nothing less than His very breath. God's Spirit so infused and influenced the biblical writers that they recorded God's own words. This does not negate the fact that human authors wrote Scripture. They often researched or interviewed eyewitnesses (Luke 1:1-4). We can even distinguish the styles and personalities of different authors, such as Paul and John. Still, what they wrote was nothing less than the very words of God.

Just as Jesus was fully man and fully God, the Bible is both a divine and human book. With Almighty God as its Originator, it is completely true, without error in its original form, and thoroughly trustworthy.

2 TIMOTHY 1:16

FOR REFLECTION Contagious Faith • 1:1-5

Some believers have dramatic testimonies of coming to faith in extraordinary circumstances, like Paul. But there is also beauty in the testimonies of those who were raised in believing homes and received Christ in their youth. Timothy was one such person.

Timothy's parents had what we might call a spiritually mixed marriage—his father was an unbelieving Gentile and his mother a Jewish believer (Acts 16:1). Paul likely led Timothy's mother and grandmother to faith in Christ (1:5), meaning that these two women instructed Timothy in the Scriptures from a young age (3:14, 15). The result: a young man ready, willing, and able to follow Jesus and to serve His people. What kind of faith gets transferred from one generation to the next? What characteristics will most likely be "caught" by succeeding generations?

- **Authentic Faith.** A faith that is consistent, that is walked out day by day and that is without hypocrisy (James 3:17) draws people to it. Children and grandchildren are the first to see us as we really are. In spite of our imperfections, are we living the faith that we claim to believe?
- **Abiding Faith.** That genuine faith "dwelt first" in Timothy's grandmother and then his mother is significant (1:5). *Dwelt* means "abided or lived in." In other words, this kind of faith has staying power; it is permanent (1:14; Col. 3:1-6). Eunice's and Lois' faith inhabited their life (as did Paul's); it was ever-present in them in good times and bad. Abiding faith is especially evident in troubled times. How the adults in a family respond to adversity reveals to the next generation whether the faith that is proclaimed in one's home really works.
- **Aroused Faith.** This is a faith that can't keep quiet; it is so moved by the Lord's work that it must tell others what God has done. An aroused faith will be shared even with the youngest of children (3:14, 15), and this helps mold them as they grow up.
- **Absolute Faith.** Paul speaks of "the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus" (1:1). The faith that is centered in Christ and fully entrusted to Him will not only last into eternity but is absolutely unwavering in this life. This kind of faith understands Christ's future promises to be fact—and lives like it.

God does not guarantee that Christian parents will raise godly sons and daughters—we know families where this is not the case. But if our parents raised us in the faith, we should thank God for them—and thank them, if we can. And if we have children of our own, let us ask God for the grace to raise them as Timothy's mother and grandmother raised him.

TEACHINGPOINTS

Calling All Servants! 2

According to Paul, the job expects

- 1. Teacher, faithfully transmits
- 2. Soldier, enduring difficult
- 3. Athlete, training yourself
- 4. Farmer, diligently laboring
- 5. Worker, rigorously giving
- 6. Vessel in God's house, ready

These are the disciplines that

Paul knew of what he spoke to his own countrymen, and even at the time he was imprisoned and committed to Jesus—because

We should all strive for such a common denominator in all things: even progress in the faith, it will be the true of Jesus' life (Phil. 2:9) and

There are no crowns without suffering in prison, and all of us in our work through suffering.

Paul would say to Timothy and to us: "If you are to have a life that comes through death. And to

Picture This

Finishing Work

Paul uses the images of a runner, a soldier, an athlete, a farmer, a worker, and a vessel. However, Paul's confidence is in the Greek—and very telling, it is in his own accomplishments but in his faith. As a successor to Paul's past as well as godly assurance, Paul said to his protégé, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have remained faithful, and no one has taken away my crown. I will receive the crown of life because I have remained faithful," Paul said to his protégé, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have remained faithful, and no one has taken away my crown. I will receive the crown of life because I have remained faithful, and no one has taken away my crown."

As the elderly apostle prepares to depart, Paul exhorts Timothy not to drop it. Timothy was to preach that Word until his dying day.

To fight intensely, to endure hardship, to guard faithfully—these are the disciplines that Paul had in mind when he wrote to Timothy. Mission and someday finish work.