

# Studies in 2 Timothy

## Leaders Guide



*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 Timothy 2:2*

# Table of contents

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Leaders guide	<b>1</b>	<b>Study 1</b> The charge to guard the Gospel	<b>36</b>	Participants guide
	<b>9</b>	<b>Study 2</b> The charge to suffer for the Gospel	<b>39</b>	
	<b>17</b>	<b>Study 3</b> The charge to develop character in keeping with the Gospel	<b>41</b>	
	<b>23</b>	<b>Study 4</b> The charge to continue in the Gospel	<b>43</b>	
	<b>29</b>	<b>Study 5</b> The charge to preach the Gospel	<b>45</b>	

# 2 Timothy

## Introduction

Paul's second epistle to Timothy is probably the last letter he wrote. He is aged and in prison as he writes.

Unlike the fairly pleasant imprisonment he experienced at the end of Acts, this time he is incarcerated in a "dismal underground dungeon with a hole in the ceiling for light and air."<sup>1</sup> He is in chains (1:16; 2:9) and suffering deeply from loneliness (4:9-13). He expects to be executed shortly (4:6-8). These realities make this one of Paul's most deeply moving and human letters.

As difficult as things are for Paul, his mind remains focused on the spread of the gospel and the glory of God. Knowing how quickly our own thoughts to turn inward when we are suffering, one cannot help but be amazed by Paul and attracted to his character. His life and thoughts are dominated by his love for God. In particular, his concern is for the future of the church. "His own apostolic labors are over... But now he must make provision for the faith after he has gone, and especially for its transmission (uncontaminated, unalloyed) to future generations. So he sends Timothy this most solemn charge. He is to preserve what he has received, at whatever cost, and to hand it on to faithful men who in their turn will be able to teach others also (2:2)."<sup>2</sup>

It is easy to see why a study of this letter is so relevant for those in leadership. We want to impart leadership qualities to those who are "passionate for God and compassionate toward people" so that, through their leadership, others may develop those same characteristics and perhaps become leaders also. Of course, none of us is as passionate or compassionate as we would like to be. But by studying this very personal letter, our hope is that Paul's words, which embody those attributes, will penetrate our hearts and make us more like him in our passion for God and compassion for others.

# 2 Timothy

## The charge to guard the Gospel

### Study 1 | 2 Timothy 1:1-18

1. Name one person who has influenced your life significantly. In what way did this person impact you?

#### READ 2 Timothy 1:1-18

2. How does Paul identify himself at the beginning of this letter? Why is such self-knowledge important? How did his understanding of his role affect the way he lived?
3. How has your self-understanding affected the way you live and the choices you make?
4. Looking at this first chapter, what observations can you make about Timothy and Paul? How would you describe their relationship? How can we pursue relationships similar to theirs in the church?



## MAIN POINTS

Aware that he will soon die, Paul is making provisions for the gospel message to be kept pure. In a number of ways he seeks to communicate to Timothy that he must not allow the message of the gospel to be distorted or diluted. He must not let timidity, shame, or suffering affect the way he communicates the gospel. Instead, he must diligently guard and propagate the only message capable of giving life.

## COMMENTARY ON THE PASSAGE AND NOTES ON THE QUESTIONS

1. Most studies are best begun with an “approach” question, meant to be asked before the passage is read. Its primary purpose is to get people warmed up and talking before delving into the passage. A free flow of conversation should be encouraged.

2. Paul identifies himself as “an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus” (v.1, NIV). This tells us that he has a God-centered, gospel-centered view of himself. He allows God to define him and he lives out that definition.

He first says he is “an apostle.” The term “apostle” in the Bible is a technical one. It refers only to a select group of people who have (1) seen the risen Jesus and (2) are specially sent out (“apostle” means “sent one”) by Jesus to represent him and teach in his name. They are distinct from the rest of Christ’s followers. Paul understands the gifts and calling God has given him. This self-understanding determines his choices, decisions, and the use of his time. It is the basis for how and where he invests himself.

Second, he is an apostle “by the will of God.” Paul did not designate himself an apostle, nor had any other human being. He was an apostle because God chose him to be one. Armed with that truth, Paul was capable of persevering in the tasks to which God called him, regardless of the obstacles and discouragements that came his way. Paul was sure that a certain kind of authority had been given to him by the Creator of the universe and the Redeemer of the world. He was, therefore, able to exercise this authority with confidence.

Third, he was an apostle “according to the promise of life.” This is one way of describing the gospel, which gives life here and in the hereafter. Paul has been called to duties that are duties of joy because he proclaims the “life” he now possesses. Paul is still obviously thrilled by the truth of the gospel. Even in prison, joy can be discerned in his life.

3. This very practical question gives you as a leader the opportunity to model to your group how your sense of giftedness and the call of God on your life have determined how you think, act, and make decisions. It gives group members the opportunity to reflect on whether they are allowing themselves to be controlled by their sense of God's calling on their lives; it calls them to consider how the realities of their giftedness and call should further inform and transform their lives. It would be very appropriate to give special attention to the group members' sense of calling and how that will affect their lives.

4. The following things can be noted about Timothy: (1) He was brought up in a godly home. The faith was passed on to him in part by his mother and grandmother. (2) He apparently had gifts in teaching and preaching. The laying on of hands was used by the church to set an individual apart to gospel ministry. (3) He was a timid individual, perhaps even an introvert, more passive than proactive. There is some indication that this timidity was severe enough to limit the way he used his gifts, so that they lost some of their sharpness. As they sometimes say, "If you don't use it, you lose it." Therefore, Paul tells him to "kindle" or "fan into flame" his gifts.

About Paul we learn the following: (1) He was an apostle. (2) He had a very powerful understanding that his apostleship came from God, which made him exceedingly bold. He was not afraid to exhort people. (3) He was feeling deserted and somewhat lonely.

The relationship between Paul and Timothy was apparently warm and genuine. Though Paul was older than Timothy and in a position of authority over him, theirs was a relationship of mutual affection. Paul calls Timothy "my dear son" (v. 2). Timothy had wept at their last goodbye and Paul longs to see him now. He anticipates that the moment will be filled with joy. Relationships with this kind of emotional intensity often exist only when there has been significant vulnerability and people have shared in accomplishing some task together.

The importance of relationships in the church can hardly be overemphasized. In his book on cell ministry, *The Coming Church Revolution*, Carl George writes, "In the church of the future, pastors will focus on developing people capable of relational ministry. Cell leaders will focus on relationships more than meetings, and every small group will deeply value nurture and one-to-another, peer-based caring... Relationship-based leadership gathers people and sees that they receive care."<sup>3</sup>



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- 8. Paul brings up the issue of shame on four occasions in this chapter (vv. 8, 12, 16). What are the occasions and causes for shame? Why does Paul give so much attention to this topic?**

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<sup>1</sup> William Hendriksen, *The Epistles to Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1957), p. 234.

<sup>2</sup> John R. W. Stott, *Guard the Gospel: The Message of 2 Timothy* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1973), p. 13.