

DEEP FAITH

a Series on the Book of Timothy



CROSSWALK

DEEP FAITH

July 3 - August 27

What is faith? Websters defines faith as: complete trust or confidence in someone or something.

There are all sorts of things we put our faith in on a regular basis, and many of those things we take for granted. For example, we have faith that the clothes we put on today won't disintegrate during our lunch meeting with the boss. We have faith that our phone will receive important calls or alert us to crucial texts. We don't have to think about these things, we just have faith. But to put our faith in God takes more intentionality. It takes our constant choice to trust in God and His promises, His narrative, His faithfulness, instead of our own.

As is so often said, faith is caught as much as it is taught, which means we need each other to deepen our faith as we practice that choice together. We have so much to learn from each other, just as Timothy learned from Paul.

Timothy was a young man who the apostle Paul mentored for years. Paul thought so much of Timothy that he often referred to him as a son (1 Corinthians 4: 17, Philippians 2:22, 1 Timothy 1: 1, Philippians 2:22). This son was not only dearly loved by Paul, but Paul poured everything he had into helping Timothy deepen his own faith to withstand whatever challenges come his way. Of course, Timothy was also Paul's choice to take over for Paul after Paul was gone, and these two letters are his last words to his protege. Prior to the writing of these letters, Paul had sent Timothy to help the church in Ephesus who was facing false doctrines and dangerous teachers. 1 Timothy was most likely written from Macedonia, while 2 Timothy was written from prison not long before Paul was killed.

Through these letters, Paul not only helps Timothy think through challenges he's facing with the church in Ephesus and how to best lead, but ultimately to help Timothy keep up the "good fight of faith." Through these letters we can learn a lot about how to deepen our own faith as well.

"The purpose of my instruction is that all believers would be filled with love that comes from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and genuine faith." (1 Timothy 1:5 NLT)

Blessings,
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WEEK 1

IN SEARCH
OF DEEP
FAITH

Day 1

1 Timothy 1: 1-2

1 This letter is from Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, appointed by the command of God our Savior and Christ Jesus, who gives us hope. 2 I am writing to Timothy, my true son in the faith. May God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord give you grace, mercy, and peace.

I don't know where I, or my faith journey, would be today if it weren't for the mentors in my life. These people, some chosen for me and some chosen by me, helped me learn more about myself and the world around me. I learned from them in a variety of ways; from their intentional instruction in my life, from observing how they lived their lives and the choices they made, and from the permission I gave them to speak truth into my life. Through their lessons, I was able to become more grounded in who God created me to be and what God created me to do. Our relationships and time together, whether in the past or still happening today, continue to guide my career choices, strengthen my relationships, and build a deep faith in me.

Mentors are critical, personally and professionally. And as I stated above, some mentors are chosen for us (parents, teachers, etc...), while others we get to choose. Either way, a mentor is an experienced and trusted adviser.

Paul opens his letter in traditional fashion; by stating who he is (an apostle of Christ Jesus) and why he is (by the command of God). Though Paul does this in part to establish his authority in the Jesus movement, he is also connecting us with what business leaders would call his “why statement.” Paul exists by Jesus, for Jesus.

Then Paul introduces us to the object of his letter, Timothy, “My true son in the faith.”

We first met Timothy in the book of Acts, when Paul and Silas recruit him for one of their missionary journeys (Acts 16: 1-5). Scholars believe that when they first met, Paul was in his late thirties to early forties, and Timothy was in his late teens to early twenties. Maybe the age difference influenced their relation-

ship, but whatever the case, there is no doubt that Timothy is special to Paul. Paul refers to Timothy in many of his letters, always fondly, and he even tells the church in Philippi, "I have no one else like Timothy." (Philippians 2: 20).

Though Paul is clearly writing this letter to Timothy, his intent goes beyond Timothy to offering instructions for the growing church throughout the world. Timothy must have opened the letter with great anticipation, anxious to hear from his beloved mentor and receive more instruction for his current post. Timothy knew Paul well, so he knew what to expect in the coming words. He knew he would be encouraged, challenged, and inspired. So will we.

Who are some of the people who have mentored you in your life?

What were some of the qualities the mentors you chose, and/or most admired?

Do you have anyone that you are mentoring currently?
If not, pray for God to reveal someone in your circle
that you could help guide in some aspect of life/faith.

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Day 2

1 Timothy 1: 3-4

3 When I left for Macedonia, I urged you to stay there in Ephesus and stop those whose teaching is contrary to the truth. 4 Don't let them waste their time in endless discussion of myths and spiritual pedigrees. These things only lead to meaningless speculations, which don't help people live a life of faith in God.

A few years ago, in a moment of weakness, I accepted a dare from college students I worked with that involved jumping out of a perfectly good airplane in flight.

As you can imagine, there are a lot of instructions one has to endure before getting to jump out of an airplane. In fact, the instructions took over an hour, while the jump itself lasted approximately 5 minutes (50 seconds of free fall followed by 4 minutes of parachute time). But let me tell you, when you're about to jump out of an airplane and plummet to the earth, you'll listen to whatever instructions are necessary.

But had the instructors started to talk about the airplane itself, how they prep to take off, what all the instruments on the panel in front of them mean, and what they have to do in the event of an emergency, I wouldn't have been nearly as interested. Not because those things aren't important, they just weren't important to me. All I needed to know at that moment was how to fall right so that I could avoid death.

At the church of Ephesus, as I'm sure was happening in other churches as well, there were those who were teaching things that didn't matter to the gospel story. The Greek word used for "teaching is contrary to the truth," (heterodidaskaleo - say that three times fast) can also mean, "teaching something beyond what is necessary." Maybe they were adding things to the gospel that didn't belong, or maybe they were spending way more time on details that didn't matter. Either way, what they were teaching was distracting from the teaching that mattered most to live a life of faith - the Jesus story. And though Paul spoke and taught about many things throughout all of his letters, it was always clear what mattered most. He states that emphatically in his first letter to the Corinthians,

"For I decided that while I was with you I would forget everything except Jesus Christ, the one who was crucified."

Anything other than Jesus Christ and Him crucified, is not essential. Anything else, according to Paul, can be a waste of time. Until you clear on and accept Jesus Christ and him crucified, everything else is a distraction. Like the old hymn goes, "My hope is built on nothing less, than Jesus' blood and righteousness... on Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand."

In the coming passages, Paul will continue to make this clear; Jesus is first, last, and all the in-between. All that we talk about, teach about, worship, ought to have Jesus central and foremost, or else we're missing the point.

What kinds of practices and teaching helps you "live a life of faith in God"?

What kinds of things distract you from living that life?

What might be something today that you need to let go of so that you can focus more on "Jesus Christ, the one who was crucified"?

Day 3

1 Timothy 1:

5 The purpose of my instruction is that all believers would be filled with love that comes from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and genuine faith. 6 But some people have missed this whole point. They have turned away from these things and spend their time in meaningless discussions. 7 They want to be known as teachers of the law of Moses, but they don't know what they are talking about, even though they speak so confidently.

Don't you love it when a teacher or speaker tells you up front what the purpose of their message is? It helps frame the rest of the conversation, and informs you on what to expect.

This wasn't always Jesus' approach while He was on earth. Of course, Jesus had a reason to teach the way that He did, and His teaching style and message was so powerful and transcendent that we're still wrestling with it today. But for the disciples, He often left them wondering what in the world He was talking about, mainly because His paradigm was different than theirs. However, on the night before his arrest, all that changed. In fact, He got so direct with the disciples that they exclaimed, "At last you are speaking figuratively. Now we understand that you know everything, and there's no need to question you. From this we believe that you came from God."

As Paul writes to Timothy, however, there are all sorts of opposing philosophies, lifestyles, and religious beliefs flying around. And some of those teachings are mixed with half-truths and old paradigms (for example: Jesus is our new covenant, and the law, which we'll see more about tomorrow, is put into a new light). So it's important for Paul to be clear.

And what is his purpose? That all the believers would be filled with love that springs from our heart, our conscience, and our faith. What does Paul mean by mentioning these three objects of a person's experience? He means that the gospel he teaches is meant to affect the whole life. It's not a checklist of tasks, it's not something we turn on or off when it's convenient, and it's not something we practice an hour a week when we gather. The gospel transforms us from the

inside out. As Paul wrote, "Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!"

In Jesus' words, His life and His teachings are "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." If anything we are taught is elevated to the same level of Jesus, or heaven forbid, above Jesus, it is wrong. And for Paul, as was for Jesus, there is no in-between. The gospel is either right or it is wrong, period. This is a hard teaching for us to accept in a world that so often drifts from one new idea to the next, and that often resists absolutes.

Paul's invitation to follow Jesus and believe this gospel, however, isn't to limit us or create followers that all look and act the same. Its purpose is to free us into a new way of living that fills us with abundant life as we are more connected to the author of it.

What do you experience as some of the "meaningless discussions" that go on in our world today, especially within the church?

As you look over the course of your life, what is different about your life with Jesus that wasn't there in your life without Jesus?

This love that Paul speaks of, with a pure heart, a clear conscience, and a genuine faith, how do we receive and grow in this type of love?

1 Timothy 1: 8-11

8 We know that the law is good when used correctly. 9 For the law was not intended for people who do what is right. It is for people who are lawless and rebellious, who are ungodly and sinful, who consider nothing sacred and defile what is holy, who kill their father or mother or commit other murders. 10 The law is for people who are sexually immoral, or who practice homosexuality, or are slave traders, liars, promise breakers, or who do anything else that contradicts the wholesome teaching 11 that comes from the glorious Good News entrusted to me by our blessed God.

I have to admit, I'm a list person. On most days, I open my "Notes" app on my phone, head to my daily "To Do's," and add or subtract for the day as needed. At the end of the day, there is nothing quite like checking off tasks and seeing what all you accomplished. However, at the same time, there are few things more depressing to me at times than looking over that list and realizing that I hardly got anything done that day.

The passage for today includes a list; a list that includes a couple of trigger words for us today that if we're not careful, can distract us from the point of the passage.

Among the Jews, Paul was addressing the many that were burdening people with a gospel that included accepting Jesus AND following the letter of the law as a means to salvation. Paul clearly speaks to the fact that it is belief in Jesus alone that saves, a "Jesus All" not a "Jesus And" gospel, but Paul doesn't discount the law. In fact, Paul says that the law is actually good when used correctly. He unpacks this more in his letter to the Romans when he says, "it was the law that showed me my sin." He actually says that "the law is holy, and its commands are holy and right and good." (Romans 7: 7, 12)

What's interesting though is that the list that Paul gives is actually an echo of the ten commandments. So maybe instead of just looking at this as a list of bad things, getting lost in judgment of ourselves and others, it would be better to frame the commandments and law of God in the context of deepening our faith

in light of the work of Jesus.

Several years ago I was having dinner with a prominent leader in the Adventist Church. As we were talking, he said to me, "Do you know what is the most beautiful passage about love in the Bible other than 1 Corinthians 13?" I racked my brain but knew he was leading me in a direction so I just said, "No, what?" Without hesitating he said, "the 10 commandments." My literal response was, "Uh, what?"

To me, the 10 commandments had always been a checklist of do's and don'ts, but my friend was challenging my previous understanding.

He went on to say, "The commandments, God's law, is really just a description of what it looks like to be in love. When you love someone, you put them first, you honor them, their name is special to you, you spend time with them, you honor their parents, and so on."

I walked away from that conversation on a new journey to see God's law as less of a checklist of rights and wrongs, and more of a way of life that honors God and builds others up. That, as we'll continue to see in Paul's letter to Timothy, is the point. Faith is about learning to trust in God to have your best interest at heart. To trust that He is who He said He is, and will do what He said He will do. To trust that His way of living life is to our benefit, and the benefit of those around us.

How were the 10 commandments first taught to you and what has your understanding and relationship to them been over the years?

Is the idea of God's law as a description of how we love Him and others new to you? If so, how might that change how you approach God's law and how you treat others?

If faith is really about trusting in God and His teachings and work, what area of your life do you need to trust Him with more today?

Day 5

1 Timothy 1: 12-17

12 I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength to do his work. He considered me trustworthy and appointed me to serve him, 13 even though I used to blaspheme the name of Christ. In my insolence, I persecuted his people. But God had mercy on me because I did it in ignorance and unbelief. 14 Oh, how generous and gracious our Lord was! He filled me with the faith and love that come from Christ Jesus. 15 This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”—and I am the worst of them all. 16 But God had mercy on me so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst sinners. Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in him and receive eternal life. 17 All honor and glory to God forever and ever! He is the eternal King, the unseen one who never dies; he alone is God. Amen.

Paul now presents himself as an example of what can happen with a life surrendered to Christ. Though he talks about teachers who distract from the gospel, Paul says that he used to be one of them. Though he gives a list of “sins,” he identifies himself as “the worst of them all.” This, by the way, is a great way to keep from judging others. When we recognize that we need Jesus as much as anyone else, we step down from the self-righteous ladder so many try to climb, and we recognize that we are just like everyone else. It puts us on the same level, like our Savior before us, who came down to this earth to take on our flesh and walk among us.

And Paul also echoes and summarizes an important quote from Jesus when he says, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Remember when Jesus said, “God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.” (John 3: 17) Recognizing that God is actually in the business of saving us, not destroying us, is critical to understand God as a God of love (1 John 4: 8).

I grew up, largely, with the idea that it would be difficult to get into heaven because God would only accept the best of the best. I worked hard to appease God, and felt like I disappointed Him on a regular basis.

But when I realized that God actually wanted to save me, that the reason Jesus endured the cross was for the joy set before Him (and that joy is you and me), then my whole perspective on God and Scripture changed. Instead of seeing Scripture as a set of rules to follow, I began to see Scripture as revealing a God worthy of worship and adoration.

Why does God have “great patience with even the worst sinners”? Why is He “slow to anger and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness?” Because, as Paul will tell us soon, God actually “wants everyone to be saved.” (1 Timothy 2: 6)

This gospel truth, brought through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, is life-changing. Paul went from being a killer of Christians, to a follower of Christ; from a teacher of the law who lived with strict adherence, to a lover of Jesus who learned to live freely and lightly in the unforced rhythms of God’s grace. I pray that you and I can lean into this type of faith, this type of life, and invite others into the joy of deep faith.

In general terms, what was your life like before Christ and an understanding of His love?
Do you live with the understanding that God is trying to save us all, or are you still trying to prove to Him that you’re worth saving?
How could you seek today to be more patient with those around you who have yet to know and experience the love of Christ?

Day 6

1 Timothy 1: 18-20

18 Timothy, my son, here are my instructions for you, based on the prophetic words spoken about you earlier. May they help you fight well in the Lord's battles. 19 Cling to your faith in Christ, and keep your conscience clear. For some people have deliberately violated their consciences; as a result, their faith has been shipwrecked. 20 Hymenaeus and Alexander are two examples. I threw them out and handed them over to Satan so they might learn not to blaspheme God.

The summer of one of my Jr High years, I was able to go for my first time to summer camp. Though I had never been, I went with friends who had, and who could help me navigate this new experience, from cafeteria food, to the nervous exchange of glances from the boys cabins to the girls cabins, and so on.

We had to choose one major activity for the week, and my friends and I had chosen sailing. I'm not really sure why. We all liked the water and wanted to spend more time in it, but none of us had sailed or really spent any time in a boat other than a canoe.

On my first day, after some general instructions from our teacher, four of us, two boys and two girls, climbed onto a catamaran and were pushed off from the dock to sail the open seas (ok, not seas, but for 12 year olds, that lake seemed like one).

Within 15 minutes, the wind that had guided our sail, stopped, and we found ourselves floating in the middle of the lake. We waited and waited for the wind to pick back up, but either we didn't know how to catch it or it never came. After about 45 minutes of drifting, floating, going nowhere fast, the instructor jumped into a ski boat to come out and tow us back to the dock. I remember feeling embarrassed that we couldn't master the wind and the sea that day.

In the ancient world, your conscience was your compass that directed you to what was good, or not good, to do. Without a good conscience, or when you ignored your conscience, you either ended up hurting other people or drifting aimless, going nowhere fast.

In the passage for today, Paul again calls out to his son in the faith, and encourages him to "fight well" as you "cling to your faith in Christ." He knew that the world was full of people who could care less about living well and who they hurt along the way, and he wanted Timothy to continue to grow his faith (i.e. his trust) in Jesus so that he could catch the wind of the Holy Spirit and follow wherever He leads.

Paul gives two examples of those that "deliberately violated their conscience." Hymenaeus and Alexander. Because they wouldn't listen to reason and continued to hurt themselves or others by ignoring their conscience and the teachings of the church, Paul "handed them over" to Satan, which really means, he let them suffer the consequences of their choices (i.e. "shipwrecked") But notice that Paul doesn't do this out of anger or spite. He does it in hopes that they will finally turn and receive the all-encompassing, life changing message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

According to Paul, we must be about the business of setting our compasses on Jesus, the "champion who initiates and perfects our faith" (Hebrews 12: 2). And once we're onboard, we can seek to help others find their true north.

What kind of practices help you center your heart and mind on Jesus?

When you know you're off course, what do you do to help recorrect your path?

Is it possible to help others who are off course find their way back without sounding condemnatory? If so, how?

INTRODUCTION

The following questions are a guide to help families with children understand God and discover His love through- out the series. You may think of other ideas that fit the needs of your family.

Read 1 Timothy 1:5, 15-17 together with your family.

As you read these texts, think about how the faith Paul and Timothy must have had. How do you think that influenced their lives?

Why does the writer say he is giving his instructions?
Why did Christ come into this world?

The writer says that God can use him as an example of his patience, do you think God can use you as an example? Why or why not?

INTRODUCTION

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion. Feel free to add or subtract or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

OPEN

Have you ever been in disagreement with someone to the point where it hurt you and the other person? Take some time to reflect on a time like this.

HEAD

Paul explains the reason he is writing to Timothy in the opening four verses of this book. Evidently, there are people within Timothy's community that are facing different beliefs, truths, and myths that are contrary to the Gospel. Paul's reason for writing is twofold. First, he is writing to dispel any false gospels and point them to the real gospel of Jesus. Second, he is wanting people to grow in their faith in God. Think of these questions as you read:

Is Paul interested in speculations about God or truth about God?

What is the result of Paul's instruction to Timothy and the community?

Is the goal of faith to look the part of a believer or be a believer?

HEART

Paul is clear in what a life with Jesus should entail. A life with Jesus does include behavior change - he believes that there is a truth that we are called to live in. Yet, it's important to understand the result of this truth in our life. In verse 5 Paul explains that the result is a pure heart, clear conscience, and genuine faith. Another way to put this is that a life in truth is a good life. God has for us a good life, one in which we all desire deep within us.

HANDS

This changes the way that we live. Pursuing after God and his life ceases to be about simply following rules. Pursuing a life with Jesus becomes about sitting in the grace and truth that we were designed for. We become the humans we were designed to be when we live within the truth that we were designed for. As people of the truth, may we live in the fullness that is found in a life with Jesus.

LIVING WORDS for YOUR WEEK

“The purpose of my instruction is that all believers would be filled with love that comes from a pure heart, clear conscience, and genuine faith.”

1 Timothy 1:5

[illegible]

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

WEEK 2

IN SEARCH
OF DEEP
CONNECTIONS

Day 8

1 Timothy 2: 1-2

1 I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them. 2 Pray this way for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity.

Since the focus of our time in the books of 1 and 2 Timothy is on deepening our faith, and since in both today's culture as well as in biblical times the words faith and trust are almost synonymous (*pistis* in the Greek can be translated as faith, trust, belief, or confidence), I did a Google search to find out the most common ways people build trust in a relationship.

At the top of almost every list, from Forbes to Psychology Today to Women's and Men's health, was communication. If we want to build trust in another person, we have to communicate, get to know them, and allow them to get to know us.

That, at its core, is what prayer is. It is a communication tool that allows us to learn more about God, share our inmost thoughts and feelings with Him (though He knows them already), and work on deepening our faith in Him through our connection to Him.

And though prayer is so central to building a deep faith, people have wrestled over the years with what prayer is and isn't, how to pray and how not to pray, and so on.

To think that in one week we could answer all the questions we have about faith is unrealistic, but hopefully we can learn a little more about it so that we can grow our prayer life while at the same time, build our faith and trust in God.

So with that said, Paul starts today's passage off by encouraging us to pray for all people, especially to pray over leaders and those with authority to direct our daily lives. The word Paul uses is "intercession." In the Greek, intercession refers to petitions we make to God on behalf of others with the expressed purpose of aligning all of us with God's will.

And what, ultimately, is God's will for our lives? As Paul writes elsewhere, "Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ." In other words, God's will is for us to be in relationship to Him. Everything else comes from that relationship. Or as Jesus said, "Seek the kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need."

Prayer is about communication that leads to connection. It is a two-way street. Sometimes we speak, sometimes we listen, but the journey leads us to not only learn more about God, but to align more with His will for our lives and our world. Aside from recognizing that our foundation in faith must be Jesus (1 Timothy chapter 1), prayer is our next essential building block and avenue to a deeper faith.

When you pray, what do you imagine? In other words, who or what are you praying to as you pray? What is one of your most meaningful ways you pray? What is challenging to you about prayer and what questions do you have concerning it?

[illegible]

1 Timothy 2: 3-4

3 This is good and pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth.

It was during a particularly difficult time in my life, when a mentor of mine encouraged me to take some time “in the wilderness.” To me, that meant getting away from all the distractions of life to sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to what He needed to say to me (listening is one of the most important aspects of prayer).

I decided to find a spot near a creek, away from civilization, and camp for a few days. Other than my camping gear, I only took my Bible, my journal, and a device to play music at times because that is one of the ways I connect most with God.

If I’m honest, before I went I was scared. Not about camping, I love being in the outdoors. No, I was scared that I would put all this work into hearing from God, but maybe I’d do it wrong and come home no better than when I had left. My mentor tried to help walk me through that fear, but I left with it fully intact.

For the first couple of days, I wrestled. I cried out to God about my struggles. I shared my frustrations with Him about my life and calling. I blamed Him for being what felt like absent in my life, and after two days, I had nothing left to say. I was “prayed out.”

Then I climbed a hill and sat down, journal in hand, but I was silent. I don’t know how much time passed, but at some point I realized I had a phrase repeating in my mind, “you are my son, whom I love, and with whom I am well pleased.” After a while, I wrote those words down on a blank page in my journal, and it seemed like this message was what God wanted me to hear all along. I went down the mountain with a peace in my heart and a sense that God was with me, even in the times when it didn’t feel like it.

However, two days later I was back at work and all my anxieties and fears and struggles came rushing back. It felt like my wilderness time had never happened, or at least its effects evaporated all too quickly.

God felt absent once again.

I called my mentor and asked him to come and pray over me, but I didn’t tell him a thing about my trip.

He came to my office, took my hands in his, and prayed, interceding on my behalf to God. He ended his prayer with these words, “Abba, remind Paddy that he is your son, whom you love, and with whom you are well pleased.” Tears filled my eyes as that prayer reminded me then, as it does to this day, that not only is God with me whether I feel His presence or not, but that He loves me and is pleased with me.

That is my biggest hope for our communities of faith. That through prayer and intercession, we would come to hear God whisper in our ears that we are His children, whom He loves, and with whom He is well pleased.

Have you ever had a moment where you felt God speak to you, whether in prayer, through a song, or through another person? What was His message? If you could hear one thing from Him right now, what would you want that to be?

Sometimes we have to say everything on our hearts before we begin to listen. Pour out your heart to God, then try to sit still, in silence, asking Him to reveal what He needs you to hear today.

Day 10

1 Timothy 2: 5-7

5 For, There is one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity—the man Christ Jesus. 6 He gave his life to purchase freedom for everyone. This is the message God gave to the world at just the right time. 7 And I have been chosen as a preacher and apostle to teach the Gentiles this message about faith and truth. I'm not exaggerating—just telling the truth.

In this passage, Paul connects with a few passages that he has written before:

“For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people’s sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation.” (2 Corinthians 5: 19)

“When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners.” (Romans 5: 6)

In a world full of other religions and a pantheon of gods, Paul regularly speaks about and celebrates the one true God who sought to save the human race through Jesus, the chosen one (Christ in Greek). He does this not to prove a point, or to somehow come across as superior to anyone else. He does this because he knows, and has experienced, that only this God offers true freedom and salvation.

Of course, Paul also speaks about his own calling, which was controversial to the devout Jews of his time, especially those he used to work with and for before he met Christ. Paul's call was to take this teaching beyond the walls of Jerusalem and Israel, to all of the nations. No longer was God the God of just Israel, and His message was no longer for a select few. Through Christ, at just the right time, the gospel is now to be spread to the ends of the earth.

A God for everyone was a new concept in their time. To them, gods were for specific regions and/or people, with specific powers. But Yahweh, the God we see more clearly in and through Jesus of Nazareth, was for all people in all areas and was full of all powers needed for protection and salvation. This was revolutionary news.

And not only is this God for everyone, He is actively seeking to reconcile all of creation to Himself. As He does, in light of prayer, we are told by Paul elsewhere that when we pray, the Holy Spirit “prays for us with groaning that cannot be expressed in words.” (Romans 8: 26) And if you read further on in that same chapter of Romans, you’ll find that Jesus prays for us as well. That’s two out of the three members of the Godhead that are praying for us, and even praying for us when we don’t know what or how to pray. That’s an amazing God, accessible to everyone, for everyone.

Maybe knowing all the above can help us pray, because it is easier to talk to and listen to someone who you know is on your side.

What does it mean to you to know that Jesus and the Holy Spirit pray to God for you?

Do you know that God is on your side? If so, how does that make praying to Him any easier? Who might God be calling you to share this news about Him with this week? Maybe you can simply start by praying for them, and praying for an opportunity to share.

[illegible]

Day 11

1 Timothy 2: 8

8 In every place of worship, I want men to pray with holy hands lifted up to God, free from anger and controversy.

Now I'm going to warn you; this next passage, today's and the rest of chapter 2, has been one of the most controversial passages in the context of the western world. It has been used to argue against women's ordination, and to support the idea of male headship theology. Though we could spend an entire series on this passage, we won't. Nor will we answer all the questions that countless scholars have argued about over the years.

What we will do is try to look at the principles found in this passage as they apply to Paul's ultimate goal through this letter, which is to strengthen Timothy's faith and instruct him, and the believers, in how to live a life of faith (1 Timothy 1: 4). We will also look at the historical context to try to help along the way.

First of all, it's important to note that what Paul is ultimately teaching about in chapter 2 is about prayer, as well as discipleship and worship. There may be different aspects for each gender to focus on, but that is the main point.

It's also important to strip away the approach to this passage that far too many take, which is to read it at face value. When one does this with following verses, the passage reads as if women aren't allowed to speak or teach or have any authority over men, and the only redeeming quality of a woman is her ability to bear children.

If we look at the whole of Scripture, we know this isn't what Paul meant. According to New Testament theologian, NT Wright, the face value interpretation contradicts other teachings where women are apostles and deacons (Romans 16), where women are expected to pray and prophesy in the assembly (1 Corinthians 11), and where in the kingdom of God, all are equal (Galatians 3: 28).

So keeping all that in mind over the rest of this study, let us explore the principle in today's passage which

seems to point toward the idea of our posture in prayer. And though Paul mentions, hands lifted up, he's really speaking more about the attitude of our heart as opposed to the physical expression of our body (since we see so many different examples of the physical posture for prayer throughout the Scriptures: lying down, bowing heads, lifting heads, and so on).

When you and I are holding on to anger, hatred, or impure motives in our prayer, all of those things bleed into the rest of our lives, not just how we pray. It's one of the reasons Jesus encourages us to reconcile with a brother or sister we have something against before coming to Him in prayer, otherwise, our motives may be impure and our focus distracted. (Matthew 5: 23-25)

Remember, no one knows us like God, and He wants all of us, not just a part of us. When we can reconcile with others, when we can let go of anger and hatred, when we can learn to forgive those who have wronged us, then we are more able to present all of ourselves to God because we are ultimately more whole.

What are some of the most meaningful postures of prayer for you?

Is there a place you often go to pray, or a favorite place?

How can we learn to let go of anger and hate, even forgiving those who have wronged us, so that our time in prayer is more holistic?

Day 12

1 Timothy 2: 9-10

9 And I want women to be modest in their appearance. They should wear decent and appropriate clothing and not draw attention to themselves by the way they fix their hair or by wearing gold or pearls or expensive clothes. 10 For women who claim to be devoted to God should make themselves attractive by the good things they do.

Again, as we dig under the surface of the cultural context to Paul's writing, one can easily see that what God cares about most isn't our external appearance, but rather the matters of the heart. And there are examples of this throughout the Scriptures.

When choosing David to be the next king of Israel, God told Samuel, “People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” (1 Samuel 16: 7)

When speaking to the religious leaders Jesus said, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness.” (Matthew 23: 27)

So again, God cares about our posture in prayer and worship. He wants us to come without internal noise and distraction (like hatred and anger), and he wants us to be ourselves, genuine and honest. In fact, honesty is another important trait mentioned as helping to build a relationship of trust. So let's not try to "act the part" or "look holy." Let us come before God, just as we are, letting Him go to work in us to bring healing and make us whole.

And may our lives be about drawing attention to God and not to ourselves. This was a common phrase I used when helping college students prepare to lead worship. And the conversation wasn't just about dress, it was about attitude, song choice, servant leadership, etc...

Humans look at and praise others for what's happening on the outside, on your social media page, how many followers you have, but God is much more interested with our internal journey. How is your heart today? Do you feel loved? Are you hurting or

broken? Anxious or worried? These are the things God wants to know and God wants to heal. Share yourself with Him without pretense and know that He doesn't need you to be perfect, we've got Jesus for that, He just needs us to be with Him.

Why do you think we judge so easily based on external appearances and accomplishments?

What does it take to get past the external, to what's happening within someone?

What do you need to let go of today so you can come before God just as you are?

1 Timothy 2: 11-15

11 Women should learn quietly and submissively. 12 I do not let women teach men or have authority over them. Let them listen quietly. 13 For God made Adam first, and afterward he made Eve. 14 And it was not Adam who was deceived by Satan. The woman was deceived, and sin was the result. 15 But women will be saved through childbearing, assuming they continue to live in faith, love, holiness, and modesty.

According to New Testament scholars, at the time of Paul's writing to Timothy in Ephesus there was a religious cult that had the biggest temple and the most famous shrine in the region. And that cult was women only. The temple was for Artemis (that was the god's name in Greek, to the Romans she was Diana), and because Artemis was a female deity, all the priests were women and they kept the men in their place.

So again, we must remember the context and worldview of Paul's writing, and look past the controversial and widely disputed surface of this passage, to what lies beneath that can help us deepen our faith and connection to God. Because again, not only are there many other places in the New Testament where women were leaders and teachers, we know that when God created us, that it took both men AND women to reflect the image of God. Not one or the other, but both. That, it seems, puts us on equal footing.

In addition, one of my favorite short stories in the New Testament comes from Luke 11, where Jesus is at the home of Martha and Mary. Do you remember the story? While Martha is slaving away in the kitchen, Mary sits at the feet of Jesus and listens to what He has to say.

Sitting at one's feet in Biblical times meant that one was a disciple. And Jesus not only welcomed this interaction, He actually told Martha that what Mary was doing was the most important thing one could do.

So with all that said, what I'm actually most drawn to about prayer in this passage, are the words "listen quietly" and "submissively." And maybe I'm most drawn to them because in spiritual life, these are the hardest practices for me.

I mean, I'm a pastor who double-majored in speech communications. Not only that, I'm the youngest child in my family, so I've long been starved for attention. I love to talk. But to sit still and listen, to care more about what others have to say than me being the center of the show, is challenging for me.

And yet I know that submitting to God's way over my way is one of the first steps to following Christ, who said, "If you want to follow me you must deny yourself." (Luke 9: 23). And logically I know that it's awfully hard to listen to what another person has to say when I'm speaking all the time.

So I'm learning how to be still, quiet, and listen to God. I do this sometimes by closing my eyes and sitting in a quiet place. Other times I listen by reading God's word, podcasting a sermon, or just going on a walk in nature and listening to the sounds of all that He has made. But one thing is sure, I am practicing because I'm nowhere near good at it.

However, in the times when I am able to quiet my life, sitting still to listen to what God has to say, I find peace settling in my heart. I may not always "hear" from God in the traditional sense, but I am more aware of His presence. And if I'm honest, some of the best times in my walk with God are when the two of us don't say a word, we just hold each other and rest.

Is it easier for you to listen or to speak? Why do you think that's the case?

What are some of the ways you try to "silence" your life in order to listen better to God?

What are some of the things that most often get in the way of this process for you?

INTRODUCTION

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion. Feel free to add or subtract or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

OPEN

When you're feeling stressed out, what's your go-to (healthy) stress release?

HEAD

According to 1 Timothy 2:1-2, what is the goal of any prayers on behalf of figures of authority?

What key role does Christ Jesus play between humanity and God? What qualifies Jesus for this role? (1 Timothy 2:5-7)

What should our emotional posture be when we pray? (1 Timothy 2:8)

Read 1 Timothy 2:8-10 and reread Day 11 and 12 from the Daily commentary. What are the biblical takeaways for us from this section?

HEART

How do you pray? Are there any habits or rituals that you've developed to make prayer a part of your daily life? Are there any prayer tips people have given you over the years that haven't worked for you?

Have you ever had a spiritual experience that affirmed God's love and approval for you? What was that like? And if you haven't, what anchors your faith even without the supernatural experience?

What does Christ Jesus being our mediator mean to you? What are the emotional benefits of knowing that Jesus is our mediator?

How do you balance praying actively and listening patiently when you communicate with God?

HANDS

Reflect on your life over the last three to six months and identify any areas in which your spiritual life has been more about appearances than what God wants for you. How can you recalibrate that as we search for deep faith?

LIVING WORDS for YOUR WEEK

"For, There is one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity—the man Christ Jesus. He gave his life to purchase freedom for everyone. This is the message God gave to the world at just the right time."

1 Tim 2:5-6

INTRODUCTION

The following questions are a guide to help families with children understand God and discover His love throughout the series. You may think of other ideas that fit the needs of your family.

Read 1 Timothy 2:1-4 together with your family.

As you read these verses, think about how prayer helps us stay connected to God and to each other.

Who are the people Timothy says we should pray for?
Can you give some examples?

Why do you think it is important to pray for other people?

Who does God want to save?

LIVING WORDS for YOUR WEEK
 “All Honor and glory to God forever and ever! He is
 the eternal King, the unseen one who never dies; he
 alone is God. Amen”
 1 Timothy 1:17

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion. Feel free to add or subtract or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

Sports culture can be very fun. One of the most fun parts of being a supporter of your favorite team is wearing gear from your team. Take some time to think of why you wear gear from your favorite team.

This portion of scripture has been used throughout the history of the church to keep women in a small bubble. From their role in church to their role in society, women have been limited because of this portion of scripture. It's important to understand the context of this portion of scripture. Timothy was located in Ephesus, which was the center of a giant cult for the Greek Goddess Artemis. In this cult, women were the leaders and men were not (some of you are probably intrigued). The issue that Paul was addressing here wasn't the position of women in the church everywhere but rather what certain things would communicate in their context. Paul wanted all his fellow believers to be known for their faith. Therefore, he writes to the people in this community reminding them that what's most important is that Jesus Christ is uplifted.

This portion of scripture actually teaches us something incredibly important regardless of our gender. Here we learn that what our lives should point to the most is our faith in Jesus. When someone looks at us our lives should exude the love and grace of Jesus. What's more is that Jesus wants to be seen through you! God's hope for you is that you would be a beacon of his light and love in our world.

This changes the way that we live - we have to ask ourselves the hard question; is our life telling people that we follow Jesus? We can leave legalism out of this. Instead, let's remember that God's hope for us is that

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

WEEK 3

IN SEARCH
OF DEEP
ROOTS

1 Timothy 3: 16

16 Without question, this is the great mystery of our faith: Christ was revealed in a human body and vindicated by the Spirit. He was seen by angels and announced to the nations. He was believed in throughout the world and taken to heaven in glory.

Your eyes are not deceiving you. This week, we are starting with the end in mind, because it is knowing the end that helps us navigate the journey.

If I'm honest, when I take a trip, I don't always like to plan every second of every day. My entire life is scheduled, so part of taking a vacation for me is to live not scheduled. That said, I have never left for a trip without knowing where I'm going. I may not plan every detail of every day out, but I know where the trip is taking us.

The Christian faith is a journey, or to use an older term, a pilgrimage. As author John Inge says in his book, *A Christian Theology of Place*, a pilgrimage is characterized by three things: a rediscovery of our roots, an understanding that life is a journey, and a new focus on our true destination.

I like how pastor and author, Jim Belcher, tells his own story of rediscovering his faith in his book *Deep Faith* (which I highly recommend), “I needed to be reminded of who I am, of where I come from, that life is a journey and that my hope is built on knowing my destination.”

So if deepening our faith is a journey or pilgrimage that involves discovering our story as well as knowing our destination, then we start with the end with 1 Timothy 3 because in the end, Paul reminds Timothy and us that both our story and our destination are Jesus. Jesus not only authors our faith (John 6: 44, John 14: 6, Hebrews 12: 2), He sustains it (1 Corinthians 1: 4-8), and is our prize to which we run (Philippians 3: 12, 14, 20).

In this passage, Paul simply reminds Timothy of the reason for all of his instruction on how to live a life of faith in God. In fact, the better translation for “mystery of our faith” is “mystery of our godliness.” What is the motivation behind why a follower of Christ lives

their life differently? It's Jesus, and all Jesus did for us - the incarnation, the life and teachings, the death and resurrection - all of which Paul leans into. And Paul states that these things weren't just witnessed in our natural world, but in the supernatural as well.

It's also important to note that when Paul talks about a mystery, in their world, the word for mystery was more akin to a secret that has been unveiled. So the secret that has been unveiled, not just to the Jews but to the whole world, is that Jesus is the Messiah of Scripture; that He is the Son of God who came to this earth, lived, died, and was resurrected. His life is not just our example, it is our identity and our inspiration. May we learn to live every step of our faith journey with the end in mind.

How do you typically approach planning for a vacation?

What is it that you truly believe in about Jesus?

How does knowing that the goal of deep faith begins, ends, and is sustained by Jesus, help you continue the journey?

[illegible]

1 Timothy 3: 1

1 This is a trustworthy saying: "If someone aspires to be a church leader, he desires an honorable position."

First things first, I have spent much of my life living as a reluctant leader. I was the captain of my little league team because no one else wanted to be. I was the president of my 8th grade class because my friends made me do it. And I even went into ministry kicking and screaming, wishing, like Moses, that God would choose someone else.

This is why when I read today's passage I cringe a little. At first read, it seems to portray a person who desperately wants to be a leader in the church, and in my experience, those who want it badly, often want it for the wrong reasons. What reasons could those be? Well, for the building up of themselves and their reputation, as opposed to the building up of Christ's church.

But if we remember where we started yesterday, with the end in mind and that end being Jesus, we remember that when He came to this earth, “though he was God, he did not consider equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave...” (Philippians 2: 6-7)

A church leader is an incredibly important position, but let us not think that in this chapter, and beyond. Paul is only referring to pastors, elders, and deacons (though the language would seem as such) so the rest of us “non-leaders” can skip over this passage. Remember that we are all “royal priests, a holy nation, God’s very own possession.” So though it would be easy for us to think that only people with a title are leaders, in these eyes of God we are all called to be active participants in the life of His church as followers of Jesus.

We live in a world where so many aspire to lead and not all with good intentions. Some reach, claw, fight, and sometimes even sacrifice their own morals or ethical code to climb the corporate ladder. But the difference between this type of leadership culture and the type of leadership culture that belongs in the

church is that church leaders should first be followers.

What do I mean?

Remember Christ's call in the great co-mission from Matthew 28: 18-20: "go and make disciples." He didn't say go and make leaders, but go and make disciples. Everything that Paul will discuss about "leaders" in the church is built on the premise that all these leaders are disciples/followers first. If we can always remember to follow Jesus before we lead for Jesus, then He can help us stay humble, honest, and people of integrity who are growing in the faith. I like the way author Leonard Sweet says it, those in positions of leadership in the church can, at best, be lead-followers.

So let us, leaders and participators in the life of God's church, "consider how to stir up one another to love and good works." (Hebrews 10: 24) As we follow Christ, may we serve like Him too.

Have you ever met, or been, a leader who led with the wrong motive? What was that experience like? Do you agree that everyone is a leader of some kind? If so, how? If not, why? How can you and I help hold each other accountable as servant leaders while participating in church life?

[illegible]

1 Timothy 2: 11-15

2 So a church leader must be a man whose life is above reproach. He must be faithful to his wife. He must exercise self-control, live wisely, and have a good reputation. He must enjoy having guests in his home, and he must be able to teach. 3 He must not be a heavy drinker or be violent. He must be gentle, not quarrelsome, and not love money. 4 He must manage his own family well, having children who respect and obey him. 5 For if a man cannot manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church?

There's that word again, "man." Let's start off today's reflection with two reminders so we don't stumble over some of these words from Scripture that create triggers for us in our culture today.

First, in the Biblical world, there were plenty of times when the word “man” was simply used to describe humans. Second, we know of places in the New Testament where there were women leaders that Paul admonished and encouraged, so in this passage it makes the most sense that the text applies to all genders.

The key verse in this passage is the last one. God's church is his house, and no, we don't mean house as in a building. His house are his people, reaching after him and caring for one another in a symmetry of relationships.

So it goes without saying that if a person can't care well for themselves or for those relationships, that they shouldn't be put in positions of leadership in the church. I don't think this means that a person has to be perfect and without struggle. If that was the bar for leadership, who of us could stand? But Paul gives a list of things that must be in good shape for a person in leadership, which are all things we should all aspire to in our life with Christ because they all have to do with treating each other with the respect that all children created in God's image deserve.

The word, Christian, means Christ-like. If I'm honest, however, telling me to be like Christ feels like telling me, someone who can't carry a tune to save their life, to sing like Adele. No amount of vocal training could get me to sing like Adele. It would take something

otherworldly to get me to sing that well. And therein lies the point. We can only journey towards being Christ-like, if we foster the spiritual gift of Christ living in us through a life of followership (something Paul reminds Timothy about in chapter 4).

With that, Paul's instructions here are certainly for the leader to measure their own life by, but also for the church to use as a metric to make sure the leader is healthy. Just like the instruments on a car are designed to warn us if something is off balance or need attention, Paul's lists are there to help us warm ourselves, and others, if an area of our lives needs special attention.

Why do you think it's important to look at how we treat each other before we look at leading in the church?

In addition to the lists Paul gives in Timothy for leadership, what other lists can you think of that Paul gives as a metric of whether or not we're on a journey with Christ?

If someone was out of step with the above list, what are some things one could do to help them course correct with a Christ-like approach?

[illegible]

1 Timothy 2: 11-15

6 A church leader must not be a new believer, because he might become proud, and the devil would cause him to fall. 7 Also, people outside the church must speak well of him so that he will not be disgraced and fall into the devil's trap.

I clearly remember a time in my life when I hated the word “mature.” To me, the word meant “to adult without having any fun.” And I loved to have fun. I loved to play games, perform light-hearted pranks, tell jokes, and enjoy life. But when older people in my life told me to “get mature,” I thought they simply meant to stop enjoying life.

But as I've matured, I realize that maturity has nothing to do with fun and joy, but more to do with growth. Are you, today, on a journey/pilgrimage in life that is helping you, daily, be a better person?

I believe that Paul is speaking to maturity when he says to be careful with how much responsibility you give to a new believer. Just like a young plant without deep roots, if you uproot someone too soon, they are easily swayed and may not survive the pressure.

There has been a lot of talk about this in the larger church as of late. We have celebrated charisma before character far too often, giving someone young in the faith too much leadership responsibility before their roots had time to grow deep. The result, just like Paul says, is that the leader becomes proud and “falls into the devil’s trap.”

What's the devil's trap? As Jesus said, the thief comes to "steal, kill, and destroy." The object of his efforts are anyone and anything that reflects the image of his enemy. And who could be more vulnerable than someone young in the faith who isn't yet grounded in their identity?

Paul has led by example in his relationship with Timothy. As Timothy's mentor, Paul has helped Timothy journey towards a deep and abiding faith in Christ. He has taken Timothy on many of his travels, allowing him to witness how Paul lives his life and responds to the spiritual battles. Slowly, he has given

Timothy opportunities to take on more responsibility. And now, as Paul is getting near the end of his life, he is moving more and more out of the way so that Timothy can over. Paul is a great example of helping someone mature in the faith.

Of course, Timothy is a great example of what Paul speaks about as well. When Paul recruited Timothy, he was already well thought of by the believers. (Acts 16: 2) Timothy was humble (albeit a bit too timid at times as Paul had to continually encourage him to stand strong - 2 Timothy 1: 7), and willing to learn.

I pray that we all could be like Timothy; good students who continually seek to grow deep roots in our faith. And when the time is right, may we also be like Paul; good teachers who pass on our faith and help the next generation stand strong in the faith.

Who was a favorite teacher of yours growing up, and what was it about that person that endeared you to them?

Is there an area of your life you know you could use some maturity in?

What could you pray for today that might help you on a path towards growth?

[illegible]

1 Timothy 2: 11-15

8 In the same way, deacons must be well respected and have integrity. They must not be heavy drinkers or dishonest with money. 9 They must be committed to the mystery of the faith now revealed and must live with a clear conscience. 10 Before they are appointed as deacons, let them be closely examined. If they pass the test, then let them serve as deacons. 11 In the same way, their wives must be respected and must not slander others. They must exercise self-control and be faithful in everything they do. 12 A deacon must be faithful to his wife, and he must manage his children and household well. 13 Those who do well as deacons will be rewarded with respect from others and will have increased confidence in their faith in Christ Jesus.

I love the word deacon in Greek because it is best translated as “servant.” If you saw Paul’s words in verses 2-7 were for someone else (i.e. leaders), it’s hard to escape this one. Just as Jesus was sent into the world not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10: 45), you and I are sent to serve in like fashion.

This aligns so well with our 5th end statement at Crosswalk; Crosswalk will be a community that exemplifies servant leadership.

So what does it mean to be a servant leader? Paul’s list is a great starting place, and like his earlier list it all has to do with relationships to God, others, and the work of Christ’s church. If you pick out some of the words in this passage you’ll find that they are respected and respectful, a person of integrity, committed, faithful, and confident in their faith. These are the qualities of a servant of Jesus Christ.

Remember how we started this week out with the end in mind? If we continue to keep Jesus as the beginning, the ending, and the everything in-between our whole lives become fragrant offerings, wholly and pleasing to God. And conversely, when Jesus isn’t central, it shows in us failing to live up to these same qualities.

The best way I can sum up the list that Paul gives here

for deacons is to say that a deacons life is more about Jesus and others than it is about themselves. That’s what servant leadership is, lifting up others and meeting needs without the desire for credit or reward.

But Paul says that there is a reward for a life well-lived; respect and increased confidence in the faith.

It’s like the parable of the talents that Jesus tells in Matthew 25. For the servants who were faithful with the few things that had been entrusted to them by their master, more was given.

God wants us to give us exceedingly abundantly more than all we could ever ask or imagine (Ephesians 3: 20). All he asks in return is our willingness to follow in his footsteps, to live a life in service to others as we put our trust in him. My guess is that when we can live this way, we’ll realize that we already have everything we need.

Is there someone in your life who is a model of servant-hood to you?

What were some of their qualities that endeared you to them?

What is one area in your life where you can seek to be a better servant?

1 Timothy 2: 11-15

14 I am writing these things to you now, even though I hope to be with you soon, 15 so that if I am delayed, you will know how people must conduct themselves in the household of God. This is the church of the living God, which is the pillar and foundation of the truth.

In the missionary journeys of Paul and Timothy, many churches were planted. Each church has a different group of people, surrounded by a different culture. But what held them all together was the passage that started the week, but that Paul ends the chapter with; a declaration on who Jesus is. It is His gospel that is our anchor point, and His Spirit that enables us to live and serve like him.

After the leaders left a church plant, even though there were other leaders in place to care for the church, it was easy for the church to become more influenced by the surrounding culture, or deceived by teachers claiming that the gospel Paul taught was incomplete. So the purpose of Paul's letters were often to remind people about the gospel of Jesus Christ that they fell in love with first. Once they re-centered their lives on Jesus, then he could more easily re-align their lives with his.

In our world today, the church is again in desperate need of re-centering our faith in Christ, and re-aligning how we live our life like him. Christians and their church have gotten a pretty bad reputation, and much of it earned. According to a variety of studies done over the last 12-14 years, Christians are more known for the things that they are against as opposed to the things that they are for, and one scandal after another in the public arena has only seemed to confirm these perceptions.

How do we seek to change the narrative and get back to the things that matter most?

We must get back to our roots; our story.

I believe this is what Paul leans into when he uses the phrase, “the church of the living God, which is the pillar and foundation of the truth.”

In the Old Testament, there are many references to “the living God” as opposed to the many gods people believed in at the time, and the countless man-made idols of the surrounding nations. The 10 plagues given in Egypt all targeted the power of an alleged god of the Egyptians, showing that the God of Israel was the one and only “living God.”

It is this God, the one who as we'll see in the closing words of 1 Timothy 3, who became flesh, lived, died and was resurrected for us. And it is upon his teaching that we are to build the foundation of our faith. His story redeems our story. When we surrender our lives to him, we no longer belong to this world, for we are citizens of the kingdom of God. Living with the end in mind simply means that the end of our story here on earth is just the beginning of our story, living in eternity with Him.

If you have been baptized, why did you make that choice?

What are the best memories you have of church?
What helps you live today with the end in mind?

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The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion. Feel free to add or subtract or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

Have you ever been nominated or elected to serve in a leadership position? What was required of you? What was that experience like for you?

Read 1 Timothy 3 together and share any wisdom, insights, or questions you have in response to the reading.

What are the differences here between a deacon and an elder? What do you notice about the similarities of qualifications for both groups?

What do you think it means to be a man/woman of “dignity”? Are those traits you often see in abundance or are they lacking in the world today? Why?

Paul is giving Timothy lots of guidance and is speaking against false teachings in the church. Why do you think he gives Timothy this list of qualifications for leadership? What is his end goal?

Why is a leader's family an important indicator of leadership potential or potential problems?

Why are tendencies to anger, intemperance, pride, and these other characteristics so important to consider when selecting leaders in the church? What happens if you don't consider them? Have you run into issues because of these things in your life/experience?

How do you imagine the Ephesian church would change if/when these standards were applied to its leaders? Do you sense a need for these changes in your church or in other areas of your life?

It is clear that these qualities are being specifically applied to people in positions of leadership, but would you agree that these qualities are important for all believers?

Which of these qualities have you made progress with in the past two or three years? In which area(s) are you growing in now? How can this group help you achieve success in these areas?

“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: 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 3:12-14

[illegible]

INTRODUCTION

The following questions are a guide to help families with children understand God and discover His love through- out the series. You may think of other ideas that fit the needs of your family.

Read 1 Timothy 3:14-16 together with your family.

As you read through these verses, think about how our faith is grounded in the story of Christ, even if sometimes we don't understand it all.

Who does Paul say the church belongs to?

How did Christ reveal himself to the world?

Even if there are things you might not understand, what makes you believe in Christ?

It's beautiful that we get to inspire others to grow in their love for God.

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion. Feel free to add or subtract or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

There are certain jobs that require an extensive amount of training and knowledge. For example, to be a good doctor requires going to medical school. Being a good lawyer requires an extensive understanding of the law. Take some time to think about what would happen if you took someone who was qualified in a certain field and put them as a leader for another field. For example, what would happen if you made a Doctor be a head chef? Or vice versa?

In Chapter 3 we find that there is a way that leaders in the church should live. Paul lists out numerous things that church leaders should excel in. From how they do in their relationships to how they live in the public sphere, Paul is clear that leaders should live a certain way. What's important to notice, though, is that Paul is speaking specifically about church leaders, meaning there's a difference between a leader in the church and a person who attends the church. I'm not saying that the congregation gets to live in the opposite ways to what Paul is describing, but what is clear is that a church leader is called to live at a higher standard.

Our world is scared of standards because often standards are used to exclude rather than include. For a second lets go off that idea and think of what Paul is saying. Paul begins by saying “if someone aspires to be a church leader, he desires an honorable position.” An honorable position requires something of us. It requires us to live up to the standard that the position symbolizes in people’s lives. In the same way we don’t want a chef to be our doctor or a doctor to be our chef, it is the same way we don’t want a church leader to be someone who doesn’t honor the position. If you are looking to be a part of leadership, remember, you are accepting the beautiful call to live in a way that inspires others. Remember, Paul is writing so that people

Are you a church leader or are you thinking of becoming a church leader? Take some time to think about your life. Do you feel you are honoring the position and people you are leading? Leave legalism out of this conversation. Instead, think, do you feel you are honoring the call of God to influence others to follow him? This does not require you to be perfect. We all make mistakes and fall short of the glory of God (Paul knows this!). Instead of trying to be perfect, find the joy in living in the life that God is calling you to live in.

“This is a trustworthy saying: “If someone aspires to be a church leader, he desires an honorable position.”

1 Timothy 3:1

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This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

WEEK 4

IN SEARCH
OF DEEP
DISCIPLESHIP

1 Timothy 4: 1-5

Now the Holy Spirit tells us clearly that in the last times some will turn away from the true faith; they will follow deceptive spirits and teachings that come from demons. 2 These people are hypocrites and liars, and their consciences are dead. 3 They will say it is wrong to be married and wrong to eat certain foods. But God created those foods to be eaten with thanks by faithful people who know the truth. 4 Since everything God created is good, we should not reject any of it but receive it with thanks. 5 For we know it is made acceptable by the word of God and prayer.

When I was 10, my family and I moved out to the beautiful Pacific Northwest from Ohio. I had never seen mountains so tall before aside from flying across the country in an airplane, but from that vantage point, the mountains looked small.

Once I started at my new school, it wasn't long before I figured out that all of my new friends were skiers, and every year, the school would take trips up to the mountain to ski. I knew I had to go and learn.

Skiing for someone who has never gone before can be daunting, if not a bit terrifying. When you first start, you don't know how to steer, or how to stop, though you do learn pretty quickly how to yell, "Get out of the way!"

After a few trips to the mountain, I was starting to get the hang of it though I had a long way to go. My friends, who had all been skiing since they could walk, were anxious for me to get good enough to go with them. When it seemed like I could handle it, they took me up with them and said that if I did well on the first run, they'd take me down something even more exciting (that scared me a bit, but I figured I didn't have to worry about it yet).

The run was going great, I was keeping up and having fun. Then all of a sudden I looked down the ski run and realized I couldn't see the end of it. My friends had tricked me and took me on the "more exciting" run first. We stopped at, I kid you not, the edge of a cliff and looked down to what was supposed to be the rest of the run. My life flashed before my eyes as I re-

alized the only way out was down, but I knew I didn't yet have the skills to do it well. I was half tempted to take off my skis and walk, but even that was scary.

As we glide into chapter four of Timothy, Paul warns Timothy of false spirits and teachings that are leading people away from Christ and their faith.

One of the major issues was something they called asceticism, which was a belief that said everything material/physical was bad and only the spiritual was good. It was as if their former lives of sin were sinful only because of the material world, not because of sin living in them.

So Paul shares two things with Timothy to help refute these false teachings that actually lead to death not life.

One, he reminds Timothy that what God has created is actually good, just like the words shared in Genesis 1 at the end of each day of creation, "And God saw that it was good." It isn't God's creation that is bad, it's the sin that God's creation invited into the world that's bad. Paul reminds Timothy to receive His creation with thanksgiving.

Two, Paul reminds Timothy of the tools he has available to him to keep from being deceived and turn away from the faith. Those tools are what today we would call spiritual disciplines, otherwise known as the objects and practices we use as followers of Jesus Christ. These tools, two of which listed here (the word of God and prayer), are the things that ground us in our faith and relationship with God, and link us to Him as we traverse His creation. As we explore Paul's teaching this week, we'll look at what it looks like and means to be a disciple, and how that life of a disciple produces fruits in our lives.

Have you, or someone close to you, ever turned away from the faith? If so, do you know why and what it felt like for you or to see them wander off? What is something you're thankful for concerning God's creation today? How does time in God's word and in prayer help you strengthen your faith connection to Him?

1 Timothy 4: 6-10

6 If you explain these things to the brothers and sisters, Timothy, you will be a worthy servant of Christ Jesus, one who is nourished by the message of faith and the good teaching you have followed. 7 Do not waste time arguing over godless ideas and old wives' tales. Instead, train yourself to be godly. 8 "Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come." 9 This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it. 10 This is why we work hard and continue to struggle, for our hope is in the living God, who is the Savior of all people and particularly of all believers.

I'm almost always the first to admit that the friends I have that dream of running a marathon are the friends I understand the least. Never in my life have I dreamed of running 26 miles when the God I serve invented the wheel, and the Wright brothers.

Though I don't get the dream, I appreciate how hard they work to prepare their mind and their body for such an endeavor. Months of training, pacing, and even researching what to do and not to do. It's amazing.

I've never run a long distance, but I have spent time working out and trying to get my body in better physical shape. At first, I hated it; the early mornings, the extra time, the energy and sweat. But as soon as I round the corner and start seeing some results, I find myself having more motivation. It must be the reason so many gyms have mirrors all over the place. Sure, for some it's vanity, but for many, it's trying to show people the fruit of their efforts.

In this passage, Paul relates the training of the spiritual life to the training of the physical life (as he does in other passages as well). He says that to be nourished by the message of faith and the good teaching, we must train ourselves to be godly. When we do this, like we do with our physical body, we receive benefits in this life AND in the life to come.

But he does say that the work is hard, and at times, a struggle. This means that at times, training ourselves

in the way of Jesus, working at being disciples, is hard work. And just like working out, there are times we want to quit. But when we start to see the results; a more godly life, more joy, more love, more peace, more patience and kindness and goodness and gentleness and self-control, when these things begin showing up in our lives we are encouraged to keep going and not give up.

If we're honest, however, we don't like the word discipline. Growing up, it often meant that we were in trouble. But we must remember that the word "discipline" comes from the word "disciple." Discipling takes training and discipline. The goal is first and foremost, to walk hand in hand with Jesus, but the further benefits that Paul talks about include living life to the full (John 10: 10). So if we can help each other avoid the distractions in life, encourage one another to stay on the scent of Jesus, work at the spiritual life through practicing the disciplines of prayer, confession, worship, forgiveness, Scripture, meditation, fasting, service, solitude, and so on, then we will craft a life that regularly points us to Jesus, and deepens our faith in Him.

Has there ever been a physical goal that you worked toward? If so, did you achieve your goal and what was the journey like?

What are some of your favorite ways to connect with God?

What types of things distract you from your walk with God, or cause you to struggle with your disciplines?

1 Timothy 4: 11

11 Teach these things and insist that everyone learn them.

It's a short passage today, but still, powerful. As I have continued to read it, I found myself reflecting on my favorite teachers in life and what it was that I was so drawn to about them.

Two of my favorite teachers growing up both had similar nicknames. One was Mr. D and the other was Dr. D.

Mr. D was my fifth grade teacher (his real last name was Dingleline, thus the shortened version). But not only was Mr. D a great teacher, knowledgeable and fair, he was also kind. My parents had recently divorced and Mr. D always took a little extra time with me to make sure I was doing ok. I also noticed that in addition to the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic, he gave us lessons on how to live life well and treat others better. From what I could see, he practiced what he preached.

Then there was Dr. Dickinson, aka "Dr. D." Dr. D was my advisor in college, and a professor of speech communications. He was silly, not afraid to make fun of himself. Passionate about what he taught. And though he didn't have prayer every day in class, when he did take time for it, it was significant. What I loved about Dr. D was that he seemed to genuinely care not only about what he was teaching, but about me as a student and person. He didn't want me to just learn more about speech communications, he wanted me to grow into a good human being.

When Paul says, "teach these things," I believe that he's not only referring to what we studied yesterday, about staying grounded in the gospel story through the Word of God and in prayer, I believe he's also saying "live these things" so that the believers not only learn more about the life of faith, but can see it in action.

I'm sure you've heard the saying that faith is better "Caught than taught." Now, I believe in both of these, but one without the other is empty. The teachers in my life that have impacted me the most are the

ones that didn't just give me words and content, but showed me how to put those words and that content into my life. Because the teachers that just shared content, yet lived their lives in a way that didn't reflect the impact of that content on their lives, well, they were what the Bible would call hypocrites.

Another one of my favorite sayings is, "Preach the gospel always, and when necessary, use words." (St Francis of Assisi). This one has been a guiding principle in my life to make sure that I'm not just pointing to the life of Christ, but I am doing my best, through the disciplines, to live a life transformed by the power of the gospel as I daily surrender to Him.

So yes, let us teach others about how to live the life of faith, but even better, let us teach by showing them how we do it, empowered by God's grace.

Who were some of your favorite teachers in life and why?

Put into your own words the quote, "Preach the gospel always, and when necessary, use words." What is one spiritual discipline that you know could use work in your life? What is something you can begin to practice this week to work on improving in that area of your life?

1 Timothy 4: 12-13

12 Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity. 13 Until I get there, focus on reading the Scriptures to the church, encouraging the believers, and teaching them.

This is a passage that is often quoted at youth events to encourage young people to not only be passionate about your faith, but to set an example for others even if the "others" you're setting an example for are older.

And though that is one application for this passage, it's interesting to note that at the time of this writing, Timothy was likely in his late thirties or early forties. One way to look at that is that if you're in that age range, you are still considered young in Paul's eyes. So congratulations.

But wherever you are, wherever you work or go to school, whatever stage of life you're in, there is always someone older than you. Someone more wise, more experienced. And sometimes it's easy for the older to dismiss the younger as being idealistic, inexperienced, and naive.

I have spent most of my career working with college students and young adults. I have learned so much from them, and yes, I hope I passed on wisdom and life lessons to them, but if I'm honest, they passed on just as many if not more to me.

That said, I have seen this age group dismissed far too often. It's one of the reasons that so many in that age group leave the church. They feel that there is no real place for them, or their passions, or their ideas, in the church and so they leave to find communities where they will be more celebrated.

I've even been in places that said they wanted the young to lead, but when they really started picking up momentum, the older members didn't like all the change and pushed to get things back to the way they were. When the older members succeeded, guess what happened to the younger members? They left, and most of them didn't land in a new church, they

just left church altogether.

There are at least two principles that Paul is speaking to here. One is about respect, which we'll read more about at the end of the week. But followers of Jesus have respect for each other, older, younger, male, female, slave, free. If we had respect for each other, really listened to each other, and were willing to work together more often, I'd bet we'd see a change in our churches unlike any we've experienced before. A Holy Spirit-led change.

Another principle Paul speaks to that I also think is important is that there are certainly several ways to respond to others that treat you poorly. You can fight. You can ignore it. You can run-away. You can be mean. But Paul says none of those ways are good. What is better? To live your whole life as a shining example of what it means to walk with Christ. A life committed to love, faith, and purity.

One way I have interpreted this verse to young adults is like this, "You can either complain about church and those against you, those who don't give you a seat at the table, OR, you can be the church you want to see in this world." I think that's what Paul means. Stop waiting for others to respect you and give you your due, and start living a life grounded in Christ that others won't be able to refute if they tried. And how do we do it? By being grounded in Scripture, encouraging others, teaching the truth. This is the way.

If you are young, or can remember when you were, did you run into opposition for how you wanted to participate in church?

What are some ways, some practices, a church could do to bring the younger members and older members together to begin building trust?

How can we be examples even when facing opposition?

1 Timothy 4: 14-16

14 Do not neglect the spiritual gift you received through the prophecy spoken over you when the elders of the church laid their hands on you. 15 Give your complete attention to these matters. Throw yourself into your tasks so that everyone will see your progress. 16 Keep a close watch on how you live and on your teaching. Stay true to what is right for the sake of your own salvation and the salvation of those who hear you.

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During my junior year at college, the theology department, of which I was a major, held a dedication ceremony for its majors. The only problem for me was, I had no idea that it was a big deal. I figured I'd go, they'd have a few songs sung, say some nice things, and then bless my classmates and I in some generic type of ceremony. I could not have been more wrong.

So I either didn't get the memo or I never read it, but when I showed up wearing jeans and a polo shirt, I quickly noticed that everyone else was dressed up. Not only that, though I had hoped to simply slip into the audience, I then noticed that all of my classmates were on stage and there was one empty chair in-between them. That one was mine.

Then, instead of a generic blessing, the theology teachers went down the row of students one-by-one, talking about their call, their qualities, and why they'll be great at serving Jesus in whatever capacity they accept. When they got done talking about each student, they would ask their friends and family who were present in support of their student to stand, then they laid hands on them and prayed over them.

So I wasn't dressed for the occasion, and I hadn't invited anyone to come and support me. I was so embarrassed and hoped that somehow they'd skip my name. But then they said it and asked me to stand. They had some beautiful things to say about me, but then they called for my supporters to stand. I looked at the ground out of embarrassment. I was going to be the only one who had no one.

Then all of a sudden, a chair moved in the audience. I looked up and saw one of my dearest and best friends,

Jackie, standing by herself in a sea of faces. She heard about the event and on her own she came to support me. Tears filled my eyes as the teachers surrounded me and prayed.

There are special moments of blessings in all of our lives, and I'm sure that Timothy's was spectacular. He was commissioned for the building up of the church and the spreading of the gospel, all of which would take much work in the coming weeks, months, and years of his life.

And when we have much work to do, it can be so easy to neglect our inner life. We can end up doing so many things for Jesus that we do next to none of them with Jesus. But Paul urges Timothy to not neglect his inner life, to stay the course, to remember why he was called and who it was that called him. And I think Paul also reminds Timothy that growth, or progress, isn't by leaps and bounds. Rather, in spiritual life we grow by millimeters not miles. This is why we need community, because we need to be surrounded by people who can encourage us when our growth is slow, cheer us on in the tough times, and people that we can encourage along the way as well. In fact, I would say that a healthy community fixated on Christ is one of the most powerful tools in our journey of discipleship. Jesus had his twelve. Who are we journeying with that can help us not neglect our inner life and encourage our faith?

-

Who are some of the people in your life that help you stay the course of faith?

What do you do when you get frustrated or feel that you aren't growing fast enough?

If you find yourself doing more for Jesus than with Jesus, what can you do to slow down and put your walk with him first?

1 Timothy 5 - 6:2a

5: 1 Never speak harshly to an older man, but appeal to him respectfully as you would to your own father. Talk to younger men as you would to your own brothers. 2 Treat older women as you would your mother, and treat younger women with all purity as you would your own sisters.

3 Take care of any widow who has no one else to care for her. 4 But if she has children or grandchildren, their first responsibility is to show godliness at home and repay their parents by taking care of them. This is something that pleases God.

5 Now a true widow, a woman who is truly alone in this world, has placed her hope in God. She prays night and day, asking God for his help. 6 But the widow who lives only for pleasure is spiritually dead even while she lives. 7 Give these instructions to the church so that no one will be open to criticism.

8 But those who won't care for their relatives, especially those in their own household, have denied the true faith. Such people are worse than unbelievers.

9 A widow who is put on the list for support must be a woman who is at least sixty years old and was faithful to her husband. 10 She must be well respected by everyone because of the good she has done. Has she brought up her children well? Has she been kind to strangers and served other believers humbly? [d] Has she helped those who are in trouble? Has she always been ready to do good?

11 The younger widows should not be on the list, because their physical desires will overpower their devotion to Christ and they will want to remarry. 12 Then they would be guilty of breaking their previous pledge. 13 And if they are on the list, they will learn to be lazy and will spend their time gossiping from house to house, meddling in other people's business and talking about things they shouldn't. 14 So I advise these younger widows to marry again, have children, and take care of their own homes. Then the enemy will not be able to say anything against them. 15 For I am afraid that some of them have already gone astray and now follow Satan.

16 If a woman who is a believer has relatives who are widows, she must take care of them and not put the responsibility on the church. Then the church can care for the widows who are truly alone.

17 Elders who do their work well should be respected

and paid well, especially those who work hard at both preaching and teaching. 18 For the Scripture says, "You must not muzzle an ox to keep it from eating as it treads out the grain." And in another place, "Those who work deserve their pay!"

19 Do not listen to an accusation against an elder unless it is confirmed by two or three witnesses. 20 Those who sin should be reprimanded in front of the whole church; this will serve as a strong warning to others.

21 I solemnly command you in the presence of God and Christ Jesus and the highest angels to obey these instructions without taking sides or showing favoritism to anyone.

22 Never be in a hurry about appointing a church leader. Do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.

23 Don't drink only water. You ought to drink a little wine for the sake of your stomach because you are sick so often.

24 Remember, the sins of some people are obvious, leading them to certain judgment. But there are others whose sins will not be revealed until later. 25 In the same way, the good deeds of some people are obvious. And the good deeds done in secret will someday come to light.

6: 1 All slaves should show full respect for their masters so they will not bring shame on the name of God and his teaching. 2 If the masters are believers, that is no excuse for being disrespectful. Those slaves should work all the harder because their efforts are helping other believers who are well loved.

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I know this is a big chapter, but reading through it, it feels like this begins to describe the outcome of a life committed to godliness, or as we've been talking about this week, the spiritual disciplines.

I often tell people that I was raised by a pack of wild women from the south. This meant at least three things: 1. I have more cousins than I've ever met in my life. 2. Most everything I ate until the age of 10 was fried and had some sort of meat in it. 3. I was taught the importance of respecting others, especially my elders and women.

In fact, my grandmother would often stay up on nights when I had a date, so that when I got home she could grill me with all the questions that would show if I had listened to her or not: did you open the door

INTRODUCTION

The following questions are a guide to help families with children understand God and discover His love through- out the series. You may think of other ideas that fit the needs of your family.

Read 1 Timothy 4: 7-8, 12-13 together with your family.

As you read through these verses, think about how living a life of faith takes training, but also with training comes results.

If we work out, run, and lift weights, we might train our bodies to be stronger.. But if we train our faith, what will get stronger?

What does Paul say to encourage Timothy, even though he is young?

How do you think you can show God’s love to other people?

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion. Feel free to add or subtract or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

Who's the healthiest person you know? Think about how and why they are so healthy and fit. What makes them a healthy person?

Paul uses a very interesting word in chapter 4. Paul writes that the message that he is giving Timothy is meant to nourish him. Nourish is an important word to understand. There's a difference between food that nourishes us and food that makes us full. Chances are that the people who are healthiest in your life are the people who eat out the least. This is because not all food is good for us! In fact, there are specific foods that will actually nourish us. Paul writes that this message he's giving Timothy is meant to nourish him.

People who are nourished are people that are healthy! Paul's hope for Timothy and his community is that they would be nourished. When we are physically nourished our bodies grow strong and how they are supposed to! A healthy body leads to a healthier mindset also. Did you know that God's hope for you is that you would have a nourished soul? God wants you to be filled with the healthy things that will build your life up!

How do we get healthy? By believing and living according to the gospel. Paul explains to Timothy that the gospel he gave to him is the true gospel, meaning that it is the most nutritious gospel. By following and living the gospel our souls become healthy and begin to thrive.

[illegible]

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WEEK 5

IN SEARCH
OF DEEP
ABIDING

1 Timothy 6: 2b-5

Teach these things, Timothy, and encourage everyone to obey them.³ Some people may contradict our teaching, but these are the wholesome teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. These teachings promote a godly life. ⁴ Anyone who teaches something different is arrogant and lacks understanding. Such a person has an unhealthy desire to quibble over the meaning of words. This stirs up arguments ending in jealousy, division, slander, and evil suspicions. ⁵ These people always cause trouble. Their minds are corrupt, and they have turned their backs on the truth. To them, a show of godliness is just a way to become wealthy.

As we head into the final chapter of Paul's first letter to Timothy, we're going to run into more signs and warnings from Paul of false teachings and other distractions that so easily tear us away from the "whole-some" and life-giving teachings of Jesus. So in a world with so many things in opposition to the teachings of the gospel of Christ, how does Timothy, and you and I for that matter, avoid being misled, disconnected, and trampled down?

The word I would use that can best help us deepen our faith and guard against falling prey to the devil and all his distractions is, abide.

It's not a new word in the New Testament. In fact, it was most famously used by Jesus in his last words to the disciples before his arrest and crucifixion:

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15: 4-5, ESV).

The Greek word for "abide" is the word "meno" which means to remain, stay, wait with. I like the word "remain" most because it is what it looks like when we are regularly engaged in the discipline of following Christ. It means we "remain" in relationship with Him as we traverse the earth. When we learn to journey with Jesus, we can more easily point out false teachings, negative motives in others, activities that tear down

instead of lift up, and so on. Everything that distracts us from the gospel of Jesus that Paul speaks to Timothy about in this passage, and the whole chapter, are more avoidable when we live a life of abiding in Him.

Now it's important to note that these people that Paul warns Timothy about, that quibble over the meaning of words, that argue, divide, slander and cause trouble. These are God's children as well. The call of Christ is still to love them, but there may be times when it's best to steer clear of them, especially in times when our own faith is weak. But we must remember that they need the true gospel as much as we do, and maybe, by the grace of God and our own example, we may be able to influence away from the things that rob them of life, and to the things that bubble over with life.

Paul paraphrased this struggle in another letter in which he gives his own definition of what it means to abide: For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit." Romans 8: 5 Let us be people who abide in Christ by setting our minds on the things of the Spirit.

Have you ever known someone who lived their life to argue? If so, what was it like to be around them?

Our attention is so easily distracted by the events and worries of our day. Are there practices you've found that help you remember your commitment to Jesus throughout the day?

When in your life have you most been able to abide in Jesus and what was that feeling like?

“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.” I have heard this line quoted at church, in movies, and from my very own parents, but there is a larger picture to this passage that Paul is trying to help Timothy see. Ultimately, that picture is one of contentment, and more than just a sense of contentment, Paul is hoping that Timothy can practice and share an other-worldly type of contentment that is at peace no matter what the world may demand or what he feels he may lack.

The last line of that passage gives Paul's secret to contentment, Christ. Again, when we abide in Him, we have everything we need.

I believe that is what Paul is trying to teach Timothy in this passage. Because people who “long to be rich”

When was the last time you felt like you lacked something? What was it?
Is having money a bad thing? Explain your answer.
How can you and I work to trust God more with our present and our future so that we can be content in the knowledge that He alone is our all in all?

[illegible]

1 Timothy 6: 11-14

11 But you, Timothy, are a man of God; so run from all these evil things. Pursue righteousness and a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness. 12 Fight the good fight for the true faith. Hold tightly to the eternal life to which God has called you, which you have declared so well before many witnesses. 13 And I charge you before God, who gives life to all, and before Christ Jesus, who gave a good testimony before Pontius Pilate, 14 that you obey this command without wavering. Then no one can find fault with you from now until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again.

Turns out, the phrase, “man of God” was a common phrase in the Old Testament but is only used twice in the New Testament. Both of those times were by Paul, and can you guess who Paul was referring to both times? Yes, Timothy, his true son in the faith.

According to Acts 16, when Paul and Silas recruited Timothy, he was well liked by others. Paul often has so many good things to say about him, but we also know he wasn't perfect. Paul has to continue to reassure him, encourage him, build him up. Scholar Philip Jenkins says that just like you have doubting Thomas in the gospels, you could have easily referred to Timothy as timid Timothy.

And yet, even with his flaws, Paul continues to use the phrase, “man of God” to describe him. Maybe Timothy was already doing all the things Paul goes on to list in this passage, “Pursue righteousness and a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness. Fight the good fight for the true faith. Hold tightly to the eternal life to which God has called you, which you have declared so well before many witnesses.” Whatever the case, Paul made an excellent choice in Timothy as his disciple.

And in order to pursue one thing, we have to be running away from something else. Paul has already given a list of these things in the previous verses. Timothy, therefore, is to “hold tightly to the eternal life to which God has called.” And therein lies the difference again. The evils that Paul speaks about steal life away from us, whereas learning to abide in Christ, learning

to follow His gospel and teachings, leads not only to abundant life here on earth, but eternal life in heaven.

One line catches me up though. Why would Paul mention Jesus' interaction with Pontius Pilate in this passage? Outside of the gospels, this is the only other mention of Pilate.

In my studies it seems that most believe that the mention of the conversation between Jesus and Pilate is mentioned here because of how Jesus carried Himself in that moment. Though falsely accused, Jesus truly carried Himself as the king of kings. Even Pilate was impressed with Jesus' character and His witness. Maybe Paul mentions this here as yet another reminder of Timothy to look to Jesus in trying times. To look to Jesus when others want to tear you down. To look to Jesus when your enemies are relentless, and to carry yourself in like manner that even the disbelievers stand back and take note, “Surely, this man was the Son of God.”

Can you think of anyone in your life that you would say was truly a man or woman of God?

What was it about them that caused you to feel this way concerning them?

In a world that regularly pressures us to abandon our faith, what are some ways we can encourage one another to hold on?

1 Timothy 6: 15-16

15 For, At just the right time Christ will be revealed from heaven by the blessed and only almighty God, the King of all kings and Lord of all lords. 16 He alone can never die, and he lives in light so brilliant that no human can approach him. No human eye has ever seen him, nor ever will. All honor and power to him forever! Amen.

There is something I have always loved about Paul throughout the courses of all of his letters. When the going gets tough, and when his back is against the wall; when those around him oppose him, beat him, and ridicule him; when the false teachers outnumber the truth teachers, Paul always reverts to the same kind of response: He lifts up Jesus.

Though he does this repeatedly, one of my favorites comes in the book of Colossians.

Paul had never visited the church in Colossae before, but he had heard through one of his converts that was helping that church grow that some false teachings were infiltrating the church. And what's so interesting is that instead of Paul going line by line addressing those false teachings, instead, he opens his letter in the first chapter with these words,

"Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see—such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him. He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together.

Christ is also the head of the church, which is his body. He is the beginning, supreme over all who rise from the dead. So he is first in everything. For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross." (Colossians 1: 15-20, NLT)

So here in Timothy we find Paul, again, clarifying the

most important thing: Jesus, the almighty God and king of all kings. When we are clear on who Jesus is and what Jesus has done for us, we can more easily avoid the false teachers and doctrine, as well as the pitfalls of life that entangle us so easily.

When life is challenging and we don't know where to turn; let us lift up Jesus

When everyone seems to be out to get us and we can't find relief; let us lift up Jesus

When the critics are around every corner and all we want is to find some peace and joy; let us lift up Jesus.

Learning to be laser-focused on who Jesus is and what Jesus has done for us gives us the ability to guard against the arrows of the evil one. And when we can learn to abide in Him daily, the devil won't have a leg to stand on.

All glory be to Christ, our Savior, our King!

Take a moment to write down all the different descriptors of Jesus you can think of from Scripture?

What parts of your life right now need to be reminded that Jesus is Lord of all?

What is one of your favorite passages about Christ? Write it out as your guide today.

1 Timothy 6: 17-19

17 Teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which is so unreliable. Their trust should be in God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment. 18 Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and generous to those in need, always being ready to share with others. 19 By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may experience true life.

Here we find Paul admonishing Timothy, and us, again to be careful not to put our trust in money, or really anything besides God. For anything besides God can change in a heartbeat, but God remains forever.

It's like the parable that Jesus told about the person who built his house on sand instead of the one who built his house on the solid rock.

The one who built his house on the sand had the easier time. Moving sand, digging in sand, is way easier than trying to move or dig in rock. So the house went up quickly and may have even been adored by his neighbors as one of the best houses in the neighborhood. But when the rain came, and the floodwaters rose, the man who had been standing in front of his house puffing out his chest, fell crying as all his hard work was washed away.

However, the man who put the time, energy, and challenging effort into building on the rock, as hard as it was, built a house that stood the test of time.

Jesus said that the parable was about people who heard his teaching but didn't obey it was the man who built his house on the sand, whereas the one that put Jesus' words and teachings into practice was the man who built his house on the rock. (Matthew 7: 24-27)

When I read this passage I think about another teaching of Jesus from the sermon on the mount where He says, "Don't store up for yourselves treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven" instead. (Matthew 6: 19-20a, NLT)

Whenever I read that last teaching, I think of a former senior pastor of mine whose house caught fire early one morning and was engulfed quickly. Thankfully, everyone in the home got out, but I vividly remember my pastor on the morning news, with his house burning in the background, quoting Matthew 6.

Life can change in a heart-beat. Everything we have can be lost in a fire, or flood, or a stock-market crash in an instant. The only thing that survives all of these things is our faith in God. Working to deepen our faith, to trust in God above all else, is the most important thing because no one can take that away from us.

As we can see in this passage, God wants us to enjoy the blessings we receive as we trust in Him, and he even gives us a hint as to how we can best enjoy those blessings; we share them with others. Which reminds me of one of my favorite quotes that I'll end today's reflection with:

"My life begins to have a point when I am no longer the point of my life."

Do you believe that God actually wants you to enjoy this life? What are ways He's designed for us to do this?

What are some treasures we need to invest in today that will await us in heaven?

What is one way you can serve another today that will, even if for a moment, take your attention off of you and onto someone else?

1 Timothy 6: 20-21

20 Timothy, guard what God has entrusted to you. Avoid godless, foolish discussions with those who oppose you with their so-called knowledge.²¹ Some people have wandered from the faith by following such foolishness.

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In my years serving as a campus chaplain, I would occasionally have a student stop by my office to declare that he/she was becoming agnostic or atheist. That statement would lead to a conversation where I mostly just listened to their journey and what led them to this new declaration.

And if it wasn't the student, I'd have a parent call me to inform me that their child was "wandering away from the faith" and they wanted to know what I was going to do about it.

Well, I'll be honest, I often wasn't as worried at these declarations as the parents were, for obvious reasons. First of all, it wasn't my child. But secondly, I have journeyed with many young people over the years and it seems like many of them who have come to a place of truly owning their faith, have to at some point thought about walking away from it.

There are several models of faith development out there, but the one I use most when I'm counseling with someone has four stages.

The first stage is the falling in love stage. In this stage, a person goes from whatever they were before their faith to finding faith and literally falling in love with every aspect of it. They read everything about God and Jesus that they can get their hands on.

The second stage is the rules stage, which says, "Know that I'm in love and in a relationship, how does this relationship work?" So we learn in this stage what to do and what not to do in the relationship. In faith, this would be a focus on the commandments, on the do and don'ts of the sermon on the mount, etc... In this stage, things are black and white, right or wrong.

But the third stage is what they call chaos, it's when we start to question everything. This would be when

we question whether or not our faith is truly ours, or just something our parents passed down to us. We ask if God is really good and if He is, why is there pain? Did Jesus really die, is the Bible truly God's word and if so, how?

But assuming we continue to press on and fight the good fight, so to speak, we enter into a space of truly owning our faith. Though admittedly, we never stop asking questions. I think we just get more ok with some questions that don't have answers. This is the space where deep faith takes root, and the place I think Paul has been leading Timothy, and us, through-out all of his letters but especially in these two letters to his true son in the faith. Let us read on and see how our faith might grow, even through chaos, to be our guiding principle in this life.

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Have you ever not believed in God? If so, what brought you to faith in Him? If not, have you ever struggled with faith and questions?

If you were to place yourself on one of the stages of faith mentioned above, where would you be and why? When you see Jesus for the first time, what questions do you think you'll ask him?

INTRODUCTION

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion. Feel free to add or subtract or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

OPEN

What makes you content? Are there things in your life that you are constantly striving for or trying to obtain? Share a time in your life when you experienced peace and contentment.

HEAD

Read 1 Timothy 6 together and share any wisdom, insights, or questions you have in response to the reading.

What is dangerous about wanting to be rich? (see vs. 9-10) When Paul tells Timothy about the “temptation and trap” of money, what truths are evident for us today?

What is the “great gain” one receives when Paul talks about “godliness with contentment”?

Can you think of a time in the Bible where a person is commended for pursuing money? What about where a person is condemned for loving or chasing after money? What should our attitude be towards money?

Paul encourages/coaches Timothy to “flee from all this” and do what instead? Do any of those words speak to you, today?

HEART

Is there a difference between enjoying money and being a lover of money? Have you ever struggled with one or the other? Or both?!

If the life of faith and the path of following Jesus is like “a good fight” how are you doing? Winning? Still training? Or getting KO’d (knocked out)?!

What from this passage will enable you to “guard what God has trusted to you”? (vs.20) How can this group help you in this good fight?

HANDS

Read and reflect on these various texts and see what take-aways come to you in regards to money:

“Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’”
Hebrews 13:5

“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”
Matthew 6:24

“He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity.”
Ecclesiastes 5:10

“A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold.”
Proverbs 22:1

“And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”
Philippians 4:19

LIVING WORDS for YOUR WEEK

“...run from all these evil things. Pursue righteousness and a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness. Fight the good fight for true faith. Hold tightly to the eternal life to which God has called you...”
1 Timothy 6:11-12

INTRODUCTION

The following questions are a guide to help families with children understand God and discover His love through- out the series. You may think of other ideas that fit the needs of your family.

Read 1 Timothy 6:11-12 together with your family.

As you read these verses, think about how our faith is built by trusting Christ above anything or anyone else.

What kinds of things does Paul tell Timothy to pursue in life?

What does it mean to “fight the good fight”?

How do you want to build your life of faith and trust in God?

Week 5 of 8

In Search of Deep Abiding

The Good Fight

INTRODUCTION

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion. Feel free to add or subtract or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

OPEN

Have you ever wanted to give up? From sports to school to videogames, for many of us when things get too hard we contemplate giving up. Think of a time when you've thought about giving up. If you gave up, what did that feel like? If you chose to move forward, what did that feel like?

HEAD

Paul writes his final encouragements to Timothy as he ends his letter. He implores Timothy to continue honoring his position of leadership. As we read this portion of scripture it becomes evident that the road ahead of Timothy will get difficult. It's clear that there will be a time when Timothy may want to give up. Paul, foreseeing this reality, charges Timothy with the call to continue moving forward. Paul encourages him to continue down the difficult road. Paul writes "fight the good fight for the true faith".

HEART

At some point we all feel like giving up. It's one of the most common experiences. There is encouragement to be found here. Paul reminds Timothy, and us, that there is a reward behind the difficulty. The good fight is worth fighting. Paul reminds him that he is living in the truth, the way that God designed him to live. There is a peace and hope that we can rest in because we know we are living in the plans that God has for us. The safest place for our souls is in the plan of God. That doesn't mean life is easy! It means we have hope.

HANDS

Practically this portion of scripture is a call to live a Godly life. A life lived for Jesus does look different. What we promote and how we treat others matters! We are people who choose to live the way God calls us. Yet, this Godly life is not simply behavior change. It's a life postured towards God. It's a life that leads to becoming the people we were designed to be. Living in the design God has for humanity is the best place we can be.

LIVING WORDS for YOUR WEEK

“Fight the good fight for the true faith. Hold tightly to the eternal life to which God has called you, which you have declared so well before many witnesses.”

1 Timothy 6:12

[illegible]

[illegible]

WEEK 6

IN SEARCH
OF DEEP
GRACE

1 This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus. I have been sent out to tell others about the life he has promised through faith in Christ Jesus. 2 I am writing to Timothy, my dear son. May God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord give you grace, mercy, and peace.

And so begins Paul's second letter to Timothy, in similar fashion to his first letter, but his circumstances have changed. Paul is no longer free to share the gospel, he's writing from a prison cell in Rome. He's not on house arrest like he has been before, which offers a little more freedom and comfort. No, this time he's been tossed into a dungeon that probably only had a hole at the top for light and air. It's cold, dark, lonely, and he knows his end is near. So where we looked at 1 Timothy with an understanding that Paul was not only instructing Timothy on how to lead the church and what the life of faith should like, we now look at a man who sees the current and coming challenges to the gospel and to Christ's church, and wants to prepare his dear son in the faith to withstand the coming storms and help guide the church through.

Timothy has been Paul's companion, student, and co-laborer for 15 years. They know each other well; strengths, weaknesses, passions, and dreams. There is a deep love and a mutual respect between them. But Paul knows Timothy needs some last words.

In this first pericope, Paul opens his letter with a few words that he repeats multiple times over the short four chapters; Christ (used 13 times in 2 Timothy), life (18 times), and faith (9 times). We know that Paul's central focus has been Christ, ever since he met him on the road to Damascus. And what Christ offers us is life, full and abundant and not just in the life to come, but in the here and now. And how do we receive that life? We live by faith, believing and trusting in God as our Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, Protector, and Promise-Keeper.

As we read this letter, we'll see Paul's heart both for his "dear son" in the faith, and for the church that he's given 30 years of his life to growing. We'll learn about the grace extended to each of us, that Timothy would

Paul ends his greeting here with two words that were often used by him in his letters, grace and peace. Grace came from a Greek word, *charis*, and peace was more from the Jewish tradition, *shalome*. With these simple yet powerful words, Paul signals that the instructions he gives, as well as the power of the gospel message, is for everyone.

What are some of the most meaningful teachings you've received in your life? Who gave them and how have those teachings continued to influence you? The life of faith is an invitation to a whole-life, something that affects and impacts every aspect of our being. But why do you think so many compartmentalize faith into a part-time weekend activity? It has been said that the gospel has to be good news for everyone or it isn't good news for anyone. Agree or disagree? Explain.

[illegible]

3 Timothy, I thank God for you—the God I serve with a clear conscience, just as my ancestors did. Night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. 4 I long to see you again, for I remember your tears as we parted. And I will be filled with joy when we are together again.

That line always grips me; “I remember your tears as we parted.” Perhaps Paul was more than a teacher and friend, but maybe a father-figure for Timothy. And perhaps they both knew that it was likely they wouldn’t see each other again, and the tears flowed.

Early on in my marriage, I traveled a lot for work. Though some people think traveling is exotic, I'll tell you that my experience is that it becomes dramatically less exotic after your third time at Taco Bell in two days and the hotel you booked is full and claims to never have gotten your reservation.

After a long season of not having to travel, that first trip weighed heavy on both my wife and I. We sat at the airport, holding each other, tears flowing. I got on my flight with a tear-stained face and the flight attendant asked if I had just said goodbye to a girlfriend. I told her that it was actually my wife. I don't know what her background was, but she seemed really surprised that I'd be that emotional over leaving my wife for a few days.

I think that as Paul writes those last few lines about being together again, he knows that it's not likely on this side of heaven. Timothy weighs heavy on his heart, which is why he prays for him day and night.

A mentor of mine once explained to me the power of intercessory prayer in a way that really resonated. He compared it to that person you know that when they walk into a room, the whole room lights up. There's something about their presence that just makes the place and the people in it better.

In a conversation I was having not long ago with a friend of mine whose 16 year old daughter is in her third year of battling hodgekin's lymphoma, he said that there have been times when he and his wife can

Paul and Timothy cared deeply for each other and it shows. They allowed themselves to be known. We all need these types of relationships in our journey of faith. Relationships full of love, respect, grace, and encouragement where Christ is central.

Do you have someone in your life that is like a partner in the faith journey? Someone you can go to for prayer, encouragement, and guidance? Do you have someone that you are investing in, praying for and encouraging on a regular basis? If not, what might you do to begin?

[illegible]

Paul saw in Timothy so much more than Timothy saw in himself, and he treated him as such. He gave him responsibility, big responsibility, knowing that Timothy wouldn't try to do it alone but instead, would go forward on his knees.

Have you ever felt called by God to do something you were sure you couldn't do? What happened?

[illegible]

2 Timothy 1: 8-11

8 So never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord. And don't be ashamed of me, either, even though I'm in prison for him. With the strength God gives you, be ready to suffer with me for the sake of the Good News. 9 For God saved us and called us to live a holy life. He did this, not because we deserved it, but because that was his plan from before the beginning of time—to show us his grace through Christ Jesus. 10 And now he has made all of this plain to us by the appearing of Christ Jesus, our Savior. He broke the power of death and illuminated the way to life and immortality through the Good News. 11 And God chose me to be a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of this Good News.

It doesn't take Paul long to get to the tough stuff. In this passage, he reminds us that following Jesus, preaching the gospel, is not always rose-petals and butterfly kisses.

This flies in the face of some of today's false gospels. The prosperity gospel teaches that if you follow Jesus in all the right ways, surrender all the right things, fight to overcome your sin, then your life will just get better and better. Adversely, if your life isn't going so great it's because you aren't doing the above or trusting enough in Jesus.

Another false gospel could be called the personal gospel, which puts us at the center of the gospel message, instead of Jesus, and makes God out to be a life coach who mostly just says what you already want to hear.

But the gospel of Jesus Christ, that Paul has dedicated his life to, never promises the easy road or the love of others and the world. The gospel Paul preaches challenges the status quo and the power structures, and it turns the world's values upside down (the first shall be last and the last shall be first, to become great you must become a servant, etc... Matthew 20: 16 and 23: 11). The world didn't praise Paul because Paul challenged the world to a different way of life, a way of sacrifice and service. And Paul's life was not easy. In his second letter to the church in Corinth he talked about how many times he'd been whipped, faced death, receiving lashings, stoned, shipwrecked, and

imprisoned, all for the sake of the gospel (2 Corinthians 11: 22-27).

God never promises us easy, but He does promise that He will always be with us, never leave us and never forsake us. He does promise salvation and a love that is more powerful than anything we can imagine.

So Paul reminds Timothy that suffering comes, as does attacks from the devil and those sold out to the way of the world, but he also reminds Timothy that it is God that gives strength, that has saved us and called us to a holy life (one we didn't deserve - which is grace), and it is God who has the ultimate power over sin and death. This is the good news worth living and dying for, and sharing this good news in the best of times and the worst of times is our call.

How would you define grace?

In what ways is the gospel of Jesus challenging you right now to live differently than the ways of the world; at work, at home, in church?

Someone once said, "Everyone dies, but not everyone truly lives." Do you know what in your life you care enough about that you would be willing to die for?

By all appearances, Paul's circumstances were bleak. He was in prison, suffering, living in a damp, dark, hole in the ground. Though once he had been at the top of the power structure in Jerusalem with a lush and comfortable future ahead of him as a leader in the Sanhedrin, now he had little to his name and his previous life was a distant memory.

But Paul didn't give up his former titles and accolades to obtain more, and as he approaches the end of his life and reflects back over the decisions he's made and the life he has lived, he seems to do so without regrets. He has said before he no longer lives but that Christ lives in him, and that His whole life is about living for and teaching about the risen Lord (Galatians 2: 20, 1 Corinthians 2:2). And even though by all appearances life is not going Paul's way, things are more than they seem. Paul is confident in his faith, who he trusts, and knows he has full access to the power of the Holy Spirit for whatever comes his way. He knows that he has made the right choice, and as he'll say soon, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful." (2 Timothy 4: 7)

What helped him live a life fixated on Christ no matter his circumstances? I think he gives us a hint when he speaks about “a pattern shaped by the faith and love that you have in Christ.” Paul had developed a way of living life that kept Christ at the center no matter what. He studied God’s word, he was found regularly in prayer, he surrendered his life in service

So what circumstances are you facing today that may be distracting you from remembering that Jesus is the most important thing? What seems as if it's falling apart, or causing fear, or stressing you out, or breaking your heart, or telling you that you're not good enough? And if you have any of these distractions, how can you surrender them today to the One who is more than enough to take care of your needs? How can you develop a pattern of life that helps you guard your faith against the distractions of this world and the evil one?

List out those things in your life that have or are keeping you from trusting in Jesus.
Pray over each item and ask Jesus to help you trust in Him more than your circumstances.
What is one practice you can start today that might help you pattern your life in such a way to keep Christ central?

[illegible]

2 Timothy 1: 15-18

15 As you know, everyone from the province of Asia has deserted me—even Phygelus and Hermogenes. 16 May the Lord show special kindness to Onesiphorus and all his family because he often visited and encouraged me. He was never ashamed of me because I was in chains. 17 When he came to Rome, he searched everywhere until he found me. 18 May the Lord show him special kindness on the day of Christ's return. And you know very well how helpful he was in Ephesus.

Here again we have the reminder of how important community is to one developing a life of deep faith.

Last year, a close friend of mine lost his father suddenly. What made it even worse was that my friend hadn't been able to see his father in some time due to the pandemic, and because the pandemic was still going strong, he wasn't able to fly out to see his mom and be with his family at this time.

Shortly after his father's death was Father's Day. Our band of brothers, as we sometimes refer to ourselves, got together and decided to surprise our friend and show up at his house on Father's Day. We all bought our airline tickets, arranged our hotel, and warned our friend's wife of our plans.

We only spent 24 hours together, a short-window of time, but in those 24 hours we cried until the tears stopped, we laughed until our faces hurt, and we ate until our bellies were about to burst. This community of brothers is one of my most meaningful tools that helps me grow in my faith. When I am in need, the brothers show up. When I have questions, they are a phone call away. When I have doubts, they listen without judgment.

When Paul mentions Onesiphorus, I feel like he, along with Timothy, is a part of his own band of brothers. Not only did Onesiphorus' faith in Paul not waver even when he was put in prison, Onesiphorus made the journey to Rome and "searched everywhere" until he found Paul just so he could bring him some encouragement and show kindness. We don't know how far he had to travel or how long it took him to

find Paul (Paul was in a hole after all), but we know he loved Paul enough to seek him out and not give up. We all need Onesiphorus' in our lives.

On the other side of this coin was Phygelus and Hermogenes. For whatever reason, they left Paul in his time of need. Maybe things got too tough, maybe they wanted to protect their lives and reputation. Whatever it was, they were fair-weather friends.

So as we all seek to develop deep faith, let us recognize that it cannot be done in a vacuum. We need community, our own band of friends who are willing to seek us out and encourage us in good times and bad. And we need to be those kinds of people for others.

Who are your band of friends?

Can you think of someone who went out of their way to be with you in a difficult time in your life? Write about what that meant to you?

Is there someone you can think of today that you know needs some extra encouragement, someone you could seek out through a text, an invitation to coffee, or even a sneaky delivery of some flowers or a treat on their doorstep?

INTRODUCTION

The following questions are a guide to help families with children understand God and discover His love through- out the series. You may think of other ideas that fit the needs of your family.

Read 2 Timothy 1:8-12 together with your family.

As you read through these texts, think about the grace of God, and what it is life to have the Spirit of God within us, guiding and helping us in our journey of faith.

Have you ever felt ashamed of being a Christian?
What does Paul tell Timothy to encourage him through these feelings?

Do you think we deserve eternal life? Why do you think God has so much grace for each of us?

Even though Paul was suffering in prison, how do his words reflect the Spirit of God within him?

2 Timothy 7

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion. Feel free to add or subtract or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

Have you ever felt like you weren't good enough? This is a common feeling everyone has experienced before. Thankfully there are people that remind us that we are good enough. Think of a time when you were reminded that you are good enough.

Paul writes another letter to Timothy with similar purpose. He is writing to his friend with instructions on how to be a leader and also to encourage him. Paul writes this letter to Timothy while in prison. At this point in his ministry Paul is a seasoned veteran of faith. He has experienced the ups and downs of ministry. He knows that Timothy is feeling the weight of ministry so he writes to him reminding him of who he knew him to be. Paul reminds him of his genuine faith and that God has given him a spirit of “power, love, and self-discipline”.

Paul reminds his friend of an incredible truth: there is greatness within him. The same can be said about us today. There are so many things that can take away from our confidence. Often we can feel unworthy - that we aren't good enough. What we learn here is that God has instilled within us power, love, and self discipline. We have all the makings of greatness within us. You are a person of greatness; God is wanting to awaken that greatness within you.

Sometimes when we feel like we aren't good enough, doing simple tasks can become difficult. Paul's reminder that we have power, love, and self discipline reminds us that we are capable of living in God's plan. Live today in the power, love, and self discipline that God has placed within you. Live in the greatness that comes from God.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

WEEK 7

IN SEARCH
OF DEEP
RESILIENCE

2 Timothy 2: 1-2

1 Timothy, my dear son, be strong through the grace that God gives you in Christ Jesus. 2 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.

As we explore 2 Timothy 2 this week we are in search of deep resilience. The word resilience refers to the capacity to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune, change, or difficulties. And as we've discussed with 2 Timothy already, Paul is trying to make sure Timothy knows that though the life of faith can be hard at times, there is an inner strength that comes with a life devoted to Christ that allows you to not only survive the difficulties, but even thrive through them.

Again, Paul reminds Timothy to be strong as he has many times before. Again, Paul refers to Timothy as his dear son, his emotions and affections right on the surface through his instructions. And again, we see Paul not just investing in Timothy, but caring for Christ's body, the church, in trying to assure that the truth of Christ and the gospel message, would carry on through the coming trials because Paul wouldn't be there to help.

You see, at the time Paul is writing, the persecution of the followers of Jesus is ramping up both from the Jews and from the Romans. After all, the Christians didn't pay homage to the Roman gods, so when bad things happened people blamed the Christians for not doing their part. In addition, Rome was hoarding its power and resources for itself, and people were in need. False teachers were spreading false doctrine throughout the world. One could say that the devil was doing his best to keep the truth about who God really is and how God really loves from taking over his realm.

And unlike one of the false teachings at the time that taught a secret knowledge, the truths of Christianity have been taught far and wide, publically, and the story has been entrusted to many reliable witnesses to spread far and wide.

God doesn't want us to have a fickle faith, tossed to and fro by the winds of challenge or from one teaching to another. He wants us to be grounded, rooted deeply in the life He's called us to live; a life that isn't just for some, but for everyone. The life of being a disciple of Jesus, is also a life of being a teacher for Jesus in word and deed. We're not to hoard the truths we come to find in Him, we are to share it so that we can help others endure whatever life throws at them.

Coming home from the church the other day I heard a story about an actress named Tippi Hedren, who visited a Vietnamese refugee camp in California some 40 years ago. She flew in her personal manicurist to come to the camp to not only do the nails of 20 of the women there, but to also teach them how to do nails for others. Tippi then told those 20 women to find 20 other women and teach them, and so on. 40 years later, the nail industry is worth over \$8 billion dollars and is dominated by the Vietnamese.

What would happen if you and I each found a teacher, developed our faith and a pattern of life that helped us to maintain that faith in the face of challenges, then taught even 1 other person to do the same? You think maybe we'd start another revolution?

Have you journeyed through some difficult times in your faith journey? If so, what kinds of things helped you endure?

Do you feel that your faith is resilient enough today to weather challenges and hard times?

If not, what seems lacking and what are some things you could seek to start today that might help deepen your faith?

2 Timothy 2: 3-6

3 Endure suffering along with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.⁴ Soldiers don't get tied up in the affairs of civilian life, for then they cannot please the officer who enlisted them. 5 And athletes cannot win the prize unless they follow the rules. 6 And hardworking farmers should be the first to enjoy the fruit of their labor.

It almost sounds like the start of a joke - "a Soldier, an athlete, and a farmer walk into a bar..." In the midst of a chapter that seems to address the external challenges we face in the life of faith, these are interesting metaphors Paul uses to help us consider developing resilience.

Maybe the suffering Paul speaks to in this passage has much more to do with internal suffering and struggle as opposed to external. Let me explain.

Soldiers, athletes, and farmers all have to be disciplined to avoid pitfalls. The soldier has to avoid concerning themselves with the civilians around them in order to follow through with the orders of their commanding officers. They have to continuously think about representing Rome and their fellow soldiers well, as well as defending the lifestyle they are fighting to protect. An athlete trains hard, but in a competitive arena, it can be easy to think about taking shortcuts to achieve optimal performance. And even a farmer, not a metaphor Paul has used before, has to avoid laziness and work hard if she hopes to enjoy the fruit of her labor.

How does this relate to the development of a deep faith with resilience?

In a weak moment I'd admit that I'm a bit of a workaholic when it comes to pastoring. I care a whole lot about the call of Christ to share the gospel, and I long for His children to come to know Him better and surrender their lives to Him. However, in the busy work of ministry I can too easily end up doing a whole lot of things for Jesus, but none of them with Jesus. Even good things like ministry can be a distraction to the call of Christ if our focus is off.

So work hard? Yes. But do so with Jesus, remembering that you can't go faster than the One you're following.

Think about Jesus' life on earth. He lived here for 30ish years, and yet only 3.5 of those years in public ministry. He had to start a movement that could change the world, and yet He often retreated and withdrew to quiet places to rest, study, meditate, and teach His disciples. When He hung on the cross, if you just went by appearances you would have that He was a failure, only one of his twelve disciples stood somewhat by Him. But Jesus' rhythm of life was such that He was able to work hard, serve much, sacrifice all because He was regularly rooted and grounded in God the Father.

You and I must do the same. We must learn to develop a rhythm of life modeled after the Savior. We must not let the demands of the tasks around us, even the good ones, distract us from the source of our faith. When we regularly and consistently spend time at the feet of Jesus, listening to what He has to say, when we abide in Him and remain in an active and present relationship with Him, then our faith deepens, our resilience builds, and empowered by Him we can do immeasurably more than what we could have ever imagined.

What are some of your most common distractions in the spiritual life?

How have you found ways that help you refocus from these distractions?

When was the last time you withdrew to a quiet place with Jesus?

2 Timothy 2: 7-10

7 Think about what I am saying. The Lord will help you understand all these things. 8 Always remember that Jesus Christ, a descendant of King David, was raised from the dead. This is the Good News I preach. 9 And because I preach this Good News, I am suffering and have been chained like a criminal. But the word of God cannot be chained. 10 So I am willing to endure anything if it will bring salvation and eternal glory in Christ Jesus to those God has chosen.

We live in an age I call infobesity. We have so much access to so much information that we think that with a few strokes on the keyboard we can be an expert at almost anything. For example, I have talked to many doctors who have patients that arrive for their appointment having already diagnosed themselves with the help of Google. All they need the doctor for is to sign-off on their meds.

But in Scripture, it's not information we're in more need of, it's wisdom, application, guidance. These aren't things we get in a Google search. If we ask Siri for the meaning of life, which I literally just did, she says, "the answer is blowin' in the wind, so take a deep breath and go outside, you'll likely find answers there."

Paul says here that the Lord will help us understand the things we're struggling to grasp now. He's echoing the Savior who promised the Holy Spirit who would continue to teach us "everything and will remind [us] of everything I have told you."

This is actually something I love about the Adventist faith tradition. We have this principle called "Present Truth" locked into our way of understanding Scripture. Present Truth says that you and I will never know and understand everything there is to know and understand, and that we will always need God's help to seek further wisdom. This principle should keep us humble, accepting that we are not known at all or have the corner market on all truth. We are students who, like Mary, continue to sit at his feet and listen to what He has to share (Luke 10: 38-42).

And as we sit at His feet we are reminded that sitting and listening and learning from Him is the most

important thing we do in this life. It is our foundation for a deep and resilient faith.

Paul reminds Timothy of this in saying, "Always remember." Don't forget who He is and what He's done. Don't forget the gospel no matter how tough it gets at times.

But if the gospel is such good news, then why was it offensive to some? Why was Paul in prison, "chained like a criminal."

The power shift of the gospel says that God, not us, is the most important thing in all creation. It says serving is more important than ruling. And in Rome, Caesar was Lord and Savior, but in the gospel, there is only one Lord and Savior and that is a Jew named Jesus, who was crucified but rumor has it, rose again.

Paul wants Timothy, and all of us, to remember the truth that we accepted when we first gave our lives to Christ. He wants us to live as life-long learners of God's word, that though he may be locked up, God's word never is. And he hopes and prays that we will be able to stand firm in our faith in Christ remembering that our future is secure in Him. Paul had eyes to see beyond the walls of his prison and past the eyes of his persecutors, and he knew that the source of his joy was otherworldly. So the world Paul lived in could do what it wanted to him, but Paul no longer belonged to the world. In these last words to Timothy he is desperate to help his son in the faith, and the church of Jesus, always remember who they are (or should I say whose?).

Is there an aspect of your faith that took a long time for you to learn or accept?

What are some of the ways you think the Holy Spirit continues to teach us today?

How does knowing the "end of the story" which is our beginning of eternity, help you live your life differently today?

2 Timothy 2: 11-14

11 This is a trustworthy saying: If we die with him, we will also live with him. 12 If we endure hardship, we will reign with him. If we deny him, he will deny us. 13 If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny who he is. 14 Remind everyone about these things, and command them in God's presence to stop fighting over words. Such arguments are useless, and they can ruin those who hear them.

Ok, today I'm going to start us off with a reference to a movie that will date me. In the movie, Back to the Future, the "villain" of the story is a guy named Biff who constantly gets in the way of the plans of our heroes, Marty and Doc. But in the end, Biff is just a school bully throwing his weight around to make himself seem significant when in reality, in other aspects of his life, he doesn't feel significant at all.

One idiosyncrasy of Biff is that he often misquotes well-known sayings. Like, "Why don't you make like a tree and...get out of here," instead of how the quote is supposed to end with the word "leave." Or "That's about as funny as a screen door on a battleship," instead of a screen door on a submarine.

Paul quotes what must have been a familiar saying, or maybe a hymn, in this passage, but it sounds like he got some of it wrong doesn't it?

The first two statements have to do with the Christian life. The first is what happens when we surrender our lives to him, we die to self. When we get baptized, we're told we go under the water as if we are going into the tomb with Jesus, and then we come up out of the water as if we are being raised with Him. This we get. It's one of the basic tenets of the faith.

The second statement is in line with what Paul has been talking about often in this letter so far; the Christian life can be a struggle, but a struggle that is worth it because of the fruit it produces in our life and the end goal of the faith which is an eternity with Jesus.

But that third statement of denial stops us in our tracks. That sounds harsh, right? Though it does echo a statement Jesus made in Matthew 10: 33 when

He says, "everyone who denies me here on earth, I will also deny before my Father in heaven." Had this statement been said without any context, we would certainly have cause for concern.

Thankfully, this statement is immediately followed by a declaration of God's faithfulness even when we are unfaithful. No matter what we do, even when we are fickle and fall, when we stray, God's character remains and never changes. When our faith fails us, when we have our questions and doubts, and when pressured we fail to pass the test, God is still an ever-present help in times of trouble. Sure, there are consequences to bad choices, but in God's tender mercy and grace, He continues to seek to save, and continues to be with us always even to the end of the age.

We have to remind people of who God is, because the devil constantly attacks God's character and seeks to give us doubt in Him. We have to remind people of how faithful God is, and how ever since our fall and rebellion in the Garden of Eden, God has never stopped chasing after us. He even went where we couldn't go, the hill of Calvary, and took on the sin of the world to restore our relationship to Him. Let this be the focus of our conversations and let us not spend time with meaningless words and endless debates that only distract us from this singular and present truth.

Think back to your baptism. Why did you choose to get baptized and what did going under the water and out again mean to you?

In what ways have you felt unfaithful to God as of late?

What is it about God's faithfulness today, even when you are not, that you are most thankful for?

2 Timothy 2: 15-21

15 Work hard so you can present yourself to God and receive his approval. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth. 16 Avoid worthless, foolish talk that only leads to more godless behavior. 17 This kind of talk spreads like cancer, as in the case of Hymenaeus and Philetus. 18 They have left the path of truth, claiming that the resurrection of the dead has already occurred; in this way, they have turned some people away from the faith. 19 But God's truth stands firm like a foundation stone with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and "All who belong to the Lord must turn away from evil." 20 In a wealthy home some utensils are made of gold and silver, and some are made of wood and clay. The expensive utensils are used for special occasions, and the cheap ones are for everyday use. 21 If you keep yourself pure, you will be a special utensil for honorable use. Your life will be clean, and you will be ready for the Master to use you for every good work.

I fear that in the church of today, we have become dreadfully accepting of mediocrity. What do I mean?

I mean that far too often I see people give the church whatever they have leftover, instead of their best.

Too often I see people show up on Saturday or Sunday morning and throw a service together, not having given any real thought or attention to what God might be up to or needing from us.

Too often I have seen people go through the motions of participating in church, but they haven't been moved in years.

The passage today begins with the admonition to "word hard." In the Greek, this could also be translated to do your best, to pursue with passion and zeal, to make every effort. God gave everything, risked everything, to save us. He laid down his life to save us from ours. All He asks for is our willingness to give Him our lives in return; the best of us, not the leftovers.

And we don't need to work at "receiving God's approval" as it sounds like at first read. Paul tells us

elsewhere that "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5: 8) This line is more akin to a worker wanting to show her boss that she's done good work. There is a healthy pride that wells up in us when we've done our best, when we've worked hard, and that feeling when our boss smiles and says, "Well done, good and faithful servant," is hard to describe.

Paul does give two examples of those who weren't doing their best; in fact, they were spending time with worthless and foolish talk that produces bad fruit. I'm sure they were given opportunity to turn from this type of teaching, but their influence was growing "like cancer" and had to be stopped.

One must be careful to avoid thinking that working hard is what wins God's favor, as if there is anything we can do to be deserving of His life for ours. We don't work hard to teach the faith and help develop it in others in order to be saved or win His favor, but we do it because we already have those things. We are loved. We are saved. He has died for us and offers us eternal life. Our task is to receive it and help others take hold of the nail-scarred hand that is reaching out for us. So yes, let's work hard and do our best and give our best in honor of the One who did it first for all of us.

Why do you think so many of us simply give God our leftovers instead of our best?

What is one area of your life that you know you could "step-up" in service to God?

Evil seems to lurk around every corner, seeking to get us off the scent of Jesus. How can you and I help each other avoid evil and turn to good?

2 Timothy 1: 22-26

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. 23 Again I say, don't get involved in foolish, ignorant arguments that only start fights. 24 A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone, be able to teach, and be patient with difficult people. 25 Gently instruct those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change those people's hearts, and they will learn the truth. 26 Then they will come to their senses and escape from the devil's trap. For they have been held captive by him to do whatever he wants.

As we've discussed before, Timothy wasn't in his teens, but he was still considered young in his culture, about 35. There are several places where Paul speaks to his age and seeks to encourage him, and in this passage, he simply recognizes that there are certain things we're more tempted by at some stages of our lives more than others. And he wants Timothy to be wise and not put himself into situations that he knows will tempt him to stray from the path of "righteous living, faithfulness, love, and peace."

Paul simply wants the absolute best for Timothy, and he knows that the absolute best for Timothy and us is the way of Christ. He knows that Jesus' teachings actually lead to life, even though some will say that it's keeping you from it.

And in these instructions, Paul reminds Timothy yet again of the adversary who is out to steal, kill, and destroy, keeping us from the life Christ calls us to live (John 10: 10).

It's important for us to name our enemy, because when we don't, we give him power over us. And in naming the enemy to our faith, the devil, we simultaneously name the one who has been given all power and authority in heaven and earth, Jesus Christ. (Matthew 28: 18)

When you feel as if the enemy is pursuing you, claim the name of Jesus. When you are feeling down, depressed, discouraged and disconnected, claim the

name of Jesus. When the darkness around you seems to think, one bad thing happening after another, claim the name of Jesus. For there is power in the name of Jesus. In the name of Jesus, lepers were healed, those born lame can walk, the blind see, and the dead raised.

I know we don't see those types of miracles like what we read in the gospels or the book of Acts, but that doesn't mean there is any less power in the name.

There have been plenty of times in my life when I have felt attacked and discouraged, so much so that I couldn't even formulate a prayer, but I could say the name of Jesus. And I'd say that name over and over again, knowing that He hears my cries for help and that according to Romans 8, when I don't know what to pray the Holy Spirit and Jesus Himself intercede.

So as we seek to build a deep faith resilient enough to withstand the difficulties of life, let us remember that there is an enemy that doesn't want that to happen. However, that enemy is a defeated foe who cowers at the name of Jesus. And the more we cling to Him and avoid the places of temptations in our lives, the more resilient our faith becomes.

What are some of the ways you think the devil seeks to keep us from deepening our faith?

Read Romans 8. What does it mean to you to know that two of the three members of the Trinity are interceding for you when you pray?

What are some of the conversations and spaces you need to avoid to help you continue pursuing a life of righteousness?

INTRODUCTION

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion. Feel free to add or subtract or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

OPEN

Have you ever said “No” to something because it appeared to be too challenging or difficult? What was it like for you to process through that?

HEAD

Read 2 Timothy 2 together and share any wisdom, insights, or questions you have in response to the reading.

“Be strong through the grace that God gives you...” or “Be strong in the grace that is in Jesus Christ.” As Paul’s life was nearing its end, he made it a special point to emphasize this point as well as perseverance and endurance. How do you think Timothy would have received a word like this coming from Paul?

Paul admonishes Timothy to “endure hardship” for the sake of something greater and then talks about a soldier, athlete, and farmer. What about these people illustrate endurance well? Which of their examples speak most strongly to you?

What encourages you most about the “trustworthy saying” in vs. 11-13?

How do you know if you are “quarreling about words” or “standing up against false teachings”? Have you ever experienced other people doing these things? What is the difference?

HEART

Remember, when Paul wrote this letter, he was in prison. In spite of all his suffering(s), he persevered and remained faithful. What enabled him to keep going? What has kept you going in times of hardship?

Why do you think our church and/or society tends to shy away from the call to endurance and suffering? Is

that something you relate to or reject?

HANDS

At the end of ch. 2 Paul gives Timothy several warnings: avoid...flee...don’t have anything to do with. He then encourages movement in the opposite direction: pursue, present, cleanse. Is there a word for your life here?

What things do you need to move away from? What things do you need to move toward?

How can this group pray for you this week?

LIVING WORDS for YOUR WEEK

“Use every piece of God’s armor to resist the enemy in the time of evil, so that after the battle you will still be standing firm.”
Ephesians 6:3

“So humble yourselves before God. Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you. Draw close to God, and God will draw close to you.”
James 4:7-8

“So think clearly and exercise self-control. Look forward to the special blessings that will come to you at the return of Jesus Christ.”
1 Peter 1:13

INTRODUCTION

The following questions are a guide to help families with children understand God and discover His love through- out the series. You may think of other ideas that fit the needs of your family.

Read 2 Timothy 2:8-13 together with your family.

As you read through these verses, think about how God is a faithful sustainer. He sustained Paul in prison, sustained Timothy in his ministry, and He sustains you too.

What does Paul say happened to him because he preached the Good News about Jesus?

Sometimes we are treated in ways that are hurtful or unfair. What does God promise to do for anyone who trusts in Him?

How can these promises helps you when you are treated unfairly or someone does something that is hurtful to you?

“This is a trustworthy saying: If we die with him, we will also live with him. If we endure hardship, we will reign with him. If we deny him, he will deny us. If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny who he is.”

2 Timothy 2:11-13

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion. Feel free to add or subtract or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

Sports function well when all the rules are followed. In fact, without the rules to a sport, the sport would cease to be a sport. Can you imagine playing American football with people who played European football? It would be chaos! Take some time to think about why it wouldn't work.

Paul takes time and care in writing to Timothy. It's clear that he sees Timothy as a great leader. He writes to him in Chapter 2 reminding him the goal of his calling: he is called to share the gospel! Paul felt the need to remind him. In the same way that a soldier listens to his head officer and the way that an athlete listens to the rules of the sport is the way that he is called to preach the Gospel. There is a person he reports to, Jesus, and rules that he lives by, the gospel.

It's easy to get lost in people's opinions. Often the Gospel will go against the grain of society. Because of this it's easy to get lost in sharing the Gospel. Paul gives us a powerful reminder: we are called to follow Jesus and preach the Gospel. You aren't called to live according to the standards of man but rather the standards laid out by God. We can live in confidence when we live in God's plan for us.

Here are some questions you can ask yourself today:

Am I living according to man's standards or God's standards?

Do I have the confidence that comes from living in God's plan?

It's important to remember that God is for us! At all moments we have the ability to live the way he has called us to live. God is faithful! May we be a people that walk in the way of Jesus.

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WEEK 8

IN SEARCH
OF DEEP
GUIDANCE

2 Timothy 3: 1-9

You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. 2 For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. 3 They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good. 4 They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. 5 They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that! 6 They are the kind who work their way into people's homes and win the confidence of vulnerable women who are burdened with the guilt of sin and controlled by various desires. 7 (Such women are forever following new teachings, but they are never able to understand the truth.) 8 These teachers oppose the truth just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses. They have depraved minds and a counterfeit faith. 9 But they won't get away with this for long. Someday everyone will recognize what fools they are, just as with Jannes and Jambres.

We are a part of a faith tradition that has spent a lot of time thinking about the "last days." We've theorized about how long those days will last, exactly when they start, and what signs have transpired that can prove it all to us. And if we're honest, we've not only said "we must be living in the end of times" because of all the evil in the world around us, but we've also asked, "why hasn't it happened yet" and "how much worse can it get."

Paul is having a "last days" moment, especially as he thinks about his own end. He even echoes something about those times that Jesus said, "Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow cold." (Matthew 24: 12)

I think Paul's description is actually what happens in a person's life when self is allowed to take center stage and we are disconnected from the source of life. When this happens, we care more about ourselves than others, we'll say anything about anyone if it advances our cause, God becomes little and we become our own god. This kind of life is really an unraveling

of Jesus' sermon on the mount.

This is why the mission and vision of our church is so important in our present times and is drawing the interest of so many. I can't tell you how many times I've worn my Lovewell hat or my Crosswalk sweatshirt and had someone comment, "Oh, I like that. What does it mean? Where does it come from?" When I tell them it's the mission of my church, I usually get two responses. One response is shock or surprise that a church would have love as it's core identity (I do live in the Pacific Northwest). The other response is a deep resonating sigh as if they know, whether they are believers or not, that loving well is what the world needs now. Loving well is what matters most. Loving well seems to be what that guy Jesus was all about.

If we want to lovewell and avoid the pitfalls of pride and pleasure that Paul asserts, then the best we can do is stay connected to the source of love, and do so in a community of faith that can help hold us accountable. Paul has laid out all the warning signs, our job is to listen.

As we spend this last week together in Paul's letters to Timothy, and as Paul comes to the close of some of his last words shared before he finished his race, let us listen close to the guidance he has to share from 30 years of being sold out to Christ.

In what ways have you seen "the love of most grow cold"?

How can you and I help hold each other accountable to Jesus' new commandment given in John 13 to "love one another as I have loved you"?

Write in your own words what it means to lovewell.

2 Timothy 3: 10-13

10 But you, Timothy, certainly know what I teach, and how I live, and what my purpose in life is. You know my faith, my patience, my love, and my endurance. 11 You know how much persecution and suffering I have endured. You know all about how I was persecuted in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra—but the Lord rescued me from all of it. 12 Yes, and everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. 13 But evil people and impostors will flourish. They will deceive others and will themselves be deceived.

Since Paul started this chapter with a reference to the end times, I'm still in that frame of mind as I read this passage. And I've got to warn you; I've got a beef to pick concerning the last line of this passage.

In our faith tribe, we have been very concerned about an end-time deception. And it's not that I don't believe in this deception, after all, it was Jesus who first mentioned it, "For false messiahs and false prophets will rise up and perform signs and wonders so as to deceive, if possible, even God's chosen ones." So it's not that I disagree that it's a future reality, rather, it's that I struggle with how we've taught people to protect themselves from it.

We have taught generations of people to be afraid of new teaching, to hide away from the world, to avoid even talking to someone who believes in something different than what you were taught when you came into the faith. We tell people this because we don't know what the deception will look like or where it will come from, so be on guard at all times.

But the problem is that we teach people to be on the lookout for the deception, instead of teaching people to be laser-focused on Christ. We've taught people to be afraid, instead of teaching people to live confidently in the life of faith. We've taught people that truth is fragile and can be easily stripped from our hands, instead of recognizing that real truth doesn't need us to defend it.

And how has Paul helped Timothy see with the right lens? How has Paul guided Timothy to have a faith

deep enough and secure enough in Jesus that it won't be shaken no matter the storm?

Paul lived his life right in front of Timothy. He invited him into his world, let him peek behind the curtain, talked about his joys and fears, his triumphs and struggles. In other words, Paul lived transparently for Timothy and regularly pointed him to the author and perfecter of his faith.

The more you and I cling to Christ, the more we allow ourselves to be taught and mentored, the more we dig into the word of God and seek to plumb its depths, the more we need to invite others into the journey with us.

For many years of my life I worked at a university where many assumed that the young adults we served knew how to have a relationship with God. Surely they know how to pray, right? Study the Bible? Oh, they've got to have that figured out by now. But in reality, many young adults didn't know how to do these things because no one showed them. And the people that were in a position to show them probably didn't have anyone do that for them in their life so they lack the confidence of being a true teacher and mentor.

But the world is in need of more people who will live the life of faith with and in front of others. Not experts, no one is, but students willing to learn with others. We need more Paul's to teach more Timothy's who, though not perfect, seek to walk with God and help others learn to do the same.

Are there any end-time tales that you've been told that at some point in your life kept you awake at night? Are there areas of your walk with Christ that you admittedly need help with? (prayer, confession, worship, Study, etc...)

Think about and pray for God to reveal someone that can help you live a life of faith, and that you can help live a life of faith.

2 Timothy 3: 14-17

14 But you must remain faithful to the things you have been taught. You know they are true, for you know you can trust those who taught you. 15 You have been taught the holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus. 16 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. 17 God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.

So many good things have been said about Scripture by Scripture:

“Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.” Psalm 119: 105

“For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.” Hebrews 4: 12

Paul’s words here is another great passage to add to the list. He even says that these Scriptures have taught him from childhood, and given wisdom to receive salvation in Christ Jesus. Powerful words.

When I was little and before I could even read, I received my first Bible. I loved that Bible. It had a picture of Jesus on the front and a zipper to keep it closed so the pages didn’t get bent. I revered that Bible so much that I would sleep with it at night, holding it in my arms. I thought it came directly to me from Jesus (with my mom being the delivery person of course).

But over the years, my view of Scripture changed a bit, especially when I started going to a Christian school in 6th grade. From then on out, through college, I had Bible class every day. This meant that the Bible would get lumped in with all my other textbooks. I throw it into my backpack for the day, and pull it out at night to do homework. The power of the Word hadn’t changed, but my relation to it had.

Then one day, while watching a movie (I know, another movie reference), something clicked. The movie was *The Notebook* by Nicholas Sparks. And the super-condensed version of the story is one of an elderly man who meets an elderly woman in a nursing home, and the man asks the woman if she wants to hear a story. The woman seems confused but says sure, and the man pulls out a leather-bound notebook and begins to read. The story he reads is of a young couple from different backgrounds who fall in love, but then face challenges and separation that lead them down different roads in life. However, something draws them back together and the story ends with them choosing each other to spend their lives with.

Spoiler alert, the story is real, and it’s the story of the elderly couple. The only problem is, the elderly woman has dementia and so has forgotten her story. Every day, the man comes with the leatherbound notebook to read her their story in hopes that she’ll remember him and their love. As the movie goes, she does remember, for just a few minutes every day, but then she forgets again and it breaks his heart. But he comes back the next day, and the day after that and the day after that and reads their story until she remembers.

Then it hit me. You and I also have a leatherbound notebook that tells our story, a story that too many of us have forgotten. And when we read that story, we begin to remember who we are, which is connected to who we are. And that the power of the Scriptures isn’t just that it tells of stories that happened once upon a time, rather, the power of Scripture is that it tells about stories that happen all the time. God’s word is living and active because lives are too, and His word is not only there to give us guidance, but it connects us to our story, our history, our maker.

So let us come to God’s word knowing that when we open its pages we are peering into the greatest love story ever told, ours.

Over the years, what has your relationship to the Bible been and how has it changed?

What is one of your favorite aspects of Scripture? What is one of the most challenging things to you about Scripture?

2 Timothy 4: 1-5

I solemnly urge you in the presence of God and Christ Jesus, who will someday judge the living and the dead when he comes to set up his Kingdom: 2 Preach the word of God. Be prepared, whether the time is favorable or not. Patiently correct, rebuke, and encourage your people with good teaching.

3 For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear.⁴ They will reject the truth and chase after myths.

5 But you should keep a clear mind in every situation. Don't be afraid of suffering for the Lord. Work at telling others the Good News, and fully carry out the ministry God has given you.

Sometimes, the people you love the most have to tell you things you don't want to hear. They don't do it to be mean, on the contrary. They do it because they love you.

I have heard this criticism of Crosswalk before. Oh, you guys are just the "lovey-dovey" church. People come out to hear you preach because you're just telling them what they want to hear, not what they need to hear. But not only could they be more wrong, they misunderstand what love really is.

If you really love someone, then you know there are times when they may be hurting themselves or another person and they need you to step in. If you really love someone, you want what's best for them and they may not be doing what's best for them at the time.

So real love is tough love at times. It can hurt and be painful to both people in the relationship.

When I was eight years old, my parents got a divorce. Now if I'm honest, at the time I really didn't understand what that meant. The only real difference that I could see is that my dad lived somewhere else, and instead of seeing him when he was home for work, we got to spend whole weekends with him at times. And in a lot of ways, dad got way more fun after the divorce. He took us to baseball games, amusement parks, let us watch movies and spend hours at the pool

in his apartment complex. Dad became a best friend. The only problem was, I had best friends and what I needed was a dad who would make the tough calls whether I liked it or not.

So if a friend or pastor only tells you what you want to hear, you may have to question if they really love you or not.

And I love how Paul instructs Timothy in this passage to "work at telling others the Good News." Why work at it? Hasn't he been watching Paul do this for a long time?

I find Paul's understanding of grace in this passage, telling Timothy to be patient with himself. Sometimes what he does is going to work great, and sometimes it won't, but don't give up. Allow yourself room to learn and grow, and especially allow room for the Holy Spirit to continue to grow you and your skills and your understanding of God's love. Faith is a journey, not a destination, and you're going to need a lot of help and a lot of guidance along the way.

Have you ever had to offer "tough love" to someone? What happened when you did?

Have you ever avoided sharing the gospel with someone because you were afraid you would do it wrong? How might your approach be different if you accepted, and gave yourself, a little grace?

So having fulfilled his calling, Paul can now simply look forward to that moment when he gets to see Jesus face to face. Though he talks about a crown, I'm sure his first move will be to fall into the arms of Christ and weep with joy. The end of his story here on earth is really just the beginning of his story that he's waited so long for. A story he has dedicated his whole life to helping others discover so they too may live with joy and anticipation of their future.

Have you had to say goodbye to someone who was important in your faith journey? If so, what was that like?

When you see Jesus for the first time, what do you imagine you will do?

What do you think is the best way that Timothy can honor Paul's memory after he is gone?

[illegible]

2 Timothy 4: 9-22

9 Timothy, please come as soon as you can. 10 Demas has deserted me because he loves the things of this life and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus has gone to Dalmatia. 11 Only Luke is with me. Bring Mark with you when you come, for he will be helpful to me in my ministry. 12 I sent Tychicus to Ephesus. 13 When you come, be sure to bring the coat I left with Carpus at Troas. Also bring my books, and especially my papers. 14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm, but the Lord will judge him for what he has done. 15 Be careful of him, for he fought against everything we said. 16 The first time I was brought before the judge, no one came with me. Everyone abandoned me. May it not be counted against them. 17 But the Lord stood with me and gave me strength so that I might preach the Good News in its entirety for all the Gentiles to hear. And he rescued me from certain death. 18 Yes, and the Lord will deliver me from every evil attack and will bring me safely into his heavenly Kingdom. All glory to God forever and ever! Amen. 19 Give my greetings to Priscilla and Aquila and those living in the household of Onesiphorus. 20 Erastus stayed at Corinth, and I left Trophimus sick at Miletus. 21 Do your best to get here before winter. Eubulus sends you greetings, and so do Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brothers and sisters. 22 May the Lord be with your spirit. And may his grace be with all of you.

When was the last time you got a hand-written letter from someone? I can't even tell you for me, but I can tell you that there are a lot of hand-written letters I received in my life that I held onto. There was something about someone taking the time to write out all those words that was special and made it hard just to toss in the trash.

Back in the day when hand-written communication was the main form of connecting with someone from a distance, you had to include everything you could think of because it wasn't like you could just follow-up with a text or an email and include something you forgot. That's how the end of this letter feels. Paul is making sure to cover his bases, and if he doesn't get another chance to talk to Timothy, he doesn't want to leave any loose ends. And even though he had just

written that his days were ending, he still tries to give Timothy, and perhaps himself, hope that maybe they will get a chance to see each other again.

As Paul closes, you do get a hint of his loneliness from his prison cell. He fondly remembers people that have left and gone to spread the gospel in other places. He also remembers some that had caused harm or abandoned him in his time of need, but interestingly, he says "may it not be counted against them." It's almost as if Paul knows that there are just times when life is hard, and though people fail, everyone deserves a second chance. And though people fail, Jesus never will, so at the end of the day, no matter our differences or our past hurts or pains, let's be more like Jesus.

Again, we have Paul praising some great women of the faith, Priscilla, Aquila, Claudia, and eventually all the "brothers and sisters" of their community of faith. Paul knows it takes a village to help raise faith in a child, and he's not going to let cultural stigmas get in the way of anyone willing to help grow faith in another.

I am sure that as Paul pens these last words, there are tears in his eyes. He'd much rather say all these things to Timothy in person, but circumstances won't allow it. And maybe there is even a part of Paul that wants to continue in this life if only to sit on the sidelines and watch Timothy become the leader he knows he can. But Paul is a realist and he knows what's about to happen. Soon, he will be executed by beheading. His tears are not for him, but rather for his son in the faith and the church he has fought so hard for. All Paul can do is trust that his work has developed deep faith throughout the known world that will stand the test of time. So he finishes his last line, puts the pen back in its bottle, hands the letter off to a courier, and thanks Jesus for allowing him the incredible opportunity to serve and give his life for the cause of Christ.

If you knew your life was going to end tomorrow, who would you want to talk to and what would you say? In the last two years of your life, have you felt your faith deepen and grow and if so, in what ways? As we end this sermon series on deep faith, what are you thankful for that helps grow your faith and encourage you to keep going?

INTRODUCTION

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion. Feel free to add or subtract or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

OPEN

What is your favorite way to stay in touch with long-distance friendships? Are you a phone call person, text person, or FaceTime person? Or maybe you're a snail mail person...

HEAD

Read through 2 Timothy 3. Make a list of the characteristics that Paul exhorts against and a list of the characteristics that Paul encourages Timothy to pursue. What do you notice about the two?

What kind of life does Paul say awaits those who want to move towards godliness? (2 Tim 3:12)

Identify Paul's understanding of Scripture. What is its nature, role, and purpose in the lives of God's people? (2 Tim 3:14-17)

What is the tone of the final words from Paul? How would you describe his perspective? What is he concerned about? (2 Tim 4:1-6)

HEART

How do we balance being aware that the "love of most will grow cold" with the gospel call to love others unconditionally? Are these two realities in tension? Why or why not?

In this passage, we have a lengthy discussion on what believers should do in the end times. What are the behaviors that Paul encourages in the end times? How do these compare with what you were taught would be important in the end times?

What role does Scripture play in your life? Has the role of Scripture changed for you in the last ten years? Why or why not?

If you were facing your last few days on earth, what would you be concerned about? What messages or communications would you want to send to your loved ones?

What does "my life has already been poured out as an offering to God" mean to you? Do you think this has something to do with death or is it illustrating a broader message?

HANDS

Earlier in this series, we talked about whether we had any spiritual heroes of faith from our family or friends—individuals who have greatly influenced and encouraged us. In this final passage in Timothy, Paul writes his last notes to his son in Christ. We can imagine Timothy would read them and commit himself to a life of deep faith in honor of Paul. Who are you honoring with your life today?

LIVING WORDS for YOUR WEEK

As for me, my life has already been poured out as an offering to God. The time of my death is near. 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.
2 Timothy 4:6-8 NLT

INTRODUCTION

The following questions are a guide to help families with children understand God and discover His love through- out the series. You may think of other ideas that fit the needs of your family.

Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 4:6-8 together with your family.

As you read these verses, think about how God’s word can guide us as we live in community. Also, think about Paul’s participation with God in ministry, and how you can partner with God in ministry as well.

Paul tells us that Scripture is inspired by God. How can reading the Bible help us live better lives?

How does God use Scripture in our lives today?

Paul wasn’t boxing or running, so what does he mean when he says he has “fought the good fight and finished the race”?

What is the prize waiting for all who believe in God and life a life of faith?

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion. Feel free to add or subtract or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

Coaches make all the difference in sports. Take some time to think about why coaches are so important in sports, and if you have had good coaches in your life, reflect on why they were so great.

Paul begins ending this letter by reminding Timothy that he can trust Paul as a teacher. Paul then lists reasons why he is trustworthy. He reminds Timothy that he has seen how he loves, his patience, and his endurance. Paul truly is a good teacher and model for Timothy.

It's so important to have a good coach. Paul took the time and energy to build into Timothy; he was being formed into an incredible leader because of Paul's efforts. Today we have the blessing of being able to read Paul's inspired words and use them as guidance for our lives today. Along with this teaching we can also learn this important lesson: having trusted leaders in our lives is vital. We can't do everything on our own! Thank God that his hope for us is that we don't do it alone.

Thank God that we don't have to walk through life alone. Think of some people in your life that you truly trust. A challenge for you can be to reach out to them and ask them to mentor you. Their wisdom is vital and can teach you much. If you don't have those people in your life, make it part of your prayers to ask God for trustworthy people. God is wanting to mold and form you into the likeness of Jesus. We're believing that God is going to place the right people in your life so that you can experience growth.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.





