

Leaders Who Make Leaders

August 20, 2023

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

2 Timothy 2:1-26

Session Outline

1. Make Leaders (2 Timothy 2:1-2)
2. Stay Focused (2 Timothy 2:14-15)
3. Prepare Yourself (2 Timothy 2:22-26)

Theological Theme

In the Christian life, it is important to have people you are pouring into as well as people who are pouring into you. Christ followers should take seriously the charge to develop fellow believers into mature leaders and to live as examples of Christ-centered leadership.



Leader Guide

Leaders Who Make Leaders

Introduction

Most people have experience with playing the childhood game, “Follow the Leader.” Remember the fun of having a creative leader you were expected to follow to the tiniest detail to stay in the game? You may have enjoyed the game most when you were at the front thinking of different things to amuse and stretch your followers.

Whatever your favorite role in the game, one thing that is evident from that game and from watching the world around us, people follow leaders. In the age of social media, the idea of being a “follower” is common language. We also have those we follow without clicking any buttons on a screen by virtue of imitating what they do. Leaders have a powerful influence and play an important role in our society.

- ❓ As a kid, which role did you like better when playing “Follow the Leader” and why?
- ❓ What characteristics do strong leaders usually have?

Session Summary


As a spiritual mentor to Timothy, Paul wrote to him about how to be a more effective and godly leader. These instructions to Timothy have practical application for all believers who recognize their need to develop as leaders. It is important to see that we all lead someone and should take the challenges and instructions from Paul seriously.

Leadership can be challenging and draining, so the need for strength is always present. Paul exhorted Timothy to find his strength in the grace of Jesus. Nothing else we look to for strength will give us the power we need to live godly lives. It is vital that we each take responsibility for our own actions and preparation for ministry. We are all called to train up others in the ways we have been trained spiritually so the gospel reaches more people.


1. Make Leaders (2 Timothy 2:1-2)

As a spiritual father and mentor to Timothy, Paul wrote words of encouragement and challenge to his younger friend that have application to us today. We all lead others. No matter where you are in life or what you do, others follow you. Paul's words to Timothy regarding leadership challenge us to also be godly leaders. Further, we follow people, whether intentionally or unintentionally, so these leadership lessons help us identify leaders we should or should not allow influence in our lives.

Knowing Timothy would face difficulties, challenges, and obstacles as he lived out God's call on his life, Paul began this passage with encouragement. If you have lived any amount of time as a Christ follower, you are aware of the need for strength and endurance to stand firm as a believer in this culture, especially as one leading. Paul reminded Timothy where to find strength. He wrote to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. People seek strength in many ways, but the most vital practice Christians can develop is to find strength in Jesus's grace. This is essential and gives us confidence and boldness we can't find anywhere else.

 How is being strengthened by the grace found in Jesus different than seeking strength in other things? Where do you gain strength to lead?

Paul brought the things he had already imparted to Timothy, this likely included lessons given both verbally and in written form. To continue his growth as a leader, Timothy needed to stay focused on the truth he had heard and learned so far. Regardless of your age or the length of time you have followed Jesus, you must remain teachable and strive to be a lifelong learner in matters of faith. Paul knew Timothy needed to be firmly grounded on doctrine so that he could stand firm on truth and not be swayed by the pervasive thoughts of the culture.

 What are three key practices through which you seek spiritual growth?

Paul made clear that the ministry God gave Timothy was not just about him. Timothy was to take what he already knew and entrust it to others. A vital part of living for Christ is pouring into others to continually multiply the number of people trained for ministry and leadership. What has been poured into you should also be poured into those God brings into your life.

The Message of 2 Timothy 2

After exhorting Timothy to "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, Paul declared his frequent message about preserving and passing on the truth.

Paul gave three examples for Timothy to follow: (1) a soldier who wants to please his commander, (2) an athlete who follows the rules of the game, and (3) a farmer who toils faithfully. The three figures of speech used here are found in 1 Corinthians 9:6, 24–27. Paul encouraged Timothy to faithful devotion and self-discipline in his service for the Lord. Again the apostle's exhortations were grounded in his own experience of suffering.

Paul instructed Timothy to identify those who were faithful. These words can be applied to any believer who desires to be a godly leader. We should always be looking for those we can pour into and help grow in their own leadership capabilities. Paul instructed Timothy to find others he could train so they would find others to train and so on.



Application: How can you be more intentional about passing on what you have learned of Christ to those you influence?

2. Stay Focused (2 Timothy 2:14-15)


In a world with many distractions vying for attention, Paul told Timothy to stay focused. Paul charged Timothy keep the main thing the main thing and to remind others to do the same. We can be tempted to get distracted from the point of the gospel, even as we work to promote the gospel.




What are some things that can distract you from being focused on the gospel?

Many messages, programs, ideas, and agendas can steal our attention or focus. Not all of these are bad things if kept in proper perspective. In these and the surrounding verses, Paul warned against being distracted by endless debate and quarrels with words. While words certainly matter, Paul stressed the need to protect ourselves from getting caught up in debates of personal opinions and losing sight of being an example of Christ. Instead, Paul instructed Timothy to stay focused, work hard, and pay attention to the way he lived.

The work of living for Christ can be tough; it takes diligence and hard work and yet nothing deserves more effort and focus than the eternal work of the gospel. We look to the Lord for approval and not man. Seeking to be popular with people and being faithful to God aren't the same. At times, God's approval will set us in opposition to the approval of man. When faced with a decision between the two, Paul said to seek approval from the Lord. We are also to remember that we seek to minister as those already approved by God because of the work of Jesus and not as those seeking God's approval through our efforts.

-  When has obedience to God put you in opposition to other people? How do we find the strength to trust God over the opinions of people, even our own opinions, in those moments?


We should work hard and strive for the approval of the Lord so that when our lives are examined, we have nothing to be embarrassed about. We can offer up our lives as evidence that we take God's Word seriously. When we focus on understanding the Word of God and living it, we follow Paul's instruction to rightly handle the Word of Truth. We must recognize there is a right and wrong way to handle God's Word. Many would teach that any way you interpret Scripture is fine as long as you believe it. But God's Word is to be understood through the Holy Spirit and the whole counsel of Scripture. We do not get to pick and choose what we like or what fits best with our choices. God's Word is true and should never be twisted to justify sin. While we will never get everything perfect, we should strive to know and follow His Word as faithfully as possible.

-  Application: What needs to change in your life to help you stay focused? Who are you preparing/training to take your current spot in leadership?

3. Prepare Yourself (2 Timothy 2:22-26)

Later in the chapter, Paul got specific about living purely as one who has been equipped for ministry and leadership. He first warned Timothy to flee youthful passions. This can refer to sexual sin, illicit fleshly pleasures, or a desire for fame and fortune. Paul warned Timothy, and us, to not give these temptations any room to take root. He said flee them, refusing to even entertain the thought.

Instead of following these temptations, Paul told Timothy to pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace. Living faithfully is not just about avoiding or taking some things away, it is also about what we choose to pursue, invest in, and put into our lives.

-  What is something you need to "put off" and something you need to "put on" for the purpose of godly living?

Lest we think these practices only impact us personally, we must not overlook relationships. We are to do everything we can to be in right relationships with others. Bad interpersonal relationships affect our spiritual walk and the witness we have to the world around us. In seeking to honor God with our lives, we should seek to honor Him in our relationships.

Part of pursuing godly relationships means staying away from endless disputes, arguments, and quarreling. Leaders are not called to pick fights and get into wars with words, but should be more focused on teaching, kindness, patience, and gentleness. When we get these right, we will see the difference it makes to live by God's plan instead of the ways of the world.

- ❓ How have you seen your interpersonal relationships affect your spiritual walk? How does this remind you that following Jesus is meant to impact your entire life and influence?

Anyone who leads others knows it is often necessary to take and stand on truth and even confront another person's wrong or sinful behavior. Paul said the key in those situations is to confront in humility. The purpose of this approach is to expose one another to the truth and give the opportunity for repentance. As Paul reminded the church in Ephesus, our war is not against our brothers and sisters in Christ, but against Satan who seeks to lead us away from Jesus (Ephesians 6:12). Jesus has already won the victory, and we have the privilege of leading others to live in that victory.

- ❓ Application: Where do you need to approach others in humility, kindness, and gentleness for the sake of honoring Jesus in your relationships? How can you use your godly influence to help others become more like Jesus and become leaders?

Conclusion

To reach the world with the gospel, the entire body of Christ must work and grow together. Paul knew this and challenged Timothy to be intentional about training up others who were faithful. We are to do the same thing. Every Christian should have people who are pouring into them as well as people they are pouring into. This is a healthy model of spiritual growth.

Paul challenged Timothy with specific things that apply to us too. To be effective, we need to stay focused and pay attention to our lives and ministry. With many options to distract us from the main thing, it can be easy to lose sight of our godly influence on others. We must be diligent and continually prepare ourselves for faithfulness to God and service in His kingdom.

- ❓ What threatens to distract you or take your focus off being a godly influence in others' lives?
- ❓ Who is God calling you to pour into more intentionally? Who do you need to ask to pour into you in intentional ways?

Prayer of Response

Thank the Lord for the grace of Jesus and the strength it provides. Confess the ways you often seek strength from other sources. Ask Him to lead you to deeper commitment in following Him and whatever He calls you to.

Additional Resources

- *Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus* by David Platt, Daniel Akin, and Tony Merida
- *The Message of 2 Timothy* by John Stott
- *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* by Robert Yarbrough

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



Questions to Guide Your Group's Discussion

1. What does this passage say?
2. What did this passage mean to its original audience?
3. What does this passage tell us about God?
4. What does this passage tell us about man?
5. What does this passage demand of me?
6. How does this passage change the way I relate to people? (*How can you use this information this week at work or with friends and neighbors?*)
7. How does this passage prompt me to pray to God?

*Adapted from Seven Arrows by Matt Rogers pastor of The Church at Cherrydale, Greenville, SC

For Next Week

Session Title

- Do Your Job

Main Passages

- John 21:15-17,20-23; 1 Corinthians 12:4-7

Session Outline

1. You Are Gifted (1 Corinthians 12:4-7)
2. You Are Called (John 21:15-17)
3. Stay Focused (John 21:20-23)

Memorize

What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. - 2 Timothy 2:2

Prayer

1. Who are you leading/influencing in your life? Pray for them by name and ask God to help you lead them well.
2. What is stealing your focus? Ask God to remove any distractions that pull you away from Him.

Historical Context of 2 Timothy

Purpose

In 1 Timothy Paul directed Timothy to actively oppose false teaching. He also gave instruction on the type of behavior that should characterize those in the church. The letter to Titus shows a similar purpose, albeit briefer in scope. As Paul addressed the character of church members, he presented it in light of the work of Christ. The message in 2 Timothy, Paul's final letter, is quite different. It is much more personal, a letter from one friend to another. Paul was preparing Timothy to carry on the work of ministry after he was gone.

Author

As stated in the opening of each letter, these letters were written by Paul (1Tm 1:1; 2Tm 1:1; Ti 1:1). However, many scholars today assume that Paul did not write them. This opinion is based on the differences from his other letters in vocabulary and style, alleged differences in theology, and uncertainties about where these letters fit chronologically in the life of the apostle. But the differences in style and vocabulary are not troublesome when one considers that authors often use different vocabulary when addressing different groups and situations. Rather than addressing churches in these letters, Paul was writing to coworkers who were in unique ministry settings. Hence we would expect different vocabulary. Also, the traditional view of the historical situation in which Paul wrote these letters is reasonable and defensible. Therefore, in spite of significant opposition by some scholars, there is a solid basis for accepting the Pastoral Epistles as Pauline.

Setting

Paul most likely wrote these letters after the time covered in the book of Acts. Acts closes with Paul in prison. Traditionally it has been believed that Paul was released from this imprisonment, then continued his work around the Mediterranean, perhaps even reaching Spain (Rm 15:22–29). During this time, he visited Crete and other places. First Timothy and Titus were written during this period of further mission work. Timothy had been left in Ephesus to handle some problems with false teaching there (1Tm 1:3–4). Titus had been left in Crete after the initial work to set up the church there (Ti 1:5). Eventually Paul was imprisoned again, and this led to his execution. During this final imprisonment, Paul wrote 2 Timothy to request another visit from Timothy and to give final exhortations as he anticipated his martyrdom.

Special Features

First Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus have been referred to as the “Pastoral Epistles” since the eighteenth century. It is reasonable to consider these letters together since they have striking similarities in style, vocabulary, and setting. These letters stand apart from the other Pauline letters because they were the only ones written to Paul's gospel coworkers. The Pastoral Epistles deal with church structure issues and, unlike Paul's other letters, were addressed to men serving in pastoral roles rather than to churches. But we must also recognize these are separate letters with their own

Extended Commentary

2 Timothy 2:1-26

2:1 This verse is a continuation of the call to Spirit-empowered boldness, which began in 1:6.

2:2 The many witnesses could testify to the soundness of the teaching as truth from God. Those who receive the gospel have a responsibility to faithfully pass it on to others, who pass it on to still others.

2:3–6 In these three analogies, Paul expounded the call to service and suffering. Verse 4 calls for single-minded desire to please God. Verse 5 declares that a person must obey God’s rules in order to succeed. Verse 6 encourages hard work by holding out the promise of blessing.

2:7 This verse is a call to contemplation of what has been written, not a promise of complete knowledge or understanding.

2:8 The phrase descended from David is a reminder of Jesus’s messianic credentials.

2:9–10 Paul was encouraged by the fact that though God’s messenger could be bound, the message itself could not be. Paul speaks of the elect here as those who had been predestined to be saved (cp. Ac 13:48: “and all who had been appointed to eternal life believed”).

2:11–13 The trustworthy statement moves from comfort to challenge and back to comfort. Verse 12 is a clear statement on the necessity of perseverance. As Jesus said, only the person who endures will be saved (Mt 10:22). Verse 13 is a reminder of God’s preserving power and faithfulness. In this context, to deny him envisions a more serious offense than being faithless. To “deny him” envisions apostasy, whereas “faithless” refers to a lapse in trust, which is something every believer does at some point.

2:14 It is clear that Paul was willing to confront people when the gospel was at stake. For example, he opposed Peter to his face (Gl 2:11). What he had in mind here was meaningless argument.

2:15 Be diligent could also be translated, “Be zealous.” Paul had in mind a zealous pursuit of God’s approval. One way to do this is to make sure we handle Scripture correctly.

2:17 Hymenaeus was mentioned as a false teacher previously in 1Tm 1:20, but Philetus is not mentioned elsewhere.

2:18 The idea that the resurrection has already taken place is similar to what Paul discussed in 1Co 15. Apparently some people were teaching that believers had already entered the glorified post-resurrection state. We do not know much about this heresy.

2:19 In spite of the work of these evildoers and evil teachers, God’s church still stands firm. The inscription emphasizes both divine sovereignty (preserving) and human responsibility (persevering).

2:20–21 The analogy in these verses connects to the end of v. 19: “turn away from wickedness.” The large house represents the Christian community; the vessels for dishonorable use represents the false teachers. The point of v. 21 is that one should try to be an honorable vessel, useful to the Master.

2:22 The word passions in this context refers to sinful desires in general. The desires that are particularly characteristic of youth could include sexual desires, the longing for novelty, or perhaps even impulsiveness (v. 24). It is significant that fleeing wrong is combined with pursuing right. Also, the pursuit of right is not to be done alone but along with other believers.

2:23 On ignorant disputes, see note at v. 14.

2:24–25 The Lord’s servant must be qualified both in ability (able to teach) and in character (not quarrelsome, gentle . . . patient). The knowledge of the truth is salvation.

2:26 Paul often described humanity as enslaved by the devil and in need of rescue (2Co 4:4).¹

References

1. *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).

Author Bio

David Platt (Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus)

David Platt is the author of three New York Times bestsellers, including *Radical*. He is lead pastor at McLean Bible Church in metro Washington, D.C., the former president of the IMB (International Mission Board), and founder of Radical Inc., a global center for the unreached that serves churches in accomplishing the mission of Christ. Platt received his master of divinity (MDiv), master of theology (ThM), and doctor of philosophy (PhD) from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He lives in Virginia with his wife and their children.

Daniel Akin (Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus)

Daniel L. Akin is the president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina. He holds a Ph.D. in Humanities from the University of Texas at Arlington and has authored or edited many books and Bible commentaries including *Ten Who Changed the World* and *A Theology for the Church*.

Tony Merida (Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus)

Tony Merida is lead pastor of Imago Dei Church in Raleigh, NC, and associate professor of preaching at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, NC.

John Stott (The Message of 2 Timothy)

John R. W. Stott is known worldwide as a preacher, evangelist and communicator of Scripture. For many years he served as rector of All Souls Church in London, where he carried out an effective urban pastoral ministry. A leader among evangelicals in Britain, the United States and around the world, Stott was a principal framer of the landmark Lausanne Covenant (1974). His many books, including *Why I Am a Christian* and *The Cross of Christ*, have sold millions of copies around the world and in dozens of languages. Whether in the West or in the Two-Thirds World, a hallmark of Stott's ministry has been expository preaching that addresses the hearts and minds of contemporary men and women. Stott was honored by Time magazine in 2005 as one of the "100 Most Influential People in the World."

The Letters to Timothy and Titus (Robert Yarbrough)

Robert W. Yarbrough (PhD, University of Aberdeen) is professor of New Testament at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. He has authored, coauthored, or translated several books, including the groundbreaking textbook *Encountering the New Testament*. He is also coeditor of the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament series.