

BNEXT BIBLE STUDY PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

Life Changing Letters 2

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BNEXT STUDY

The Day of the Lord : 1 Thessalonians

Preparation for That Day : 2 Thessalonians

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► The Second Coming

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STUDY BNEXT

William P. Campbell



Welcome to BNEXT Amazing Journey

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The Scripture covered by each lesson is listed on the mast of the page. Read the Scripture passages and then begin working your way through the lesson. Each lesson in this series contains three pages of commentary, followed by three pages of questions that will assist you dig deeper and reflect on God's Word.

An important component of BNEXT Amazing Journey are the videos that accompany each series. To access the videos associated with this particular series, see the link below my signature.

Also we have included, in the last pages of this digital version, a Leader's Guide that will enable anyone to facilitate a small group. Once you have completed this BNEXT Amazing Journey series, I hope you will consider leading others through this study material.

Again, thank you for allowing me to share this amazing journey with you.

Your brother in Christ Jesus,



William P. Campbell

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Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-3

Introduction

Paul's letters to the church at Thessalonica speak more about the Lord's Second Coming than all of his other epistles. The doctrines of eschatology (teachings related to the last things) fit naturally with the progressive themes of the books in the New Testament. The Gospels tell of the life of Christ. Acts describes the beginnings and history of the early church that Christ founded. Romans lays out the message of hope proclaimed by the church. The letters to Corinth address general problems that arose in the church. Galatians strikes at the heart of the most deadly problem: confusion about the Gospel of grace. Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians describe the triumph of Christ for and through the Church. What grander theme could possibly follow the building sense of God's victorious work, as seen in these New Testament books, than the wonderful prospect of our Lord's return? His appearing will usher in the consummation of our salvation. Christ will come to claim His own as a visible confirmation of all that God has planned and promised through the ages.

Thessalonica

Paul visited Thessalonica during his second missionary journey (Acts 17:1-10). This was only the second place the gospel was preached in Europe, Philippi being the first. Thessalonica was a bustling seaport—a central point for communication and trade at the head of the Thermaic Gulf. With more than 200,000 residents, Thessalonica was the largest city in Macedonia. Here, Paul found great success and great opposition. He spent just over three weeks in the city when the response was so great among Jew and Gentile that some jealous Jews "rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city" (Acts 17:5b). They stormed the house of Paul's host, Jason, in search of Paul. Not finding the apostle, they charged Jason with supporting traitors to Caesar. The city officials took Jason as security and let Paul and his coworkers leave the city.

Under the cover of night, Paul, Timothy, and Silas departed for Berea. There, Paul's ministry was short-lived, for the vicious opponents from Thessalonica came to Berea and drove Paul from the city; Timothy and Silas remained. Paul traveled to Athens and sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to strengthen and work with the believers there (1 Thessalonians 3:1-2). Paul was concerned because he was forced to leave the saints at Thessalonica prematurely without establishing strong leadership. When Paul moved on to Corinth, Silas and Timothy brought him a good report about the Thessalonian church. Paul was encouraged by the news and wrote two letters to the church in Thessalonica. Both letters are similar, probably written within six months of each other. He wrote to commend the new believers for their faith, to encourage them in their suffering, to spur them on to diligence and godliness, and to answer their questions about the Day of the Lord.

The Day of the Lord

The concept of "The Day of the Lord" began in the Old Testament. There, the focus was on God's judgment against the enemies of Israel and God's protection of His people. It was a day marked by foreboding and darkness, as God's wrath would be poured out in full measure (Isaiah 2:12;



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The LORD thunders at the head of His army; His forces are beyond number, and mighty is the army that obeys His command. The day of the LORD is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it?

Joel 2:11

13:6; 34:8; Ezekiel 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:11; Amos 5:18; Zephaniah 1:14).

In the New Testament, the Day of the Lord still carries the concept of God's judgment upon unbelievers (Matthew 10:15, 24:27; Luke 12:8-9; Romans 2:5-16; 2 Peter 3:7, 12; Revelation 6:17), but offers believers a bright sense of joyous hope. The Day of the Lord is understood more clearly for us because we have met the Savior, and it is the day of His return. Of that event Christ promised, "I shall lose none of all that He has given me, but raise them up at the last day" (John 6:39b). It is also called "the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6, 10), and the "day of our Lord Jesus" (2 Corinthians 1:14). On that day, sin will be abolished and the kingdom of heaven established forever. Little wonder that it is often referred to as simply "the Day," or "that Day," for it will be the most significant day the world will ever know (Matthew 7:22; 1 Thessalonians 5:4; 2 Timothy 4:8; 1 Corinthians 3:13).

Other phrases we use to describe the Day of the Lord are "Second Coming" or "Second Advent." These terms, however, are not found in the Scriptures. The theological term used frequently in the Scriptures to describe that day is the *parousia*, which literally means "presence." Parousia was in use as a technical term for the arrival of an emperor or dignitary when he visited his people. Such a visit would often be marked by celebration, perhaps including the raising of a new monument or the engraving of a new coin. Thus, the word parousia has overtones of greatness that would be fitting for the coming of Christ, who will return to judge His foes and bring His beloved bride, the Church, home forever.

The Day of the Lord and the Thessalonians

Paul discusses the Day of the Lord in both of his letters to the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:2). Because these letters were written with a common theme and sent consecutively to the same church, they flow together as a unit:

Confidence for That Day | 1 Thessalonians 1–4:12

- The Faith of God's People (1)
- Paul's Love for God's People (2)
- The Obedience of God's People (3–4:12)

Instruction for That Day | 1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:28

- Teaching About the Resurrection (4:13–18)
- Teaching About Our Expectations (5:1–11)
- Final Instructions (5:12–28)

Preparation for That Day | 2 Thessalonians

- The Role of Suffering in Our Lives (Chapter 1)
- The Reality of Evil in the World (2)
- The Requirement for Diligence to the End (3)

After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

1 Thessalonians 4:17

Confidence for That Day

Paul opens his first letter with overflowing commendation and praise for the faith exhibited by the Thessalonians. He says, “The Lord’s message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it” (1 Thessalonians 1:8). The word translated “rang out” is derived from a Greek root, *echeo*, from which comes our word “echo.” While the Thessalonians waited to hear the command of the Lord, the shout of the angel, and the trumpet of God echoing through the heavens at the time of the Lord’s appearing (1 Thessalonians 4:16), their own faith echoed across the Roman Empire as a testimony to everyone. The Thessalonians lived for the Lord on earth, and could look forward with confidence to the day the Lord descends from heaven.

Instruction for That Day

Some of the Thessalonians were ignorant about the basic plan of the resurrection (1 Thessalonians 4:13). Apparently, they thought that the Lord would bring to heaven only those who were still alive when He appeared. To set their minds at peace, Paul taught them that the resurrection would occur in this order:

1. The Lord will descend (1 Thessalonians 4:16a);
2. The dead in Christ will be raised (1 Thessalonians 4:16b);
3. Those believers still living will be caught up into the air and changed (1 Thessalonians 4:17a);
4. Thus, all God’s people will be together with the Lord forever (1 Thessalonians 4:17b). For unbelievers, however, the Lord’s sudden appearing will be “like a thief in the night” (1 Thessalonians 5:2).

Preparation for That Day

This will be the focus of our next lesson in 2 Thessalonians.

Final Thought

The return of our Lord is mentioned more than 310 times in the 260 chapters of the New Testament. The hope of our Lord’s soon return was a major focus of the early church; perhaps, this explains why they turned the world upside down for the Lord. Where is your focus today?

Spending Time With God

This lesson in the series “Life Changing Letters 2” is designed to supplement your personal and small group Bible study. The devotion questions are written for your personal study. The discussion questions are especially for small groups. Members who answer the questions ahead of time can bring more insight into their small group meeting. The digging deeper questions are for those who wish for more personal or small group study. As you spend time with God, may His Word enrich your life and enhance your daily walk with Him. PRAY, ASKING GOD FOR SPECIAL INSIGHT INTO HIS WORD.

Devotion (Personal Study)

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-3. For what reasons does Paul give thanks for the Thessalonians? Name one or more people for whom you are especially thankful in the same way.

2. Paul has many reasons to commend the saints in Thessalonica. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:4-10 and describe these believers in your own words. In what ways do you wish your life was more like that of the Thessalonians?

3. 1 Thessalonians 2 tells of Paul's relationship with the Thessalonians. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:17-20 and describe Paul's sense of being torn away from them. From Acts 17:1-9, what circumstances caused this separation of the Apostle from these new Christians?

Discussion (Small Group Study)

4. Read 1 Thessalonians 3:1-5.

a. Note how Paul reached out to the saints in Thessalonica, despite the fact that he could not return to them personally. From this section and from 1 Thessalonians 2:18, what part did Satan play in the persecution and separation experienced by Paul and the Thessalonians?

b. Do you think we Christians tend to give the devil too much or too little credit for the temptations and trials we face in life and ministry?

c. If possible, give an example from your own experience to support your viewpoint.

5. a. 1 Thessalonians 3:6-13 refers to the faithful service of Timothy, whom Paul embraced as a spiritual son (1 Corinthians 4:17; Philippians 2:22). Do you have one or more people in your life whom you consider your spiritual children—whom you strive to nurture in the faith?

b. What percent of God's will for our lives would you suppose is spelled out in the Bible? What is one way that you live in accordance with God's will for your life?

b. Do you have a spiritual father or mother in your life?

c. In what way does this thought challenge or encourage you to read, study and memorize Scripture?

What are the benefit of such relationships?

7. Both of Paul's letters to the Thessalonians have much to say about the Lord's Second Coming. Describe the sequence of events we can anticipate as listed by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17.

6. One of the issues facing the average Christian is, "How can I know the will of God?" What do we learn about God's will for our lives in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12?

b. Which of these truths excites you most?

Confuses you most? Why?

Do these concepts stir your heart toward prayer and action regarding unbelievers? Explain.

c. What are we suppose to do with these glorious promises (1 Thessalonians 4:18)?

Digging Deeper (Further Study)

9. Read Paul's final instructions (1 Thessalonians 5:12-28). Which of these guidelines most blesses or challenges you?

8. Additional truths about Christ's Second Advent are listed in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11.

a. What exhortations are found in this section?

b. Why do you think Paul used the analogies of a "thief in the night" (1 Thessalonians 5:2) and "labor pains" (1 Thessalonians 5:3)? c.

Scripture for Meditation

Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18



Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed.

2 Thessalonians 1:7-10



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Introduction

By all indications, Paul wrote his second letter to the Thessalonians from Corinth, about six months after sending them the first. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul comforted believers who thought deceased loved-ones would miss the Day of the Lord. In this second letter to the Thessalonians, Paul comforted the believers who thought the Day of the Lord was upon them. Many of the Thessalonians quit their jobs—apparently convinced that the Lord would return immediately—an inappropriate way to prepare for the Lord's coming. Paul devoted nearly 40% of this second letter to end time issues as he explained the signs of the Lord's coming, and how to get ready for that day. 2 Thessalonians can be outlined as follows:

- The Power of Christ's Coming (Chapter 1)
- A Preview of the Antichrist's Coming (Chapter 2)
- Our Preparation for That Day (Chapter 3)

The Power of Christ's Coming (Chapter 1)

Some citizens of Thessalonica, who vehemently opposed Paul when he sought to plant a church in Thessalonica, now made every effort to destroy the church. Paul reminded the believers in Thessalonica that the suffering they endured was one more reason for the coming of the Lord. When the Lord appears “in blazing fire with his powerful angels” (2 Thessalonians 1: 7b), his strength will be displayed in measures of judgment and mercy that baffle the mind. God would not only give relief to them in their suffering, but would pour out vengeance on their enemies (2 Thessalonians 1:5-7a).

1. Judgment for God's Enemies

Persecuted Christians can find comfort in the fact that enemies of the Church are enemies of God. Christ is the head of the Church and any injury inflicted on the body is felt at once by the head. God will defend his Church. As Paul told the Roman Christians, “Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord” (Romans 12:19). On that day those who refuse to believe “will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord” (2 Thessalonians 2:9). The word *everlasting* (*aiōnios*) is used 70 times in the New Testament, always to mean “eternal,” or “without end,” except in three places where it is looking back to the beginning of time (Romans 16:25; 2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 1:2). Thus, there can be no reason to think that Paul was referring to anything less than a destruction that continues endlessly—complete, on-going ruin. In our physical world, things are destroyed once and for all. In the spiritual world, ruin and decay can continue forever. Paul's words echo the repeated warnings of Christ, and the clear teachings of the Biblical writers (Matt. 10:28; 18:8; 25:41,46; Luke 3:17; John 5:29; Hebrews 6:2; 10:28-31; and Revelations 14:10-11; 20:10).

2. Mercy for God's People

With His strong right arm the Lord will judge His enemies and with His kind right hand He will welcome His friends. When the King invites us into his palace, we will be amazed. As it is writ-

Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us—whether by a prophecy or by word of mouth or by letter—asserting that the day of the Lord has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3

ten: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9). Greater even than the sight of His magnificent dwelling place will be the vision of His majesty. In Him, we will marvel. In us, He will be glorified (2 Thessalonians 1:10). We cannot begin to imagine what blessings will befall those who put their trust in God.

A Preview of the Antichrist's Coming (Chapter 2)

The description of the "Lawless One" of 2 Thessalonians dovetails with the description of the "Abomination of Desolation" described by Christ in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24:15-25). And, Christ made it clear that his description of this evil world ruler was linked to Daniel's prophecies (Matthew 24:15; Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). All of these references come together, like strands of a cord, into the "beast" image of Revelation 13. What name are we to give this lawless one? The Apostle John, writer of the book of Revelation, referred to him (and to those who precede him with the same spirit) as the "Antichrist" (1 John 2:18, 4:3). The "Antichrist" is more than a Pseudo, or false Christ. There would be many false prophets and false Christs through history (Matthew 24: 11, 24). The prefix *anti* depicts one "against," "in opposition to," or "opposite of" Christ. The Antichrist will call himself a savior while being diametrically opposed to our Lord. He will desecrate the temple of God and demand worldwide worship of himself. He will deceive the unbelieving world through great signs and wonders to the extent that they follow him as God. He will unleash an unprecedented persecution upon the children of God. The Antichrist will meet his match, however, when the Lord Christ appears and overthrows him "with the breath of his mouth" and destroys him by "the splendor of his coming" (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

We must be careful to not over-simplify our study of eschatology (doctrines related to the end time events). A humble approach is a healthy approach when formulating interpretations of Scriptures that were left somewhat mysterious and unclear by the Spirit of God. It appears that Paul, at one time, explained his view of the end times rather clearly to the Thessalonians (2 Thessalonians 2:5).

Even so, they did not get it right and Paul had to write them two letters to address their confusion. We have only pieces of Paul's marvelous insights. As we strive to match them with the teachings about Christ's Second Coming throughout the Bible, we should be cautious about drawing inflexible conclusions. Christians through the ages have derived different end time scenarios from the same Bible. Today, we can find some of the most studious and trustworthy teachers to proclaim differing perspectives on details such as the Millennium, the Rapture of believers, the Great Tribulation, the battle of Armageddon, the role of the Jewish people in prophecy, and the general unfolding of events surrounding the Lord's Second Coming. Regarding the Antichrist, we would be wise to avoid two extremes:

1. We should not ever let down our guard regarding the encroaching power of evil against us. Paul exhorted the Thessalonians to "stand firm" (2 Thessalonians 2:15). Christ warned that evil, persecution, and apostasy would increase before the end arrives (Matthew 24: 4-13). Today, more people are being martyred for their faith than ever before in history. Whether or not we live to see the Antichrist arise in our genera-

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables Him to bring everything under His control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body.

Philippians 3:20-21

tion, we must stand firm, prepared for whatever form of persecution God may allow.

2. Our focus should be primarily on the Lord's coming, not on the coming of the Anti-christ. Jesus exhorted his disciples on many occasions to "watch and pray" for his return (Matthew 24:42-44; 25:13; Mark 13:35-37; Luke 12:38; 21:36). Paul wrote about the coming Man of Lawlessness for one reason: to help the Thessalonians see that Christ has not yet come. Many Christians believe the Rapture (the catching up of believers) will occur before the Antichrist reigns with terror and before the Lord's final return (Matthew 24:40-42; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). While not all hold to this view, who can resolutely reject the notion that we may meet the Lord face to face before the Antichrist begins to rule? Even with the hope of the Rapture placed aside, we must recognize that any of us may die any day, finding ourselves face to face with the Lord.

Our Preparation For That Day (Chapter 3)

Paul's first concern, regarding preparation for the Day of the Lord, is that the Gospel be proclaimed. He asked prayer that his own witness might be effective (2 Thessalonians 3:1). He urged obedience among the Thessalonians, that their witness might be effective as well (2 Thessalonians 3:4, 7a). Their ability to serve God was hampered by the fact that some in their midst refused to work for a living. This not only set a bad example for the rest of the Church, but caused undue burden on the resources of the congregation. It appears that people were putting their jobs aside in anticipation of the Lord's imminent appearing (2 Thessalonians 3:6-15). Paul urged them to serve God as witnesses while living a normal life. We, too, should live each day as though it may be our last, while planning wisely for the future. Then, if the Lord tarries, our coming years may be fruitful years.

Final Thought

When we read Paul's letters, the sense of readiness and expectation for the Lord's coming is evident. Now, nearly 2000 years later, we may feel that it will never happen. Let us not forget the patience with which the prophets waited for the first coming of our Savior as they "searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow" (1 Peter 1:10b-11). Christ came at just the right time—in fulfillment of Old Testament predictions—to provide our salvation. It is for the culmination of this salvation that our Lord will come again, at just the right time.

Spending Time With God

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Devotion (Personal Study)

1. Read the commentary portion of this studyguide. Do you think Christians today focus too much or not enough on the Day of the Lord? Why?

c. How should such truths effect the way we think, speak and live?

Where do you find yourself in this regard?

3. In 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12, we find one of the many choice prayers in Scripture. Read this prayer aloud, praying it for another person. In view of our Lord's soon return, why is this a good prayer to pray for others?

2. See 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4.

a. For what reasons does Paul give thanks for the believers in Thessalonica?

4. In what way were the Thessalonians confused about the Lord's coming (2 Thessalonians 2:1-2)? What did Paul say must happen first, before the Day of the Lord (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4)? Why do you think God would allow such an abomination to occur on earth?

b. From 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10, what events will occur when our Lord returns?

Discussion (Small Group Study)

5. As we continue reading 2 Thessalonians 2, we will come into areas that are debated among Christians. See 2 Thessalonians 2:5. Do you sometimes wish you were with the Thessalonians to ask Paul questions until you got it right? Consider the fact that they didn't get it right; hence the need for two letters to the Thessalonians. We have those same letters. What is more, we have the completed Bible. Do you think God gave us everything we need to map out the details of the end times with precision and accuracy? Explain.

For what reason will God allow him to wield such influence?

6. From 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7, what do you think is holding back the "man of lawlessness"? Why? (Suggestions have included the governing powers, whether in Paul's day or ours; Paul's missionary work; the Jewish state; the Holy Spirit; and the presence of the Church.)

8. What is Paul's exhortation for believers (2:13–3:5)? How can we "stand firm"?

7. What will happen to the man of lawlessness when the Lord returns (2 Thessalonians 2:8)? From 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12, what influence will Satan have in the world through this final antichrist?

9. Notice the blessings offered by Paul in his final greetings (2 Thessalonians 3:16-18). Bring your concerns and anxieties to the Lord in prayer until you experience more of these blessings. Pray about the darkness of our world, about the end time events, or about challenges in your life today.

Digging Deeper (Further Study)

10. a. What problem is Paul addressing in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15?

b. Do you know people today who have this problem? What is the opposite extreme of idleness?

Is your life in balance?

b. How can/should this be applied to the church of today (consider also the command of the apostle in 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15)?

11. a. Notice Paul's example in 2 Thessalonians 3:7-8. Do you think he was a "man out of balance"?

c. Can or should this also be applied to homeless people in our cities? Explain.

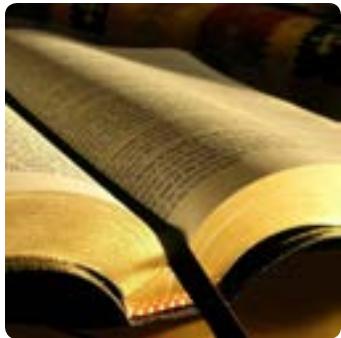
b. What was his motive (2 Thessalonians 3:9)?

12. a. What is Paul's guiding principle (2 Thessalonians 3:10)?

Scripture for Meditation

May our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who loved us and by His grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17



Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

1 Timothy 3:14-15

Introduction

Have you searched for the instruction manual to an old but needed appliance? That manual was designed to fit the appliance and nothing else would do. When God birthed the Church in the first century AD, it came with an instruction manual called 1 Timothy. 1 Timothy is the first of three Pastoral Epistles; the others are 2 Timothy and Titus. These letters were written for pastors rather than for congregations. They are packed with advice and insight for the maintenance of a healthy church. 1 Timothy reads like an owner's manual; its contents are as relevant today as when it was first written nearly 2,000 years ago.

The Context

Paul was visiting Lystra (modern Turkey) for the first time, when he met Timothy. Opposition to the Gospel in Lystra was intense. Paul was stoned, dragged out of the city, and left for dead (Acts 14:19). The apostle got up and marched right back into the city to continue his work (Acts 14:20). Timothy must have been impressed by such faithfulness and soon he became Paul's committed coworker.

It is likely that Paul won Timothy to the faith during this first encounter. Timothy grew up under the influence of a godly mother and grandmother, but his father was an unbelieving Greek (Acts 16:1; 2 Timothy 1:5). Paul became Timothy's spiritual father, regarding him as his "true son in the faith" (1 Timothy 1:2, 2 Timothy 2:2). Impressed by Timothy's faith (2 Timothy 3:14-15), Paul may have seen in Timothy a replacement for young John Mark (Acts 13:5, 13), who abandoned Paul on his first missionary journey. During Paul's second visit to Lystra, he invited Timothy to join his ministry team (which included Paul, Silas, and Dr. Luke). Timothy was circumcised that he might minister freely among the Jews and was ordained that he might minister effectively in the Church (Acts 16:3; 1 Corinthians 9:20; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6).

Timothy assisted Paul in the evangelization of Macedonia and Achaia, including an extended ministry in Ephesus (Acts 17:14-15; 18:5; 19:22). He was Paul's close companion during the apostle's house arrest in Rome (Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:1; Philemon 1:1). Sometime after Paul was released, he asked Timothy to remain at Ephesus, to correct problems within the Church (1 Timothy 1:3). Paul wrote to Timothy about the church in Ephesus urging him to confront false doctrines (1 Timothy 1:3-7; 4:1-8), appoint church leaders (1 Timothy 3:1-13; 5:17-23), and guide the growing Church (1 Timothy 2:1-15).

Paul placed great trust in Timothy, as can be seen by the fact that he was a designated co-sender of six of the apostle's letters (2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, and Philemon). In addition to his ministry at Ephesus, Timothy provided assistance to the congregations in Thessalonica, Corinth, Philippi, and Berea (1 Thessalonians 3:2,6; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 16:10; Philippians 2:19-23; and Acts 17:14). During Paul's final imprisonment, near the end of his life, he asked Timothy to come to his assistance (2 Timothy 4:9 & 21). Timothy would eventually suffer temporary imprisonment himself (Hebrews 13:23).



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"Modern Myths"

If you point these things out to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished on the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed. ... For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

1 Timothy 4:6,8

The Content

The first book in the Bible to give detailed instructions on how to conduct affairs in the local church, 1 Timothy offers guidance regarding:

Errors	(Chapter 1)
Worship	(Chapter 2)
Elders and Deacons	(Chapter 3)
Leadership	(Chapter 4)
Widows and Workers	(Chapter 5)
A Call to Godliness	(Chapter 6)

1. Errors (1 Timothy 1)

Paul taught that Biblical thinking is required for godly living. In fact, most of his letters begin with doctrine and end with application. In Chapter 1, Paul begins by confronting false doctrine. False teachers in Ephesus were doing damage to the church. Paul predicted this would happen about seven years earlier, when he visited the elders at Ephesus: "I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30).

These false teachers promoted a strange mix of early Gnosticism (an early church heresy — 1 Timothy 1:3-11), partial Judaism, and rigid asceticism (severe treatment of the body — 1 Timothy 4:1-3a). They were conceited, contentious, and devoid of Biblical insight (1 Timothy 1:7; 6:3-5). Paul was not confronting these heretics in an arrogant manner; he once considered himself the chief of sinners, unworthy of the very grace by which he was saved (1 Timothy 1:12-17). Through this grace, Timothy himself must stand firm, contending for the faith (1 Timothy 1:18-19).

2. Worship (1 Timothy 2)

Paul's first concern was that the people of the church pray—we do well to talk first to God about people before we talk to people about God. The first order of prayer was for those in authority (1 Timothy 2:2). The sad tendency among Christians is to assume that a government is too corrupt or inept to be worthy of our prayers—remember, Paul wrote his exhortation when vicious Nero was Emperor! Paul also gave instructions for women in worship (1 Timothy 2:9-15). Today, debate continues on how much of what Paul taught was conditioned by the culture and conditions in which he wrote, and how timeless principles derived from this text should be applied to the church of our day.

3. Elders and Deacons (1 Timothy 3)

Churches were growing rapidly around the Roman Empire. Christians met in homes—church buildings would not be permitted until Constantine brought a halt to the persecution of Christians some two centuries later. Thus, there were many small churches and a great need for church leaders. It was Paul's practice to appoint elders (also called overseers, or bishops) as shepherds over these flocks (Acts 14:23; 1 Peter 5:1-4). Deacons were also appointed to care for

Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have departed from the faith.

1 Timothy 6:20-21

the practical needs of God's children; the word *deacon* means "servant" (Acts 6:1-7; Philippians 1:1). In 1 Timothy 3, Paul listed qualifications for both elders and deacons. The Apostle's focus was not as much on their skills as on their character; not so much on what they could do for Christ as on who they were in Christ.

4. Leadership (1 Timothy 4)

Despite the fact that he was young, Timothy needed to approach false teachers and trouble-makers in the church with boldness and authority (1 Timothy 4:11-12). Probably in his mid-30s or younger—an age where influential positions of leadership were not usually allowed—Timothy was encouraged by Paul to lead by example (1 Timothy 4:12). In our culture, youth is idealized and elders have often lost their rightful place of respect. We would do well to encourage those who are older (as well as the younger) to take positions of leadership in the church, leading by example in their mature and bold faith in Christ.

5. Widows and Workers (1 Timothy 5)

In the days of Paul and Timothy, women who were widowed were especially vulnerable—there were no governmental assistance packages, life insurance programs, or pension funds to fall back on. Thus, Paul instructed the church to provide practical assistance to the widows. The Church in every generation is responsible before God to take special care of widows, along with orphans, and others in distress (James 1:27). Likewise, workers in the church who serve well should be shown special honor (1 Timothy 5:17-20).

6. A Call to Godliness (1 Timothy 6)

A church may have sound doctrine, strong worship, good leadership, and effective service, but if godliness is not evident in the congregation, all this is in vain! Paul closes his epistle by confronting those who are in love with money and by calling Christians to contentment in the grace and goodness of God.

Final Thought

How many times in your life have you made mistakes and wasted precious time because you did not follow instructions? 1 Timothy is Paul's basic instruction manual for the Christian Church. Every Christian is meant to be active in a local church (Hebrews 10:25), with a ministry from God (1 Corinthians 12:7, 20). Thus, every Christian—that includes you and me—would do well to read and know the instruction manual, 1 Timothy, that our mistakes might be kept to a minimum and our effectiveness in service pushed to a maximum for God's glory.

Spending Time With God

This lesson in the series "Life Changing Letters 2" is designed to supplement your personal and small group Bible study. The devotion questions are written for your personal study. The discussion questions are especially for small groups. Members who answer the questions ahead of time can bring more insight into their small group meeting. The digging deeper questions are for those who wish for more personal or small group study. As you spend time with God,

may His Word enrich your life and enhance your daily walk with Him. PRAY, ASKING GOD FOR SPECIAL INSIGHT INTO HIS WORD.

Devotion (Personal Study)

1. Read the commentary portion of this study guide. Name one of the issues raised by this commentary that seemed especially important to you and explain why.

3. a. From 1 Timothy 1:8-11, what is the purpose of the Law?

b. If possible, describe a specific situation in which the Law of God is essential for today.

2. Paul wrote to his disciple Timothy to guide him in his ministry as a pastor.

4. a. What does Paul say about God's grace operating in his life and ministry (1 Timothy 1:12-17)?

a. What was the first concern raised by Paul (1 Timothy 1:3)?

b. Based on Paul's example, do you think you are sometimes too quick to dismiss people as hopelessly lost in their sin or hopelessly confused in false religion?

b. Why do you think this would be first on the list of problems to correct?

c. If you are comfortable doing so, list one or two people for whom you have prematurely given up hope.

Discussion (Small Group Study)

5. Read Paul's instructions about prayer (1 Timothy 2:1-8). For whom should we pray? What is the result of such prayer?

8. What does Paul say will happen in later times (1 Timothy 4:1-5)?

6. Read the qualifications for elder in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. Which stipulations do you find most difficult?

9. What is Timothy to do as a corrective measure (1 Timothy 4:6-16)?

Why?

7. Is the emphasis here on what is required of an elder different from the emphasis in the average church today? If so, how?

10. a. Who do you think is gaining more ground today...the "deceiving spirits" (1 Timothy 4:1) or faithful pastors like Timothy?

b. What can you do to encourage pastors in their ministry?

11. Note Paul's concern for the widows in the Church (1 Timothy 5:3-16). How are widows treated by the culture today?

13. Read Paul's final charge to Timothy as a prayer, asking God to so move in your life that the letter to Timothy might also be a guiding light for you (1 Timothy 6:11-16). What part of these closing words challenges you the most? Why?

By the Church?

Think of a few widows in your extended family, church, or neighborhood, and pray for specific guidance on ways you might show them the love of Christ.

Digging Deeper (Further Study)

12. Read Paul's teachings about materialism and the love of money (1 Timothy 6:3-10).

a. In what way does the love of money and materialism most tempt you?

b. What can you do about it (1 Timothy 6:17-19)?

Scripture for Meditation

I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favoritism.

1 Timothy 5:21



I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

2 Timothy 4:7-8

Introduction

Following his fourth and final missionary journey, the Apostle Paul was imprisoned under Emperor Nero between 66 and 67 AD. He knew the end was near and that it was time to surrender the ongoing work of the Gospel to others. In 2 Timothy, Paul opened his heart and shared personal ambitions and hopes for his most faithful disciple, Timothy. The book of 2 Timothy was the last Biblical letter written by the Apostle Paul. As his pen was running dry, Paul produced words that have brought tears to the eyes of countless readers through the ages. If ever a letter ushered a call to faithfulness, this would be it.

Faithfulness in Testimony (Chapter 1)

Paul urged Timothy "... do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord" (2 Timothy 1:8a). He appealed to Timothy not only as a "son in the faith" (1 Timothy 1:2), but as "my dear son" (2 Timothy 1:2). Nothing would thrill the heart of Timothy's spiritual father more than a son whose life served as a faithful testimony to the Father of All. Timothy's testimony was based on the foundation of a good upbringing. The essentials of the Christian faith were instilled in him through his grandmother, Lois, and his mother, Eunice (2 Timothy 1:5). He knew, first hand, that there is no place like home for instilling Biblical principles in a young life!

Once a person moves from the cover of the home to the challenge of the world, no opportunity or ability should be spared in one's effort to tell others about the saving grace of God. It seems that Timothy, however, was holding back. The urging of Paul to his dear son provides insight and guidance for every one of us who struggle to be faithful witnesses for the Lord. "For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline" (2 Timothy 1:6-7).

Many of us hold the truth of God close to our hearts, like a flickering candle to be protected. God calls us to proclaim the Gospel as a light to guide the lost (Matthew 5:16). Our small ambitions for God will become powerful flames of passionate testimony when we fully surrender to God's Spirit. Paul told Timothy that three essential qualities must be evident in the Christian life: power, love and self-discipline. God's power must be our strength, His love our motive, and the self-control of the Spirit our protection. A true Christian testimony is bold, loving, and backed by holy living.

Paul motivated Timothy not only by words, but by example. "Join with me in suffering for the gospel," he urged his beloved disciple (2 Timothy 1:8b). Paul knew much about suffering for Christ (2 Corinthians 11:23-29). He wrote from a damp, cold, dark dungeon, condemned as a criminal, forsaken by all and awaiting a death sentence. One saint, Onesiphorus, searched hard for Paul until he located him, and provided refreshment and help to the suffering Apostle (2 Timothy 1:15-18). Paul's greatest joy would not be found in relief from his sufferings, however, but in Timothy's willingness to suffer in the same way for the sake of the Gospel (2 Timothy 1:8).



Watch Amazing Journey Video
"Final Instructions"

What you heard from me,
keep as the pattern of
sound teaching, with faith
and love in Christ Jesus.
Guard the good deposit
that was entrusted to
you—guard it with the
help of the Holy Spirit who
lives in us.

2 Timothy 1:13-14

Faithfulness in Duty (Chapter 2)

Paul urged Timothy to remain faithful in his duty as a pastor, teacher, and leader of the church. Paul hammered on this point like a skilled carpenter driving a nail safely and securely into a finished piece of work. Paul's challenge was repeated through no less than six analogies:

Timothy was to be a wise steward who was carefully entrusted with the gems of truth given to him by Paul for safekeeping, and entrusted to other faithful men who would in turn entrust them to others (2 Timothy 2:1-2).

Timothy was to be a good soldier who would endure hardship and not swerve from the course of faithful duty, with an eye toward pleasing the commanding officer (2 Timothy 2:3-4).

Timothy was to strive toward excellence with all the determination of an athlete, striving for the victor's crown (2 Timothy 2:5).

Timothy was to be patient in service like the hard-working farmer, waiting for his share of the crops (2 Timothy 2:6).

Timothy was to be a skilled workman like a mason who cut his product straight and true. Timothy's stone was the Word of God, which he was to handle with accuracy and precision (2 Timothy 2:14-19).

Finally, Timothy was to be true to his calling by heeding the example of the articles, or containers, used in a house. Some vessels on the kitchen shelf are for common use, made of clay and wood. Other articles are for special, noble purposes. Some are composed of precious metals like gold and silver. Timothy must live a holy life, set apart for God, that he might be useful to God for every special occasion (2 Timothy 2:20-26).

In the midst of Paul's many analogies of faithfulness, he also pointed Timothy to the one perfect example, Jesus Christ. "Remember Jesus Christ," he urges Timothy. About this most faithful one, Paul borrowed words that many scholars believe were part of an early Christian hymn (2 Timothy 2:8-13). This hymn tells us that Christ has been always faithful and will remain true to those who trust in Him. Therefore, if we have failed the Lord, if we have disowned Him, or forgotten Him, we can now turn to Him and find His forgiving grace and loving mercy to be as true today as it was the day He died on the cross for our sins. Our faith, then, should not be in our own ability to trust, but in the trustworthiness of God.

Faithfulness in Hardship (Chapter 3)

Paul forewarned Timothy about the hardships he would face as he sought to stay true to his post of duty for the Lord. Timothy may have remembered Paul's earlier prediction about false teachers arising from within the church at Ephesus, a problem that the young pastor now faced head-on (Acts 20:17, 29-30; 2 Timothy 2:17-18). Thus, Timothy took seriously Paul's prediction about the wickedness that would manifest itself in the last days. Paul listed no less than 22 attributes of ungodliness that would characterize that time. It appeared that people would love almost everything but God and despise almost everything good (2 Timothy 3:1-8). The only pos-

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others. Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer. Similarly, anyone who competes as an athlete does not receive the victor's crown except by competing according to the rules.

2 Timothy 2:1-5

itive note sounded in this litany of despair was, "...they will not get very far...their folly will be clear to everyone" (2 Timothy 3:9).

This onslaught of evil was no reason for Timothy to retreat, however. Paul laid it on the line: "You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Timothy 3:10-12). Timothy's special reinforcements, when the battle grew tough, would be the promises and principles found in the Word of God—all the equipment he needed for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Faithfulness to the End (Chapter 4)

Paul was forever bold and never swerved from God's present call, because his eyes were always on the future claim. He set his hope on the final day, when Christ would appear to settle accounts with the righteous and the unrighteous. Paul urged his spiritual son, Timothy, to adopt the same unswerving focus: "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge" (2 Timothy 4:1). What was the charge? To "preach the Word." Timothy should use the Scriptures to correct the wayward, rebuke the backward, and encourage people forward (2 Timothy 4:2). The time would soon come when people would not heed God's truth; hence, now was the time to proclaim and teach it (2 Timothy 4:3-5).

Standing true to the end, Paul said, "For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure" (2 Timothy 4:6). The drink offering was an offering of wine poured out at the base of the altar (Numbers 15:1-12). Paul, who gladly expended himself for the Lord in life would now offer himself freely to the Lord in his death, as a final act of worship. He was ready to meet his Maker, for he had served God faithfully to the end: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7). Great rewards awaited Paul. And rewards await all who long for the appearing of our sovereign Lord Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 4:8). Is that your longing too?

Final Thought

In Paul's closing remarks we see great evidence of his service to God—lives touched for God (2 Timothy 4:9-22). Some of those he touched became personal friends; others became heated enemies. In all, there are 23 friends and foes mentioned by Paul in the book of 2 Timothy. His faithfulness to the Lord was evidenced by his witness to others. Would the same be true of his beloved disciple Timothy? Is the same true for you and for me?

Spending Time With God

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of time can bring more insight into their small group meeting. The digging deeper questions are for those who wish for more personal or small group study. As you spend time with God, may His Word enrich your life and enhance your daily walk with Him. PRAY, ASKING GOD FOR SPECIAL INSIGHT INTO HIS WORD.

Devotion (Personal Study)

1. Read the commentary portion of this study guide. What part of Paul's call to faithfulness is especially meaningful to you?

3. Read 2 Timothy 1:6-7.

a. In your own words, describe the three godly qualities that Paul urged Timothy to adopt.

b. In what area do you most wish to grow?

Why?

2. Read 2 Timothy 1:3-5. See also Acts 16:1.

4. a. What was Paul's charge to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:1-2?

a. From these verses, what can we learn about the home in which Timothy grew up?

b. Think of a time in your life when you entrusted time and training to someone unreliable. What was the outcome?

b. Describe elements in the home of your childhood that helped you to know God.

- c. Contrast that with the results produced from the training of a faithful person, again thinking of a specific example.
- d. How should this simple logic carry over into the life of our church?
6. Read aloud 2 Timothy 2:15.
- a. What practical steps could you take to make this verse a living reality in your life?
- b. Notice the context (2 Timothy 2:14, 16). What problem can be avoided if we become proficient in knowing and following God's Word?

Discussion (Small Group Study)

5. In 2 Timothy 2:3-7, Paul calls Timothy to dedicated service through three analogies. Which of the three speaks to you most powerfully? Why?

7. Read 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

a. In this context, the last days likely refers to the whole Messianic era between Christ's first and second coming. Do you think times are worse today than they were in Timothy's day?

b.What did Paul tell Timothy to expect (2 Timothy 3:12-13)? Are such words equally relevant for our day?

Digging Deeper (Further Study)

10. Read 2 Timothy 4:6-8 and describe Paul's confidence. Pray that you, your family, and members of your small group and church will be enabled by God to live by faith and find such confidence as well.

8. Read aloud 2 Timothy 3:16-17. What does this tell you about the source of the Scripture and the usefulness of Scripture?

9. In response to the truths of 2 Timothy 3:16-4:1, how does Paul urge Timothy to preach the Word (2 Timothy 4:2)? Do you think the "time has come" that is described by Paul in 2 Timothy 4:3-4? Explain why or why not.

Scripture for Meditation

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race,
I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the
crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous
Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me,
but also to all who have longed for His appearing.

2 Timothy 4:7-8



For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age...

Titus 2:11-12

Introduction

Some people view Christianity as a list of rules to which a person becomes enslaved. True Christianity, however, involves a joyous surrender to Christ, through which a person is set free (Romans 6:17-23). Christians are servants of Christ, set free from sin to do the will of God. Even as through the bonds of a faithful marriage each partner is free to discover the joyous opportunity to reach their best potential, so to be bound to the Lord is to be set free from bondage. Titus and Philemon are two gems in the display case of inspired Scripture that demonstrate this spiritual freedom. Every facet of these letters glistens with colorful insight on how we can be free to serve the living God.

Titus

Paul begins his letter to Titus with a favorite expression, "Paul, a servant of God..." (Titus 1:1a). The word servant is derived from the Greek term *doulos*, which means "bond-servant." In Paul's day, slavery was a big institution. If a servant fulfilled his terms of service and was offered his freedom, he could launch into a new life on his own. Sometimes, however, released servants who especially loved their masters would opt to stay with them for life. Such a servant would have been treated fairly and with kindness, and considered life-long service to his master to be the greatest use possible of his new freedom. The master would bring the slave to a door post and drive an awl through his ear as a mark that this was now a bond-servant whose will was forever one with that of the master. Paul was a bond-servant to the Lord, happily and fully committed to God's service for all time. In such complete surrender, the apostle knew true freedom.

The book of Titus is about doing God's will. If 1 & 2 Timothy focus on doctrine, then Titus places emphasis on good works. These works are not unto salvation, however, but are the fruit of salvation. Paul wrote Titus to demonstrate that faith results in works; right thinking results in right living.

Paul commissioned Titus to serve with the churches in Crete, the largest island on the Mediterranean. Crete was spotted with 100 cities, sandwiched in fertile valleys between rugged mountains. The highest mountain, Ida, was the traditional birthplace of the Greek god Zeus. Cretans lived in the shadow of pagan gods, and were described by their own poets as "...always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons" (Titus 1:12). Christians, however, should be distinguished by their righteous living. Paul exhorted them to live in such a way as to "...make the teaching about God our Savior attractive" (Titus 2:10). As nice clothes and careful grooming make a person attractive, so holiness and obedience to God make our faith appealing to others. Our works are like frames set over the picture of our lives, displayed for the world to see. Paul urges Titus to assure right living among the church's leaders and the church's members (Titus 2 & 3).

Titus was a Greek (Galatians 2:3), probably won to Christ by Paul (Titus 1:4). He first appeared in the Bible when he accompanied Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem (Galatians 2:1). He was later sent to Corinth to straighten out problems there regarding unity and purity, and to encourage an offering for the church in Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 8:6-10). Titus then met Paul in Macedonia and was sent back to Corinth with a letter from Paul to collect the previously set aside offering



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I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, because I hear about your love for all his holy people and your faith in the Lord Jesus. I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ. Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the Lord's people.

Philemon 4-7

(2 Corinthians 8:3-13; 8:16-23). He likely joined Paul for his third missionary trip and received the letter we call Titus before Paul's final imprisonment. Titus is last mentioned in Scripture when Paul writes from prison that Titus was sent on to Dalmatia (2 Timothy 4:10).

Titus was a faithful and trusted worker of Paul, and a skilled problem-solver for the Church. He was God's instrument to help the Corinthian church turn toward righteous living, and in the letter to Titus, Paul encouraged him to do the same for the churches in Crete. Titus would appeal to church leaders (Titus 1:5-15), the elderly (Titus 2:2-3), youth (Titus 2:4-8), slaves (Titus 2:9-14), and every member of the church in Crete.

Through a prayerful study of this marvelous letter, we are challenged to experience the joy of true freedom through service that God offers every believer.

Philemon

Paul's letter to Philemon is one of the prison epistles, along with Galatians, Ephesians, and Philippians. This is one of the most personal letters written by Paul. Along with 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus, Philemon was not written to a church, but to an individual. During Paul's imprisonment in Rome, he befriended a runaway slave named Onesimus. This slave had stolen money from his master, Philemon, who lived in Colossae. Upon meeting a new master, Jesus Christ, Onesimus acknowledged the debt he owed his earthly master, and the even greater debt he owed to his heavenly Master. Jesus Christ had given His life to set Onesimus spiritually free. Hence, this runaway should offer his days fully and freely back to God. It would not be enough to accept the title "Christian;" Onesimus must live for Christ. Because Onesimus' earthly master, Philemon, was a fair man and a follower of Christ, it would be right and reasonable for Onesimus to return to him. Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon with a letter of introduction. Through this letter to Philemon we are reminded of the potentially great and lasting effects of writing. In fact, it is only through Paul's epistles that we know much about Paul and his ministry. The 25 verses of this, Paul's shortest epistle, provides us with some important principles for Christian living:

1. The Gospel has power not only to liberate souls, but also societies.

Paul wrote in a day when slavery was commonplace. He could have sent a letter to Philemon, telling him that slavery was not acceptable and that Onesimus must go free. However, under a loving master like Philemon, Onesimus could be as happy as many employees today, receiving a fair wage for fair work. Paul could have turned toward the more repressive side of slavery and launched a crusade for its abolition. Instead, he wielded the weapon of the Gospel, which alone can change the human heart, so that not only slavery, but also every form of evil would receive a death blow. Those who crusade to change institutions from the outside can at best succeed in replacing one expression of human sin and selfishness for another. The Gospel, however, can change an institution from the inside out. This magnificent letter from Paul to Philemon foreshadows the time when the bonds of Christ's love would release countless thousands from bands of slavery.

2. The Gospel message is symbolized in the pages of this short letter.

Recently, some scholars have questioned the value of Paul's letter to Philemon as a book in the Bible. It was read and accepted by the early church, however, and the Holy Spirit guided councils from that time on to accept it as inspired by God and useful for our instruction. This book not only gives us insight into Paul's situation, but into the Gospel of salvation. In it we find a wonderful analogy of our redemption. We, like Onesimus, were once slaves, trying to escape the tyranny of an unwanted master. We were enslaved to the ways of the world, the devil, and our flesh. Onesimus could not save himself from the penalty of Roman law. A slave who absconded and was captured, had no rights of his own—he would likely die or receive a severe beating. As Paul interceded for Onesimus and committed to paying all of his debts (Philemon 19), so too Christ interceded for us and paid the full penalty for our sins!

3. Once we give our lives to Christ, our lives are eternally useful to God.

The name *Onesimus* means “useful;” hence Paul’s play on words, “Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me” (Philemon 11). Onesimus found purpose in life through his new master, Jesus Christ. If one associated with the lowliest class of people in Paul’s society could become useful, so can anyone who trusts in Christ. Paul taught that every Christian is a member of the body of Christ and that every member has an essential and useful function (1 Corinthians 12).

Final Thought

Do you view the Christian life as a religion full of restrictive rules? Think of it rather in the context of the first humans, Adam and Eve. All of God’s restrictions for them were centered in one direction: they were told not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:17). Beyond that tree—in all directions—were other trees laden with the most delicious fruit a person could desire. Adam and Eve could choose to focus their attention on the small section forbidden in the garden or freely enjoy the paradise around them, walking in the garden with God Himself.

So it is today with God’s people. The Lord has given us some rules to protect us. If we will turn our gaze on the blessings of God, the leading of God, the people of God, the mission of God... and, most important, on God Himself...we will find ourselves enjoying life and bearing fruit for God. The Christian life is a little taste of the great paradise that awaits us when the Lord returns to make all things new. There is no place in the world more freeing and fulfilling than that of complete and total surrender to God.

Spending Time With God

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may His Word enrich your life and enhance your daily walk with Him. PRAY, ASKING GOD FOR SPECIAL INSIGHT INTO HIS WORD.

Devotion (Personal Study)

1. Read the commentary portion of this study guide. What area of your life is most challenged by the study of Titus and Philemon?

a. Do you find them to be mostly the same or mostly different?

2. Read Titus 1:5.

a. What do you learn about Titus' mission from this verse?

b. How binding should these lists be in the church of today for the selection of elders?

b. What are the implications of the words "every town"?

4. From Titus 1:10-14, what were some saying about the Cretans?

Why do you think Paul brought out this negative perspective?

3. Compare the list of elder qualifications in Titus 1:6-9 with that found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7.

5. From Titus 1:15-16, how does Paul contrast the pure and those who are corrupted?

7. Read Philemon 1-3. Tell why Paul wrote to Philemon and briefly describe the setting and background for this letter. If you have a Bible dictionary, study Bible, commentary, or other reference aid on the book of Philemon, feel free to use it.

Do you think he is exaggerating? What is his point?

8. Read Philemon 4-10.

a. How does Paul verbally set the stage for the request he is about to make for Onesimus? See Proverbs 16:24.

Discussion (Small Group Study)

6. Titus 2 focuses on holy living. Read aloud the charge Paul gives to us in Titus 2:11-15. What portion of this charge do you most need to apply to your life today?

b. How might you more effectively use words to persuade others to do what is good and right?

Why?

9. a. From Philemon 11-16, what do we learn about Onesimus (whose name means “useful”)?

Digging Deeper (Further Study)

11. Contrast the tone of Paul's letter to Titus with that of the one he wrote to Philemon. Why do you think the tones of these letters were so different?

b. From Philemon 17-21, what do we learn about Paul's relationship to Philemon?

If Paul were to send you a letter today, what do you think would be the tone of that letter?

10. Does the book of Philemon show that Paul is supporting a repressive system of slavery? Explain. (See also Ephesians 6:5-9.)

Scripture for Meditation

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—

Titus 2:11-13A



BNEXT Amazing Journey Leader's Guide

This BNEXT Leader's Guide section is for facilitator/leaders. Please read this information before you begin. As the facilitator of a small group, you will have the experience of not only sharing this journey through God's Word with others, but of aiding them along the way. The purpose of this Leader's Guide is to aid you in your role as facilitator. You do not need previous experience or special training to lead a group. Your primary responsibility is to serve as facilitator, not to teach.

MATERIALS NEEDED FOR A SUCCESSFUL EXPERIENCE

The BNEXT Study / Amazing Journey includes a weekly video of 15–20 minutes in length. The video provided is on a flash drive, so make sure you have USB-compatible technology. Please review the video *before* each class. Here's a materials checklist:

- TV or computer with a USB 2.0 (or faster) port
- For larger groups, a projector is needed (and may even enhance a small group experience)
- Amazing Journey videos (on USB flash-drive)
- This Participant's Guide (one per participant)
- Bible for each participant, preferably the same version (these studies use the NIV)
- Pen or pencil for each participant
- Watch or clock to monitor time

ABOUT THIS STUDY

The BNEXT study series' are versatile and may be used by individuals, small groups, or even entire congregations. The use of a small group as part of the program will enhance each one's experience. BNEXT studies have successfully been used in a variety of environments, including home groups, churches, prisons, and businesses.

Total time for each weekly lesson should be about 1 to 1½ hours in length, which includes time for group discussion and video viewing. Suggested lesson plans with timing guidelines are found at the end of this Guide.

If you use this study in a large group or an entire church, there are two possible approaches. One approach is for the entire group to first gather for a welcome and opening prayer, after which participants can meet in small groups for discussion using the BNEXT questions. After a specified amount of time, all would reconvene into a larger setting to watch the video together. Alternately, the flash-drive videos may be made available for each small group, in which case, after the opening and welcome time, everyone can move to groups and remain there until the end of the day's session.

ABOUT SMALL GROUPS

Group Size: Experience has shown that a group size of 10–12 people works best. If your group is significantly larger, we suggest that you create additional small groups.

Group Leaders: Each group should have its own facilitator/leader. It is good to also have at least one back-up facilitator in case the primary facilitator is absent. If you have several groups meeting at one time, decide who will be responsible for facilitating the larger group gatherings for the welcome time and so forth.

ABOUT FACILITATOR/LEADERS

The ideal small group facilitator/leader should have:

- A hunger for God's Word and a deep desire to see others grow in their knowledge of God and His Word.
- A commitment to the group, emphasizing seeing the program through to the end.
- The ability to facilitate and moderate discussion rather than teach.
- A willingness to follow the "Discussion Group Rules of Engagement" (found in this Participant's Guide).

As facilitator, pray for your small group. Spend time preparing your own lesson and be thinking about how to present the questions to the class. You should attempt to answer all of the questions before the class. Group members should be encouraged to at least answer the first two sets of questions: Devotion (Personal Study) and Discussion (Small Group Study) questions, before each class, to enhance their learning experience. Even better, encourage them to find time to complete Digging Deeper (Further Study) questions on their own. One of the goals of this approach is to encourage participants to develop the habit of delving into Scripture and studying on a regular basis.

You are not expected to be a Biblical expert. You are a facilitator, so resist the attempt to teach. You are there to guide the group, keep them on track, and avoid getting caught up in doctrinal debates. These lessons are designed to easi-

ly be used by a first-time leader as well as an experienced leader. If you want to facilitate the group with a broadened background knowledge, see our "Background Study Option" below.

Recognize that not everyone is comfortable answering questions. Gently keep discussion going by asking questions like, "Does anyone else have something to add?" It can be helpful at times to have a volunteer read Scripture texts that are referred to in the questions.

Recognize and affirm all who contribute to the discussion. Do not dismiss someone's answer as wrong. If an answer is obviously off-base, thank them for their answer, then ask what others think. Remind the group to let Scripture interpret Scripture.

If you feel that a certain statement or question is inappropriate for your group, you may omit it or at least recognize that not everyone needs to answer it. However, do not be afraid of letting the group tackle tough topics.

BACKGROUND STUDY OPTIONS

Again, facilitators are not expected to be Biblical experts. If the group looks to you for an answer you do not have, it is perfectly fine to say, "I'm not sure. Perhaps we can all think about that one and bring it up again next week?" Or, "Let's bring this one up to the larger group when there is time allotted for such discussion," or, "Let's see if this doesn't answer itself over the weeks as we continue our study. Remember, the Bible interprets itself."

For extra study, you may wish to approach your pastor, or to read commentaries and use other resources. The internet contains a wealth of information ... and also disinformation. Some internet sites that provide reliable (and free) commentaries and articles include: biblegateway.com, biblestudytools.com, biblehub.com, and blueletterbible.org.

Another useful source of general Biblical knowledge is *The Essential Bible Companion*, by the same contributors of our Bible

in 90 Days study series: John Walton, Mark Strauss, and Ted Cooper Jr., Zondervan Publishing (also available as an e-book).

LEADING THE CLASS

First Class

Decide where you want to meet weekly and decide on a time. Once this has been done, actively publicize the *BNEXT Amazing Journey* study throughout all your circles — at your church, workplace, friends, family, etc. There are some free publicity aids on our website at ScriptureAwakening.com/bnext/freebies/.

The first class is unique in that the participant will not have anything to prepare. Use this time for getting to know one another and to introduce the BNEXT lesson format. There is an 18-minute BNEXT introduction video that accompanies this first lesson. Before showing the introduction video, we recommend:

1. Opening prayer, welcome, and introduction of members (10 minutes)
 - a. Think of something brief each participant could say about themselves such as: "Tell us something unique about yourself." Or perhaps, "What do you hope to get out of this BNEXT study?" Or, "This first lesson will provide an overview of the Bible. How comfortable are you with the Bible as a whole? Do you think you can benefit by learning more about each of its books and sections?"
 - b. Remind them to keep their answers brief (one minute or less).
2. Handout materials and give an overview (7 minutes)
 - a. Discuss the format of BNEXT Amazing Journey:
 - Reading of a specific book(s) or chapters of a book of the Bible.
 - Lesson commentary and questions (at least the Devotion and Discussion questions, and ideally, more) to be completed individually through the week.
 - Meet weekly to watch a 20-minute video and to go

through the Discussion questions (and if time allows, the Digging Deeper questions).

- b. Review the "Rules of Engagement" (found in the front of this Participant's Guide).
- c. Ask if there are any questions.
3. Discuss the study you will be doing (15 minutes)
 - a. Inform class of how many weeks you will be meeting to cover the study and what date will be your last date for this study.
 - b. Ask the group, "What do you know about [insert study's Bible book(s) name(s) such as Genesis]."
 - c. Ask the group, "What do you hope to have answered about (Genesis)?"
4. Watch the BNEXT Amazing Journey Introduction and Overview video (18 minutes)
5. Video discussion (5 minutes)
 - a. Ask if there are one or two participants who have a comment on the video or who may have learned something new from the video.
 - b. Remind them to keep their answers brief to allow others to respond.
6. Closing prayer (5 minutes)
 - a. If time is short, then as the leader, pray for the group.
 - b. If you have more time, you may ask if there are any prayer requests and either pray on behalf of the group or open it up for the group to pray.
7. Dismissal

Subsequent Classes

1. Opening prayer, welcome, and introduction of any new participants (5 minutes)
 - a. If there are new members, have them introduce themselves. Remind them to be brief (one minute or less).

- b. Think of a good ice-breaker that somehow relates to the study. For example, if you are about to watch a video on the Exodus from Israel: “Why do you think the Exodus was important?”, or “From what you know about the Exodus, how does it relate to the work of Christ on the cross?” Remind them to keep their answers short. Set a time limit for this opening section; not everyone needs to answer.
 - c. If you think it's necessary, remind the group of the “Rules of Engagement” in the front of this Participant's Guide.
2. Discuss lesson questions (20 minutes)
 - a. Ask if there are any Devotion questions that people in the group would like to discuss. These are the questions they have been encouraged to complete on their own prior to the class.
 - b. Give primary attention to the Discussion questions, which are designed to promote good discussion.
 - c. If time permits, you may wish to use one or more of the Digging Deeper questions.
 3. Watch the BNEXT Amazing Journey video (about 20 minutes)
 4. Video discussion (10 minutes)

Ask what participants may have learned or found interesting in the video.
 5. Closing prayer (5 minutes)
 - a. If time is short, then as the leader, pray for the group.
 - b. If you have more time, you may ask if there are any prayer requests and either pray on behalf of the group or open it up for the group to pray.
 6. Dismissal