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Introduction: Good Book Guides

Every Bible-study group is different—yours may take place in a church building, in a home, in a cafe, on a train, over a leisurely mid-morning coffee or squashed into a 30-minute lunch break. Your group may include new Christians, mature Christians, non-Christians, students, business colleagues or teens. That's why we've designed these *Good Book Guides* to be flexible for use in many different situations.

Our aim in each session is to uncover the meaning of a passage, and see how it fits into the 'big picture' of the Bible. But that can never be the end. We also need to apply appropriately what we have discovered to our lives. Let's take a look at what is included:

- 🗨️ **Talkabout:** most groups need to 'break the ice' at the beginning of a session, and here's the question that will do that. It's designed to get people talking around a subject that will be covered in the course of the Bible study.
- ⬇️ **Investigate:** the Bible text for each session is broken up into manageable chunks, with questions that aim to help you understand what the passage is about. **The Leader's Guide** contains **guidance on questions**, and sometimes 📝 additional 'follow-up' questions.
- 📖 **Explore more (optional):** these questions will help you connect what you have learned to other parts of the Bible, so you can begin to understand how the Bible relates together as a whole.
- ➡️ **Apply:** As you go through a Bible study, you'll keep coming across **apply** sections. Some of these have questions to get the group discussing what the Bible teaching means in practice for you and your church. Sometimes, a 🧠 **getting personal** section is an opportunity for you to think, plan and pray about the changes that you personally may need to make as a result of what you have discovered.
- ⬆️ **Pray:** We want to encourage prayer that is rooted in God's Word—in line with His concerns, purposes and promises. So each session ends with an opportunity to review the truths and challenges highlighted by the Bible study, and turn them into prayers of request and thanksgiving.

The **Leader's Guide** and introduction provide historical background information, explanations of the Bible texts for each session, ideas for **optional extra** activities, and guidance on how best to help people uncover the truths of God's Word.

Why study 2 Timothy?

Last words can be significant—they can reveal what is ultimately most important for the speaker. In Paul's second letter to Timothy, we have the last written words known to us of the apostle Paul. As he wrote, Paul was in prison, facing the end of his life, cut off from the churches that he had set up, and deserted by most of his gospel co-workers, to whom he had become an object of shame. Christians had become intimidated by the apparent success of opposition to the gospel from those outside the church. Meanwhile, inside the church, false teaching was spreading and many people seemed to like what they heard.

It would be easy to panic in a situation like this—or to go into survival mode: keep your head down and do as little as possible to antagonise your opponents or confront the false teachers. But Paul knew that the only way to guard the precious gospel of Jesus Christ was to teach it to the next generation of leaders and teachers, who, in turn, could pass it on to the succeeding generations. So Paul writes this deeply personal letter to Timothy, the man who was to become his spiritual 'heir', and would take the gospel to the next generation.

He writes to both challenge and encourage Timothy—to preach the word, to keep his head in all situations, to endure hardship, to fight the good fight and run the race to the very end.

The church today is still only one generation from extinction. The world is opposed to Jesus Christ, and false teachers seem to run rampant, destroying faith and denying God's power. Inside and outside church, people ridicule, intimidate and oppose anyone who sticks to the Bible. And like Timothy, we all feel the pressure to be ashamed of the gospel. We can all be disturbed by the Word of God, which rebukes and corrects us—we can all be attracted by false teachings that suit our own powerful desires instead.

These seven studies have been written to help Christians who feel demoralised, cowardly, and tempted to be ashamed of the gospel. As we investigate this letter, we can stand in Timothy's shoes, listening to the encouragements and the commands of the battle-scarred apostle. We will learn the boldness of his plan for the gospel and the boldness of his attitude to opposition, even when he was right in the thick of it. We will be reminded of the utter faithfulness of Jesus Christ, the wonder of the gospel, the certainty of Christ's return and judgment, the power of Scripture to save us and equip us for every good work, and the joy of what we look forward to—the unique Christian hope.



overview

WHAT IS 2 TIMOTHY ALL ABOUT?



talkabout

1. If you could plan your last words, what would you like to say?



investigate

Timothy was a younger Christian leader who had accompanied Paul on some of his missionary journeys. Paul later sent him to help lead churches that Paul had started. When Paul writes this letter, Timothy is probably still leading and teaching the church in Ephesus. Paul, however, knows he is coming to the end of his life—he is expecting to be executed as part of the persecution of Christians going on at the time. So what are Paul's final instructions to Timothy? What is his final message to the believers who have heard the gospel through his preaching? Read on to find out!

2.  **Read 2 Timothy 1 v 2-5.** What does Paul think of Timothy now?



3. ▶ **Read 1 v 15-17, 2 v 9 and 4 v 16.** What is Paul's situation?

4. ▶ **Read 2 v 17-18.** What is the situation in the church?

5. ▶ **Read 3 v 13 and 4 v 3-4.** What things are expected in the future?

⇒ **apply**

6. If you were Paul, what sort of things might be going through your mind as you faced this situation?

- How similar are the problems facing the church today (both locally and worldwide)?



- What sort of things do you hope to learn from Paul as you study this letter?

↓ **investigate**

7. ▶ **Read 1 v 13-14.** What is Paul's big concern?

8. ▶ **Read 2 v 2.** What is Paul's plan for achieving this?

⋮ **explore more**

optional

What actually is the message of the gospel? **Read John 3 v 16** and try to construct an outline of the Good News. What do these verses tell us about...

- God?
- ourselves?
- Jesus and His death?
- faith?
- the alternative?



Now see if you can explain what the gospel is in your own words.



investigate

9. **Read 2 v 25-26.** What else will Paul's plan involve for Timothy?

10. **Read 1 v 8 and 3 v 12.** What will happen to Timothy in the process?

- What is Paul worried that Timothy might do (see 1 v 8)?



apply

11. If you were Timothy, what sort of things might be going through your mind?

- How similar are the experiences of Christians today (both locally and worldwide)?



- What sort of things do you hope to learn along with Timothy as you study this letter?



investigate

12. ▶ Read 1 v 9-10.

What's the biggest encouragement to Timothy to still do his job?



getting personal

When you became a Christian, what did you think it would be like? Did you realise that living for Jesus will mean suffering? Are you prepared for any challenges that may lie ahead?



pray

As a group:

Thank God for faithful and fearless teachers of His Word through the ages, such as Paul. Pray for the leaders of your church and their God-given responsibilities.

On your own:

Think again about what you hope to gain from this Bible-study course. Ask God to help you grow in faithfulness and fearlessness as you live for Christ in this hostile world.



BEFORE NEXT TIME

- **READ AHEAD:** 2 Timothy 1 v 1-10
- **THINK AHEAD:** *What things will keep Timothy going in his difficult job?*

