



VISION SERIES

A VISION FOR GOD'S HEART

LEADERS NOTES





A VISION FOR GODS HEART

WELCOME TO THE ST PAUL'S CASTLE HILL 2026 VISION SERIES

Each year, the heart behind our vision series is to encourage us together as a church, to look forward to where God is leading us and consider how he is leading us there. It is not a time to push human agendas, but rather to prayerfully consider together the opportunities and challenges ahead of us as a church, seeking God's strength, wisdom and guidance as we move forward with confidence, growing as his people and seeing the gospel advance.

We want to hold the gospel tightly, and our own plans loosely.

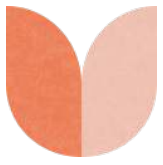
As we look towards 2027, let's think about how we bring the Gospel of light to:

Every Generation,

Every Household,

and Every Community.

As we prayerfully seek God's direction for his church and discern together how each of us can play our part in the body of Christ, we will spend three weeks in the book of 2 Timothy.



A NOTE TO LEADERS

Thank you for your commitment to serving God and to serving St Paul's as you love and lead those in your Small Group.

In a series focused on vision, it is a great opportunity to recognise that so much of God's vision for His Church is expressed through Small Groups. As each group opens and explores God's word together, serves and cares for each other through prayer and practical help, we embody God's call for His Church and become a Gospel-shaped community.

As you do this, you come to know your group deeply and personally. Please treat these studies as a starting point, not a finished product. Feel encouraged to edit the questions, tailor them to your group and approach each week in the way that best serves your members. Each group may take a slightly different path to the same key teaching point.

The leaders notes after each question are not there to provide answers that end the group's discussion, but to support you as you guide the conversation.

Leaders' notes become detrimental to group engagement and growth if they are read out as answers.

If at any point you would like support or prayer, please feel free to contact your Small Group Coach. If you need support from the staff team, contact Pat Jones for pastoral care or Emma Wynn-Jones for Small Group coordination and administration. We will be happy to serve however we can.

PRAYER

Prayer is one of the ways we express our dependence on God and participate in the life of a Small Group. At St Paul's we want all Small Groups to be praying for each other, their adopted mission partner(s), for the church and for all the ministries happening each week. To support this, we've included a "what's on this week" at the end of each study. This helps keep everyone informed and shapes what we pray for together.



WHAT'S COMING UP

GRACE IN COMMUNITY – ST PAUL'S CONFERENCE **Saturday 12th September, 9:00am – 2:30pm**

We're so excited to be doing something new this year as our whole church family gathers across all generations!

The St Paul's Conference "Grace in Community" is an opportunity to sit under God's word, be encouraged together, and set our hearts on the direction God is leading us as his people.

THANKS AND GIVING SUNDAY **Sunday 13th September – All Services**

Each year as a church we put aside a Sunday service to reflect on all that God has been doing in and through our church over the last year and give Him praise and thanking Him for His faithfulness.

Thanks and Giving Sunday is also an opportunity to consider how God is calling us to joyfully and generously join in with the plans we believe God has in store for the year ahead.

Prime Time – September 15th

Commons Sunday – September 20th

Final Crossfire Term 3 – September 25th

Help at Home – September 26th

Songs of Praise Hosted by St James – September 27th

UNDERSTANDING 2 TIMOTHY

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

AUTHOR AND OCCASION. 2 Timothy presents itself as a letter from Paul and has traditionally been understood as his final letter before his execution, composed from a Roman prison around AD 66–67, during the reign of Nero. While Pauline authorship is disputed by some modern scholars, this study follows the letter's own presentation and the traditional understanding that Paul wrote it. This was likely Paul's second Roman imprisonment, and it was far harsher than the first. During his earlier imprisonment (reflected in Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians, and Philemon), Paul had relative freedom under house arrest and reasonable hope of release. Here, he describes himself as "suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal" (2:9) and speaks of his life already "being poured out like a drink offering" with his "departure" at hand (4:6). Commentators treat 2 Timothy as Paul's final testament — his last charge to the man he trusted to carry the gospel forward.

THE NERONIAN PERSECUTION. In AD 64, a great fire devastated Rome, and Nero blamed Christians, leading to persecution of Christians in Rome. What had been a marginalized sect was now facing severe hostility. Paul writes in a world where "everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (3:12) was not abstract theology but Paul's own lived, present reality, and a warning of what Timothy might face.

TIMOTHY AND EPHESUS. Timothy was pastoring in Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3), a congregation Paul had established and among whom he ministered for roughly three years (Acts 19–20). Ephesus was a wealthy, strategically located, religiously pluralist city and home to the temple of Artemis, one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world.

By the time Paul writes 2 Timothy, false teachers had infiltrated the Ephesian church, including two named individuals, Hymenaeus and Philetus, who taught that the resurrection of believers had already taken place (2:17–18). Paul also invokes "Jannes and Jambres" (3:8), the traditional Jewish names for Pharaoh's court magicians, whose opposition to Moses provides a parallel to these teachers who oppose the truth.

TIMOTHY'S BACKGROUND. Timothy had a mixed heritage: a believing Jewish mother, Eunice, and a Greek father. He had been raised in the Scriptures from infancy by his mother and grandmother, Lois (1:5; 3:15). He had travelled with Paul for years, beginning in Acts 16, and had personally witnessed Paul's sufferings in his own home region. Lystra was Timothy's hometown, where Paul had been stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:19–20).

THE LETTER'S MOVEMENT. 2 Timothy as a whole is structured as a dying man's charge to persevere and to guard and pass on the gospel ("guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you," 1:14).

The letter moves from Paul's personal circumstances to Timothy's responsibility to carry the gospel forward. In chapters 1–2, Paul calls Timothy to courage and faithfulness, urges him to guard the gospel and entrust it to others, and warns him against false teaching. These themes set the stage for Paul's further instructions in chapters 3–4, where he calls Timothy to remain faithful in the face of increasing opposition.

Chapter 3 moves from a warning about the moral and spiritual decline of "the last days" (3:1–9) into Paul's personal appeal to Timothy based on their shared history (3:10–13), then into the great statement on Scripture's origin and sufficiency (3:14–17), which grounds the solemn charge to preach the word (4:1–5). It is, in effect, Paul's final instructions before death, a final passing of the baton.

THROUGHOUT 2 TIMOTHY

KEY THEMES AND EMPHASIS

SUFFERING FOR THE GOSPEL. A constant refrain, Paul urges Timothy not to be ashamed of the gospel or of Paul's chains (1:8, 12), to "join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (2:3) and reminds him that if we died with him, we also live with him (2:11–12).

GUARDING AND TRANSMITTING THE GOSPEL DEPOSIT.

Paul repeatedly charges Timothy to guard sound doctrine (1:13–14) and to entrust it to "reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others" (2:2), a vision of multi-generational faithfulness.

THE SPIRIT'S POWER. Paul reminds Timothy "The Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline" (1:7), urging him to "fan into flame the gift of God" within him (1:6).

ENDURANCE AS THE MARK OF GENUINE FAITH. The soldier, athlete, and farmer images of 2:3–7, and the "trustworthy saying" of 2:11–13, present perseverance — not sinless perfection, as the hallmark of authentic discipleship.

SOUND DOCTRINE VERSUS FALSE TEACHING. Paul repeatedly contrasts sound teaching with "godless chatter" (2:16) and "foolish and stupid arguments" (2:23), culminating in the description of teachers who tell people what their "itching ears" want to hear (4:3–4).

THROUGHOUT 2 TIMOTHY

KEY THEMES AND EMPHASIS

THE DIVINE ORIGIN AND SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE.

3:16–17 stands as one of the clearest biblical statements on inspiration. Scripture is "God breathed" and fully adequate to equip the believer for every good work.

A LIFE THAT MATCHES THE MESSAGE. Paul does not appeal only to doctrine but to a life Timothy has personally observed (3:10–11), teaching validated by conduct.

THE SOLEMN CHARGE TO PREACH. 4:1–2 is the letter's climactic imperative, delivered "in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus."

FINISHING WELL. Paul's own testimony, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (4:7), models what faithful endurance to the end looks like, with a crown of righteousness awaiting.

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS AMID HUMAN WEAKNESS. "If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself" (2:13), a sober but hope-filled anchor for a letter otherwise full of warnings.

STUDY #1

REACHING EVERY GENERATION

2 TIMOTHY 1:3 – 14

Key teaching: *It takes a generation to reach a generation. This responsibility is modelled in Paul, Timothy's grandmother and mother, and in Timothy's own life. It is a responsibility we all need to seriously consider as a priority in our lives. Please allow time for this to land in the final question and give people space to reflect.*

WELCOME

1. What is the most important life skill or mindset you have had passed onto you?

BRIEF CONTEXT

Paul is writing to Timothy, a close friend and fellow worker in the gospel. Timothy has been serving in Ephesus, and Paul is writing to encourage him to remain faithful to the gospel and the ministry God has entrusted to him. Paul writes from imprisonment, knowing that his death is near, giving the letter a particular sense of urgency as he prepares Timothy to continue the work.

READ: 2 TIMOTHY 1:3 – 14

UNPACK

2. What is Paul doing as he begins this letter? What does his "clear conscience" tell us about his relationship with God and the way he approaches his ministry?

Paul is writing to Timothy, a close friend and fellow worker in the gospel. When Paul speaks of serving God with a clear conscience, he is describing the integrity and sincerity with which he approaches his ministry. His confidence is not in his own perfection, but in the God whom he serves.

3. Paul begins with prayer, affection and Timothy's family. What does this tell us about Paul and Timothy's relationship and the way faith has been passed on to Timothy?

Paul's relationship with Timothy is deeply personal and affectionate.

Christian discipleship is not simply the transfer of information or knowledge, but happens through relationships, example and shared life. Timothy's faith has also been shaped through his family, particularly his mother Eunice and grandmother Lois. Faith is often passed on through the people God places around us, and we have the opportunity to play that role in the lives of others.

4. What does Paul mean by "fan into flame the gift of God"? How does the Spirit God has given Timothy enable him to do this?

To "fan into flame" the gift of God is to actively use and develop what God has entrusted to us rather than allowing it to lie dormant. Timothy is not expected to do this in his own strength. Paul immediately reminds him of the Spirit God has given him, who gives power, love and self-discipline. Encourage the group to consider how they might actively use the gifts God has given them, trusting the Spirit to work through them.

5. What in Paul's description of "the Spirit God gave us" stands out as an encouragement or challenge to you?

Give the group time to reflect on Paul's description of the Spirit. The Spirit does not produce timidity, but gives power, love and self-discipline. Encourage people to identify one aspect that particularly encourages or challenges them. There will be an opportunity to return to this personally in Q10

6. What does Paul call Timothy to do in verse 8? What reasons does he give Timothy to be courageous?

Paul calls Timothy not to be ashamed of the gospel or of Paul's suffering, but to join him in suffering for the gospel. Notice how this call is surrounded by reminders of the Spirit's power and God's grace and purpose. Timothy is not being asked to find courage in himself. His courage comes from God, the Spirit he has been given, and the gospel he has been entrusted with. At this point, we want the group to begin seeing how central the Spirit's work is to faithful gospel ministry.

7. Read verses 9–11 again. Paul describes the Gospel he was appointed to herald. What stands out to you in his summary of the Gospel? How does it differ from how we might summarise it?

We are often drawn to explain the mechanics of salvation when we summarise the gospel. Paul certainly speaks of salvation here, but he emphasises the life God has called us to: a holy life, given to us not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace. That grace was given to us in Christ before the beginning of time. Paul also describes Jesus as the one who has destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. These are not always the first things we would include in a summary of the gospel, but they show the depth and scope of what God has done for us in Christ.

8. What does Paul mean by “I know whom I have believed” and “he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him”? How do these words give him confidence despite his suffering?

Paul's confidence is ultimately in the God whom he knows and trusts. “I know whom I have believed” points to a personal confidence in God's character and faithfulness, while “he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him” expresses Paul's confidence that God is able to preserve what has been committed to him. Paul can therefore continue faithfully despite suffering because the outcome of his life and ministry ultimately rests with God, not with Paul's ability to control his circumstances.

REACHING EVERY GENERATION

9. Having described what he believes his charge from God is, what instructions does Paul then give Timothy in verses 13–14? What does each instruction mean?

Paul gives Timothy these instructions: hold to sound teaching with faith and love in Jesus, and guard the good deposit with the help of the Holy Spirit. Faithful gospel ministry is about both holding onto the truth and living in relationship with Christ, and it is done in the Spirit's strength rather than our own.

10. As Paul calls Timothy into gospel action, he repeatedly points to the help of the Spirit. Looking at the work of the Spirit throughout this passage, what might it look like for that same work of the Spirit to be evident in you?

Invite the group to choose one aspect of the Spirit's work they have noticed in the passage. Encourage them to honestly consider whether this is evident in their own lives and why or why not.

11. We don't all have the exact same calling as Paul and Timothy. Which aspects of their calling in this passage are universal to all Christians? What would it look like to live these out?

Paul and Timothy had particular callings, but all Christians are called to faithfully hold onto the gospel, live it out, and help others know and follow Christ. This includes investing in those who come after us, empowered by the Spirit.

READ: PSALM 78:4-7 + PETER 1:12-15

These passages show the importance of deliberately passing on what we have received. Timothy's faith was shaped by Lois and Eunice, and Paul is now investing in Timothy. Timothy is then instructed to pass on what he has received to others. Gospel ministry looks beyond our own lifetime as we faithfully pass the gospel from one generation to the next.

12. Who has God put in your life, or who could you seek out, to make a generational investment in the gospel?

This question is intended to move from principle to personal priority. For those with families, consider whether the rhythms of our homes communicate the priority of passing on the gospel. Does Bible reading have a place alongside homework? Does prayer alongside music or sport? Our children learn what we consider important not only from what we tell them, but from what we make time for.

For everyone, consider who God has placed around you and whether you are actually investing in those who come after you. It is easy for generational gospel investment to become something we affirm in principle but continually push behind work, study, friendships, family, sport, comfort or other priorities. There are opportunities to invest both organically through relationships and intentionally through ministry. Are we actually taking them?

VISION IN ACTION

Each week in this series, we want to take time for purposeful and practical response, considering how we can be encouraged in our **prayer, giving,** and what we can **go** and do. Below are some prompts to get the conversation started.

PRAY: For the next generation and those who have gone before you.

GIVE: Resources for the Kingdom: our time, energy, wealth, and all that God has given us for generational Gospel ministry.

GO: Invest in the next generation and fan into flame what God has given them.



COMING UP

St Paul's Conference: Grace in Community – September 12th

Thanks and Giving Sunday – September 13th

STUDY #2

REACHING EVERY HOUSEHOLD

2 TIMOTHY 1:15 – 2:13

WELCOME

If you were to write a letter to anyone thanking them for their investment in your faith, who would it be and why?

BRIEF CONTEXT

Paul is writing to Timothy during a difficult period of his ministry. Paul is imprisoned and facing the end of his life, while Timothy is continuing the gospel ministry Paul has entrusted to him. Throughout the letter, Paul speaks about the people who have remained faithful and those who have turned away, before encouraging Timothy as a younger gospel worker facing the challenges of ministry

READ: 2 TIMOTHY 1:15 – 2:13

UNPACK

1. Why do you think Paul includes both the people who abandoned him and the hospitality he received as he writes to Timothy?

Paul is writing personally to someone he loves, but these examples also give Timothy a realistic picture of gospel ministry. People may abandon us, while others may become a great source of encouragement and practical care. Neither should determine our faithfulness. The gospel remains the priority.

2. Practically, what do you think Paul means when he tells Timothy to “be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus”?

Paul doesn't tell Timothy to find strength in himself, but in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Grace is not merely something we receive at conversion; it is where we continue to draw the strength we need to remain faithful. The ministry ahead will require Timothy to depend on Christ rather than himself.

3. Why is 2:2 particularly important for us as we think about reaching every household?

Paul's ministry wasn't simply about proclaiming the gospel himself. Paul entrusted what he had received to Timothy, who is now to entrust it to reliable people who can teach others too. Gospel ministry is therefore not only about reaching people ourselves, but about equipping others to carry the gospel further. This is the multiplication at the heart of 2:2.

4. As Paul instructs Timothy, ask God to give you insight into the meaning of these three illustrations. Discuss together and share what you discover.

-Soldier

-Athlete

-Farmer

Give the group freedom to explore the illustrations rather than giving them the answers. Some things to draw out if needed:

Soldier. *A soldier accepts hardship and remains focused on the one who enlisted them. Gospel ministry requires commitment even when it is difficult.*

Athlete. *An athlete must compete according to the rules to receive the prize. Faithfulness matters, not simply effort or enthusiasm.*

Farmer. *A farmer works hard before seeing the fruit of their labour. Gospel ministry can be demanding, and its fruit may take time, but the work is worthwhile.*

5. Paul's one-verse summary of the Gospel in 2:8 is even more succinct than in the previous chapter. What is significant about what he chooses to highlight?

Paul's brief summary centres on Jesus Christ, descended from David and raised from the dead. He brings together Jesus' identity as the promised Messiah and his victory over death. Even in its simplicity, the Gospel is centred on the person and resurrection of Jesus.

6. What comparison does Paul make in verses 9–10, and how does it encourage him to endure?

Paul's chains can restrain him, but they cannot restrain God's word. This gives Paul perspective on his suffering. His circumstances cannot stop the gospel from advancing or prevent people from receiving salvation in Christ.

7. The “trustworthy saying” in verses 11–13 has four statements. Break into 4 groups and have each group summarise what their statement teaches about following Christ.

Allow the groups to wrestle with each statement. Draw out the seriousness and hope running through the whole saying:

Die with Christ: *Following Christ involves sharing in his death, with the promise that we will also live with him.*

Endure: *Those who persevere with Christ will reign with him. Christian faithfulness requires endurance.*

Disown: *Jesus' warning is serious. Those who disown him will also be disowned by him. Our response to Christ matters.*

Faithless: *Even when we are faithless, Christ remains faithful. His character and promises do not change according to ours.*

REACHING EVERY HOUSEHOLD

8. Paul describes a chain of gospel investment: Paul invests in Timothy, Timothy entrusts the gospel to reliable people, and they invest in others. If you put yourself in Timothy's place, who is your "Paul"? Who are you investing in?

Give people time to think. If someone cannot identify a person who has invested in their faith or someone they are investing in, don't rush past it. Encourage them to consider who God might be placing in their life and what a first step could look like.

9. If we are not investing in others, what is holding us back? Are we treating this as something every Christian should continue growing in, or something we can leave to others?

Push into the excuses rather than allowing them to become the end of the conversation.

Don't understand the gospel well enough? Find someone who can invest in you and help you grow.

Don't have relationships with a younger generation? Find somewhere to serve and begin building them.

Don't have time? Ask whether this is important enough to make time for. There will always be reasons not to invest. We should never graduate from this, whether through formal ministry or ordinary relationships.

10. What costs might we genuinely face if we step forward boldly to reach every household? Could fear of these costs be holding us back from living out God's vision? How might being "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" shape the way we face those costs? are not investing in others, what is holding us back? Are we treating this as something every Christian should continue growing in, or something we can leave to others?

The costs may be significant: persecution, rejection, awkwardness, inconvenience, lost time, or simply having to put ourselves second.

Encourage the group to be honest about what actually holds them back. Is being the "weird one" at work or school enough to stop us? Is inconvenience enough? Is losing comfort or time enough? Paul was willing to endure because the gospel was worth it, and he knew that his strength came from the grace of Christ.

11. In response to our Thanks and Giving Sunday service, use the “Vision in Action” section below to pray together with boldness and reflect on where God might be calling you to Give and Go, both collectively and individually.

***Don't rush this final question.** In response to Thanks and Giving Sunday, give the group substantial time to pray and consider where God may be calling them to Give and Go. Encourage them to think both personally and collectively about how we can participate in reaching every household.*

VISION IN ACTION

Each week in this series, we want to take time for purposeful and practical response, considering how we can be encouraged in our prayer, giving, and what we can go and do. Below are some prompts to get the conversation started.

PRAY: For people to come to know Jesus.

GIVE: For new churches, buildings and ministries.

GO: As evangelists and church planters.



COMING UP

Prime Time – September 15th

Young Adults, The Commons – September 20th

STUDY #3

REACHING EVERY COMMUNITY

2 TIMOTHY 3:10 – 4:5

Key teaching: *This passage is a charge to remain faithful to the gospel, even when people reject sound teaching or following Jesus becomes costly. As you lead the study, keep coming back to Paul's final words to Timothy in 4:5: "keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry." In a series about reaching every generation, household, and community, help the group see that sharing the gospel requires faithfulness, perseverance and a willingness to endure hardship.*

WELCOME

1. As a group share your biggest encouragements, questions and convictions from the Grace in Community – St Paul's Conference and the Vision Series so far.

BRIEF CONTEXT

Paul continues writing to Timothy as he faces the challenges of ministry and an increasingly difficult world. Timothy has known Paul, his teaching and his life for many years, and Paul writes with the urgency of a final charge to his trusted fellow worker.

READ: 2 TIMOTHY 3:10 – 4:5

UNPACK

2. Read 3:10–11. Make a list of every quality or experience Paul says Timothy has "followed" about him. Why do you think Paul begins his final charge to Timothy this way?

Paul lists eight things Timothy has followed in him:

- *his teaching,*
- *his conduct (how he lived),*
- *his aim in life,*
- *his faith,*
- *his patience,*
- *his love,*
- *his steadfastness, and*
- *his persecutions and sufferings*

Paul wants Timothy to remember this isn't just an idea Timothy agreed with, but rather a life he witnessed, suffering included. A life someone has personally observed carries weight that words alone don't.

3. In verses 12–13, what contrast is Paul drawing between the trajectory of the godly and the trajectory of deceivers?

Leaders note: *If you want to highlight this point you can ask as a 3-part question:*

a. *According to verse 12, what does Paul say will be true for "all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus"?*

b. *Now look at verse 13. What is happening to "evil people and impostors" over time?*

c. *What can we learn from this contrast?*

In verse 12 Paul states that anyone who genuinely wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. That's the expected result of real godliness, not a sign something has gone wrong. However, verse 13 says the opposite happens to deceivers: they don't stay the same, they get worse, all while deceiving others and being deceived themselves — caught in a cycle of their own making. So we see the godly suffer but stay anchored in truth, while deceivers avoid that suffering for a while but spiral further from truth.

4. Read 3:14–15. What two things does Paul urge Timothy to do? Why might the source of Timothy's instruction matter as much as its content?

Paul tells Timothy to continue in what he has learned and become convinced of, remembering the trustworthy people through whom he received it. His mother and grandmother had shaped his faith from childhood (1:5), and Paul himself had taught and modelled the faith to him. Timothy had also known the Jewish Holy Scriptures from infancy. His confidence rests not simply in an abstract idea, but in trustworthy teaching received through faithful people and grounded in Scripture.

5. What Scriptures is Paul referring to in verse 15, and how do they point us towards salvation through faith in Jesus Christ?

Paul is referring to the Jewish Scriptures, our Old Testament. These Scriptures point us towards God's purposes and ultimately make us "wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."

6. Looking at verses 16–17, unpack each function Paul attributes to Scripture (v16). How do each of these together help achieve their collective purpose described in verse 17?

To elaborate:

a. What does each of the four functions (teaching, rebuking, correction, training in righteousness) seem to emphasize?

b. How might they work together rather than separately in a person's life?

Scripture is useful for teaching (what's true), rebuking (where you're wrong), correction (how to get back on track), and training in righteousness (how to keep growing forward). Together they cover the whole process of diagnosis, correction, and ongoing growth. This is not just a moment of learning or fixing a mistake. The purpose (v.17) is that God's person would be "complete" and "equipped for every good work". Scripture isn't just information to know, it's meant to produce a whole, faithful life.

7. Why do you think Paul frames his charge to Timothy in 4:1 this way?

Paul says this charge is given "in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus," giving it the weight of a solemn charge before God. He names Christ as the one who will judge everyone, living and dead, and points to Christ's future appearing and kingdom. This is about as serious as biblical language gets. Paul frames it this way so Timothy understands this charge isn't just Paul's personal wish; it's something Timothy will one day answer for before God himself.

8. What stands out to you about each instruction in 4:2?

The commands are: preach the word, always be ready, correct, rebuke, and exhort. "In season and out of season" means regardless of whether it's convenient or whether people want to hear it. Reprove means pointing out what's wrong; rebuke means confronting it directly; exhort means encouraging people toward what's right. Paul adds "with complete patience and teaching" so none of this comes across as harsh or impulsive. It's meant to be careful, patient instruction, not just criticism.

9. Read 4:3–4. What picture does Paul paint of what people will reject and seek?

Paul warns that a time is coming, and was already beginning to arrive, when people won't put up with sound teaching. Paul paints a picture of people who stop tolerating solid teaching, seek out teachers who'll tell them what they want to hear, turn away from truth, and turn aside to made-up ideas ("myths"). "Itching ears" pictures people who want to be scratched, not healed — teaching that feels good and confirms what they already think, rather than teaching that challenges them.

REACHING EVERY COMMUNITY

10. What barriers do you face when sharing the Gospel with people who are different from you? How does Paul's ministry, which involved suffering (3:10–11), set an example for us and what does it suggest about where we should seek our confidence?

Paul suffered in several different cities while bringing the gospel to new places, and through it all the Lord remained faithful to him. That tells us not to assume opposition means something has gone wrong. Our confidence is not in avoiding hardship, but in God's faithfulness even when following Christ is costly.

11. In 4:3–4, people are described as accumulating teachers "to suit their own passions" rather than enduring sound teaching. As we share the gospel to different communities and groups, how can we guard against reshaping the gospel to conform to the preferences of the people we are trying to reach? (See also 3:16–17)

What people want to hear looks different from place to place. One community might crave a message about success or comfort, another about national pride, another about self-fulfilment or tolerance. The pull is the same everywhere: shape the message to fit what people already want.

Paul points Timothy back to God-breathed Scripture, which teaches, corrects and equips God's people. As we seek to communicate the gospel appropriately in different communities, we must guard against changing its message simply to make it more acceptable.

12. The charge to "preach the word... in season and out of season" (4:2) assumes some settings will welcome the message and others won't. What would it practically look like for a church or an individual believer to stay faithful to Paul's charge "in season and out of season"?

Practically, that could look like continuing to show up, continuing to teach the whole truth rather than only its comfortable parts, and doing it with real patience rather than harshness: trusting the outcome to God rather than to how well it's received.

REFLECTION

13. Paul could point Timothy to a life he (Paul) had personally lived, not merely words he had spoken (3:10–11). Whose life has been modelled for you which demonstrates Christian faithfulness? What might others see in your life that points them towards faithful Christian living?

14. Sit with the four commands of 4:5: be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. Which of these four is hardest for you right now, and why? Take a few minutes to pray specifically about that one area before moving on.

Please spend a significant amount of time on this question.

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