



Week 3: 2 Timothy: Soldier, Athlete, Farmer, Persevere in Suffering

Series Big Idea: You are not the church of tomorrow. God has called you to be a servant leader as a part of the church of *today* for His glory.

Today's Big Idea: As a servant leader, your singular focus is pleasing God in whatever you do and wherever you are. Don't let personal suffering or others' opinions distract you from your mission to love God, love others, and bring God glory.

Today's Goal: As you begin studying Paul's last letter before his death, 2 Timothy, you will show students several analogies to explore what the life of a servant leader looks like. Help students see that no matter what their job is, what type of people they interact with daily, and where they are in the world, they can join God in what He is already doing. It's evident again that Timothy was experiencing all types of conflicts in the church, clashing from the culture in Ephesus, and suffering from persecution. This is so relatable to students. Help them discover that God wants to speak to their situations through the letter of 2 Timothy. We all are frequently tempted to cave in to peer pressure, change our beliefs based on wanting others to like us or to fit in, to quit when things get hard or when we experience conflict in relationships, and to succumb to our sinful natures. However, we put our hope not in our ability to try harder to do better or "pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps." Our hope is in Jesus' all-sufficient sacrifice on the cross for us and the Holy Spirit's transforming work in our hearts for God's glory. We don't make ourselves into sanctified soldiers, athletes, farmers, or servant leaders—God does the shaping as we submit to Him.

Leader Reminders:

- Be prepared. Make sure each week you are spending an adequate amount of time soaking in the Scripture and praying for your students. Cramming forces you to read from this page rather than facilitating a conversation. Highlight the questions you really want to get to as there are way more than you could cover in your group time. Don't feel like you need to get through all the questions.

- Follow up on how it went reading 1 Timothy 4-6 this past week. Challenge them to bring paper Bibles each week. [**Youth Pastor Note: Have extra paper Bibles available for students who forget or don't have one.**]
- “Interpreting Tip” #3: **Interpret Scripture With Scripture.** Rather than sharing this tip, work it into your lesson by asking your students throughout the lesson what other verses they know about suffering, perseverance, and the other related themes. This way they are learning Bible study tools as a part of conversation and *will allow you to talk less.*
- Have you set up a time to bring a student along into your life for an hour or two this month? If not, take a moment now to text the students you need to coordinate with.

Break The Ice: *Take 5 minutes to touch base with your students about their highs and lows from the week. Set a 1-minute timer for each student if necessary.*

Starter Activity:

- Give students a piece of paper and ask them to draw a soldier, a farmer, and an athlete. Then have them write characteristics of each of these professions. Segue by saying something like, “today as we study what God has to say to us in the book of 2 Timothy, we are going to see how God is developing our perseverance-in-the-face-of-suffering muscles. This is the one thing I want you to take away from today’s lesson: **As a servant leader, your singular focus is pleasing God in whatever you do and wherever you are. Don’t let personal suffering or others’ opinions distract you from your mission to love God, love others, and bring God glory.**]
- Then, have students watch this 7 minute and 46 second video about the context of the book of 2 Timothy:

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/2-timothy/>

Starter Question: *Start your group in prayer. Have a student pray!*

- What’s your dream job? What do you think the hardest job would be?

Read The Word:

Have a student read 2 Timothy 2:1-26

- What jumps out to you from this part of Paul's letter to Timothy as interesting, confusing, challenging, or encouraging?
- What does a good soldier do? [Obey, serve, they stay focused on their duty] Can you think of any of passages of Scripture that use the soldier analogy? [Ephesians 6:10-17, 2 Corinthians 10:3-6]
- What does a good athlete do? [Trains, competes for the prize=relationship with Jesus, can't take short cuts]

[Fun Cultural Fact: In this time, they had the "Isthmian Games" like the Olympics.]

- What does a good farmer do? [Is patient, nothing worthwhile is ever easy]
- The Pastor that wrote "The Message" paraphrase of the Bible says servant leadership is a "long obedience in the same direction." What does that mean? Based on all we've read these past 3 weeks, how have you seen that to be true in what Paul is telling Timothy?
- In 2:2b, we see that everyone teaches and preaches something, and that we don't get out of it. What is your life preaching?
- What is so powerful about vs.13?
- In 2:15, Paul tells Timothy to "correctly handle the Word." When he references "wandering away from the truth," in Greek, the idea is that of missing the target. What does it look like to correctly handle the Bible and keep it as our target?
- How are we all "instruments" like Paul says in vs. 20-22? Why are we so quick to elevate ourselves over others (like Paul is referencing in 1 Corinthians 4:7 regarding his leadership and Apollos' leadership in the church)?
- How might someone do harm with the Bible?
- In 2:22, Paul uses the words "flee" and "pursue" [escaping something and running toward something]. What things are you running away from that will trap you or pull you away from Jesus [or what do you need to be running away from]? In what ways are you running towards service of Him?
- In vs. 23-26, Paul is addressing squabbles within the Ephesian church. How have you been abrasive or absent when it comes to disunity and grumbling about non-essential issues, when you should have gently corrected?

- What does it mean that “the Word of God cannot be chained?”

Have a student read 2 Timothy 3:1-17

- Looking at this description of what the Ephesian world is like for Timothy [1-9], where do you see similarities today?
- What is the significance of verses 16-17? What does it mean that the Bible is inspired? How have you experienced the Bible to be useful in your life? How is God using the Bible right now to equip you to step up and be the church of today?
- How many people you know have remained faithful in a life-long commitment to Scripture?
- How has Scripture been like a blacklight—exposing lies, things you are hiding, and shame Satan is trying to bury you in?
- Paul references being in “the last days.” What other verses do you know that talk about the “last days?” [[Acts 2:17](#), [Hebrews 1:2](#), [1 Chronicles 12:32](#)] How can we not allow ourselves to be shocked by the clashing of our culture with God’s ways, while also not being seduced by its sin? What do we need to remember when we feel overwhelmed?

Application Questions:

[Say This: Remember the goal of this series is *You are not the church of tomorrow. God has called you to be a servant leader as a part of the church of today for His glory.*]

Level 1:

- How has God been convicting you through this study? What is God speaking to you from 2 Timothy?
- In your future, what do you think it will look like to please God—in college, in your career, once you have a family, when you are old?
- How have you believed the lie that you need to “do more things for God,” sometimes at the expense of simply “being with” God?
- Where do you see the biggest clashes with culture the way Timothy did?
- Since God is already at work all around us, despite it being the “last days,” where do you see Him working in your different circles of influence?

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