

LESSON 12

Faithfulness in Ministry

Materials

- RBP transparencies 1 and 15
- Lesson 12 case study from resource CD
- 2 Timothy 4:7, 8 verse card from resource CD

Scripture Focus

2 Timothy 4:1–8

Key Verses

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:7, 8).

Overview

This text makes two major points. The first, which is the bases of faithful ministry, provides reasons to faithfully minister for Christ. The second, the behaviors of faithfulness in ministry, lists a number of specific activities that exemplify faithful ministry.

Topic

Faithfulness in ministry

Theme

There are reasons for and specific activities that define faithful ministry.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will be a faithful minister for Christ this week.

Outline

- I. The Bases of Faithfulness in Ministry (2 Tim. 4:1, 3, 4, 6–8)
 - A. God witnesses and judges (4:1)
 - B. Reward awaits (4:6–8)
 - C. Opposition arises (4:3, 4)
- II. The Behaviors of Faithfulness in Ministry (2 Tim. 4:2, 5)
 - A. Preach the Word (4:2)
 - B. Be instant (4:2)
 - C. Reprove (4:2)
 - D. Rebuke (4:2)
 - E. Exhort (4:2)
 - F. Watch (4:5)
 - G. Endure (4:5)
 - H. Do the work of an evangelist (4:5)
 - I. Make full proof of thy ministry (4:5)

Getting Started

Strange Bedfellows?

Ask: What is the common thread running through all these programs?

Weight Watchers

The justice system's probation program

Substance abuse rehab programs

Christian discipleship programs

Ask: What is the power of accountability? What experience do you have with accountability? (Questions 1, 2)

Every believer is accountable to Christ, our Judge. Paul developed that truth in his message to Timothy.

Searching the Scriptures

I. The Bases of Faithfulness in Ministry (2 Tim. 4:1, 3, 4, 6–8)

Paul gave Timothy a charge, the solemn responsibility to be faithful.

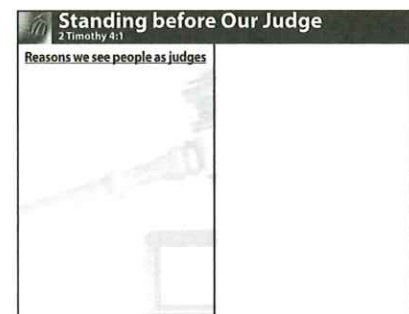
A. God witnesses and judges (4:1)

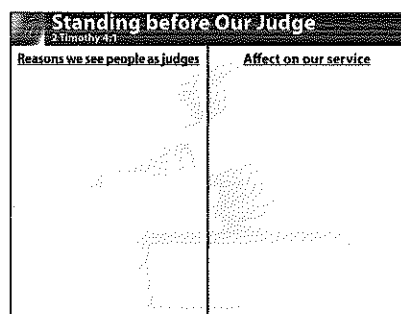
God the Father and God the Son served as Witnesses of Timothy's charge. Timothy would be serving "before" (that is, "in the sight of") Deity. Furthermore, God "shall" judge. The word "shall" is not merely a future tense but a word that means "about to." That stresses two ideas. First the judging is certain; there is to be no possibility of escaping it. Second, the judging is imminent. God is about to judge, so there must be no delay in obeying the charge. Timothy's solemn responsibility rested upon his accountability to God.

TRANSPARENCY: Display transparency 15 with the right half covered. **READ:** 2 Timothy 4:1. **ASK:** Why do we tend to see other people as our judges when we minister? (Question 3) Record learners' answers on the transparency.

When the Lord judges, those who are living at His return and those who have already died will all be judged. So whether Christ should come before or after Timothy's death, He would still be Timothy's Judge and would evaluate how Timothy fulfilled his charge. What a powerful incentive to faithfulness.

The phrase "at his appearing and his kingdom" would seem to focus upon time, perhaps the time of the judgment. But the construction indicates, rather, the basis for Paul's charge. The idea becomes clearer if we render the text "by his appearing and by his kingdom." Timothy faced perilous times, as we do today. But there will come a day when perilous times cease and the glorious kingdom of God fills the earth. Therefore, Timothy should not be afraid in the face of opposition. God is coming again to overthrow all opposition and make this world His kingdom.





The truths that God is watching and witnessing the believer, that He will judge the faithfulness of each believer and will overthrow all the opposition believers face are solid reasons be faithful to his charge.

TRANSPARENCY: Display transparency 15. **ASK:** How often do you think about standing before Christ, your Judge? How should it affect your service for the Lord? (Questions 4, 5) Record learners' answers to question 5 on the transparency.

B. Reward awaits (4:6–8)

Timothy's charge to faithfulness was also based upon the reward that awaits the faithful servant.

READ: 2 Timothy 4:6–8. **ASK:** What three periods does Paul address? (Question 6)

Paul said he was ready to be offered, to have his life poured out like a drink offering to the Lord. (See Numbers 15:5, 7, and 10.) Paul was a Roman citizen, and Roman citizens were never executed by crucifixion. Instead, they were beheaded. When Paul was beheaded, he poured himself out as a drink offering to God.

The time of his departure was at hand (2 Tim. 2:6). He saw his death as being present and ready to happen. His word for "departure" meant "loosing." It was commonly used of death, but it also conveyed other overtones. Perhaps Paul had in mind its use in taking down a tent. He had earlier referred to the body as a tent or tabernacle (2 Cor. 5:1–6). Being a tent-maker by trade, he may have thought of his death as leaving the tent of his body and going home to Heaven. Paul was prepared to face impending death.

READ: Philippians 1:23. **ASK:** Where did Paul know he would be after departing this life, and how did he evaluate that location? (Question 7)

Paul looked back over his life and described it under three figures. First of all, he had fought a good fight (2 Tim. 4:7). This figure could refer to just about any athletic event, but perhaps wrestling was the specific sport on his mind. Second, he had finished the course. This figure pictures the runner who has given his fullest effort and has reached the tape at last. Third, he had kept the faith. This figure brings to mind the soldier who has faithfully guarded something committed to his care.

There is another emphasis in 2 Timothy 4 that we may miss as we read our translation. Our translators chose three different words to render a single word in the original Greek. The King James Version of verse 7 reads "a fight," "my course," and "the faith." The Greek reads "the good fight," "the course," and "the faith," reminding us that Paul viewed them all as God's plan for him. He fought the fight God considers a good fight—the fight for truth. He finished

the course God laid out for him. He kept the faith God revealed to him. Paul had done what God wanted him to do.

ASK: What, if anything, is better than coming to the end of your life knowing that you did what God wanted you to do? (Question 8)

Since Paul had been faithful in God's fight, on God's course, and in keeping God's truth, a crown of righteousness awaited him. Athletic winners in Paul's day received a leafy garland as a crown for their victories. It had little value in itself but was held in high esteem because of the honor it signified. In Heaven a token of great honor was reserved for Paul by God Himself.

Paul may have been thinking that Nero, the pragmatic judge, would find him guilty. But the Lord, the righteous Judge, was going to declare that Paul sought to live a righteous life. God would agree with Paul's evaluation of himself as recorded in verse 7.

READ: 1 John 3:2, 3. **ASK:** What does everyone who has the hope of seeing and being like Christ when He comes do? (Question 9)

All those who love Christ's appearing can receive a crown because they who have that hope live righteously (v. 8). The potential of reward in Heaven is another solid reason to be faithful to his charge.

ASK: What evidence in your life suggests that you are consciously looking forward to Heaven? (Question 10)

C. Opposition arises (4:3, 4)

A third basis for Paul's charge to Timothy is introduced in verses 3 and 4 by the word "for." A difficult time will come. The word for "time" means season. Verses 3 and 4 focus on the character of the season.

It will be a time when many will not endure sound doctrine. The message of God is a sweet savor, giving life to those who receive it. But that same Word is an offense, giving death to those who reject it. Opposition arises from those who cannot endure to sit under the authority of sound doctrine.

READ: 1 Corinthians 1:18. **ASK:** What two groups are named and how do those two view the message of Christ's cross differently? (Question 11)

Those who cannot endure sound doctrine react by getting out from under the preaching of it. We might expect they would stop attending services, but human beings are incurably religious. If a person will not worship the true God in the proper way, he will worship otherwise. Those who reject God's way find teachers who do not teach sound doctrine.

ASK: What does your fleshly self want to do when you hear a message or a Sunday School lesson that convicts you of sin? (Question 12)

These people had ear trouble. Their ears itched to hear self-complimentary things. False teachers were chosen by the crowd because the false teachers would scratch their itching ears. In other words, the teachers taught what the listeners wanted to hear.

Notice three contrasts between the first and last parts of verse 4, which give the results of ear-scratching preaching. First, they turned away from the truth and unto fables. Fables are beliefs that oppose facts, which are not in accord with truth. The word “unto” could be translated “to rest upon.” A similar construction is often used of our belief in Christ. We are to rest our faith upon the solid rock of Christ. Those who turn to false teachers rest their faith upon the sand of fables (Rom. 4:5).

A second contrast has to do with actively turning and passively being turned. The first half of the verse is active, while the last half is passive. The people who will not endure sound doctrine turn themselves away from the truth. In the end they find themselves being turned by someone else. They do not intend to believe fables when they set out. But once they forsake the truth, they have no objective standard by which to judge a message. The teachers they choose tell them what they want to hear and eventually lead them to believe fables.

A third contrast is found in the two words for “turn.” In the first half of verse 4 the verb and its prefix have the idea of “turn away from.” In the last half of the verse the verb and its prefix convey the idea of turning out of the proper place. The resisters of sound doctrine turn themselves away from the truth, and then they are turned out of the proper place. They refuse to listen to sound doctrines, and their faith is dislocated and made to rest on fables.

ASK: Have you known someone who turned from the truth and ended up being turned aside to false doctrine? What characterized their lives after they turned from the truth? (Question 13)

II. The Behaviors of Faithfulness in Ministry (2 Tim. 4:2, 5)

A. Preach the Word (4:2)

The concept of “preaching” is definitely a church-related activity to us. But the New Testament word is more general and means any authoritative proclamation. To preach the Word is to proclaim the Word with authority. When speaking for God, only the Word of God can be proclaimed with authority, for it alone has come from God.

When we proclaim the clear-cut statements of the Word, we should do it in an authoritative manner because it is the Word of God. On the other hand, we need to distinguish between what the Word clearly says and our opinions

and interpretations so that people can distinguish between what God has said and what we are saying.

ASK: What happens to the power of God's Word when the person preaching it almost apologizes for the message as if the people don't have to take it seriously? (Question 14)

B. Be instant (4:2)

The word "instant" means be present and ready (same word translated "at hand" in verse 6). Timothy was to be present and ready to preach the Word and to do any type of ministry for which God had equipped him. Timothy was to minister when he was well-received and things seemed to be going well ("in season"). And he was to minister when there was opposition and results seemed meager ("out of season").

C. Reprove (4:2)

The Scriptures are profitable for reproof, and a ministry of reproof should be grounded solidly on the Word of God. Many attitudes and actions are forbidden by the Word, and we need the reproof of the Word through faithful ministers when we practice forbidden things.

D. Rebuke (4:2)

This word is stronger than "reprove" and is probably directed toward those who are not convicted by the reproof.

EVALUATE: A pastor should rebuke people only if he feels comfortable doing it. (Question 15)

E. Exhort (4:2)

The word "exhort" is the verb form of the Greek word *paraclete*. The Holy Spirit is the *paraclete*, or comforter, par excellence. The servant of the Lord is to comfort, strengthen, or encourage others in doing right.

Notice that the reproof, rebuke, and exhortation were to be done in a particular manner, with all long-suffering and doctrine. The word "long-suffering" refers to bearing with people who do not respond. When people are out of line, they need to be shown that. If they do not respond, they need a stronger rebuke. Often this is a very frustrating process for the Lord's servant. He needs long-suffering and patience if he is to be faithful in these ministries. Likewise, the ministry of exhortation can be frustrating. Some people readily agree that their behavior is wrong, and they also agree as to what they should do, but they seem to have great difficulty in accomplishing what they agree to do. The Lord's servant must be long-suffering in strengthening them and moving them along.

READ: Colossians 1:11. **ASK:** What enables us to exercise such long-suffering? (Question 16)

These ministries demand not only long-suffering but doctrine. As we have seen, the Scripture is profitable for doctrine. As the servant of the Lord shows another what is wrong, he must present what the Bible says is wrong, and not just his opinion of the problem. And as he shows others what is right, that, too, must be what the Bible says is right. Finally, as he gives encouragement, he should give Biblical encouragement concerning the greatness of our God and His ever-abiding presence to help.

When we minister as exhorters, we are just instruments of the great Exhorter, the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 16:7–11, 13, 14).

F. Watch (4:5)

The word “watch” means to be sober, either literally or metaphorically. One can be sober or not drunk with wine, and one can be sober-minded, alert, and attentive. Certainly both levels are appropriate for the servant of the Lord.

Timothy was to watch in all things. He was to be watchful in the areas of doctrine, behavior, life, and faith, watching both himself and others.

ASK: What can a pastor do to be aware of what is going on in the lives of the church members?
(Question 17)

G. Endure (4:5)

This same word occurred in 2 Timothy 2:9 and was there translated “suffer trouble.” Paul had suffered trouble, even to the point of bonds. Back in the first chapter of this epistle Paul used the same word (v. 8), adding a prefix meaning “with.” There he encouraged Timothy not to be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord nor of Paul, but to be a partaker with Paul of the afflictions of the gospel. In chapter 4 Paul omitted the prefix meaning “with” because he would soon be gone and Timothy would have to suffer without him.

H. Do the work of an evangelist (4:5)

The evangelist is mentioned only two other places in the New Testament besides here (Acts 21:8; Eph. 4:11), but the verb “evangelize” is used a number of times. It is usually translated “preach the gospel.” An evangelist was a preacher of the gospel. He was much like a modern-day missionary in going to people who did not know the gospel to preach to them, build them up in the Lord, and establish them as a local church.

Timothy, for the time, was limited geographically, but he was urged to remember the unsaved. He must not get so immersed in caring for the flock and fighting the reprobates that he forgot the unsaved.

I. Make full proof of thy ministry (4:5)

Timothy was to fulfill his ministry (2 Tim. 4:5; cf. Acts 12:25). He must not forsake it but faithfully carry it to completion. He should finish his course even as Paul finished his. Timothy must be faithful to the very end.

Just a word about Timothy’s “ministry.” The word itself means “service.” It is related to the word from which we derive “deacon” or “servant.” In twenty-first century America the word “ministry” is often attached to the functions of

ordained men and considered a profession. The ministry, in the sense of pastoral service, is a noble place of service. But it is still service, and the minister is basically a servant of the Lord.

READ: John 12:26. **ASK:** Who can be a servant of the Lord? (Question 18)

Every believer is a minister/servant of Christ. The challenge to be faithful in ministry to the very end is a challenge to every Christian.

Making It Personal

Ministry Plan

Review the behaviors of ministry and select one you believe God would have you practice this week. Put on your calendar time to pray about it and to practice it. (Question 19)

Since it will most likely involve other people, make arrangements with them as soon as possible. Perhaps you would want to share your plan with others in our class and ask for our prayer support.

Case Study

Distribute the case study for lesson 12 to the learners. Have a learner read the case study. Use the questions on the case study to lead a discussion.

Review Transparency

Use transparency 1 to review the Mark of the Faithful for this lesson: Lives accountable to God.

Memory Verses

Distribute copies of the 2 Timothy 4:7 and 8 verse card from the resource CD. Encourage the learners to memorize the verses.

NEXT LESSON

Encourage your learners to complete lesson 13 before the next class

Marks of the Faithful	
1. Forgives others as God forgives.	8. Guards and teaches sound doctrine.
2. Remembers and shares God's forgiveness.	9. Ministers with energy and commitment.
3. Seeks and supports godly leadership.	10. Interprets the Bible accurately.
4. Lives a genuine, godly life.	11. Remains faithful to God's powerful Word.
5. Serves zealously in light of Christ's Return.	12. Lives accountable to God.
6. Ministers thoughtfully and intentionally.	13.
7. Serves faithfully in the face of fears.	

Faithfulness and Paul's Companions

Materials

- RBP transparencies 1, 2, and 16
- Lesson 13 case study from resource CD
- 2 Timothy 4:18 verse card from resource CD

Scripture Focus

2 Timothy 4:9–22

Key Verse

“And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (2 Tim. 4:18).

Overview

Paul closed his final letter to Timothy with a number of personal notations. He spoke of some who had strayed from him and from the Lord's service. He also spoke of many who had remained faithful, including one who had once strayed but then returned. Paul gave Timothy personal instructions and a blessing. Finally Paul delivered a great testimony of God's faithfulness to him, a most fitting conclusion to a letter about faithfulness.

Topic

Fellow ministers

Theme

Companionship in ministry is vital, and the Lord's companionship is essential.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will value companions in ministry and seek to be a companion to another.

Outline

- I. Companions Who Strayed (2 Tim. 4:10a, 16)
 - A. Demas (4:10)
 - B. Deserters (4:16)
- II. Companions Who Stayed (2 Tim. 4:10b, 11a, 12, 20)
 - A. Crescens (4:10)
 - B. Titus (4:10)
 - C. Luke (4:11)
 - D. Tychicus (4:12)
 - E. Erastus (4:20)
 - F. Trophimus (4:20)