

Walking With the Father Through 2 Timothy

Over the years, I've found my life changing and my faith deepening as I meet with our heavenly Father in His word. This has been especially true as I've been writing these devotionals and having to live what I write.

I long for you to be able to say the same as you read through this letter.

As I've gotten to know Paul, James, Peter, Jude, and John through their letters, I'm overwhelmed by how they were changed by knowing and walking with their Lord. How much they much have longed for us to know Him as they did.

As John wrote in 1 John 2:3-6, he wants us to walk as Jesus did and believed that it was absolutely possible to do so. So how did Jesus walk? That's one secret our Father shares with us.

Blessings on your time as we take another walk with the Father,

Margie Martin

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Paul's second letter to Timothy came out of Paul's second Roman imprisonment shortly before his martyrdom in 67-68 A.D. These are our last words from Paul; what an honor it is for us to be able to read them. Timothy was still living and ministering in Ephesus.



New Testament World

As you spend time in this letter, please take the time to talk with our Father about what He's showing you so you're not just gathering information. As you pray, you can use the space on each page to journal your thoughts or write Him a note.

Walking With the Father Through 2 Timothy

2 Timothy 1:1-2

“ . . . according to the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, my dear son . . . ”

So, are you starting to notice the differences in Paul’s introductions as we’ve been reading through his letters? What a different tone this one has, probably because Paul is at the end of his life and has little hope left for more ministry and growing relationships.

Do you ever feel this way: lack of hope, no anticipation, every day like the last, no friends, no freedom, no plans? I do at times, but usually for me the pain of the situation is so intense that I’m only looking for relief. Then, in a day or so (or a year or so), the relief comes, and I’m excited about what God is doing in the here and now.

But Paul is in a different place, so to speak. As we’ll see through this letter, he knows that without a divine miracle happening he’ll soon be facing a death that isn’t pleasant or easy. He won’t die as an old man in his sleep with his family around him.

He chooses instead to look forward to the promise of life that comes with Christ Jesus. Interesting, isn’t it, he’s still living but he’s anticipating life. He’s living with the promise of what is to come that is going to be so much better than what he has. And I think that if we were to talk with any “old” saint, we’d hear the same thing.

So how did this time in Paul’s life of anticipating his final days carry over into his relationship with Timothy? Well, in his first letter, Paul calls Timothy his “true son.” In this second letter, Paul calls him his “dear son.” And I think it’s true: as our lives grow in Christ, our hearts deepen from just truth to love that is based on truth. We let more people into our hearts, and we give our hearts more.

How’s your heart doing these days? If you’re still at the truth stage— that’s great! But know that as you grow in Christ, you’ll be transitioning from knowing truth for yourself to thinking of younger Christians as sons and daughters in the faith. And be prepared: the process that takes us from truth to love are the hard times of life. It’s in these times that we find, as we give up our rights and let God be in charge, that we stop fighting Him and begin to experience real life.

What are your circumstances, and how are you relating to them? Are you fighting them (and possibly God who has brought them)? Is it time to give up?

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2 Timothy 1:3-18

“ . . . your sincere faith . . . fan into flame the gift of God . . . spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline . . . do not be ashamed . . . I am not ashamed . . . what you have heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching . . . guard the good deposit . . . ”

Over the weekend we saw a new movie, *Miracle*, about the 1980 Olympics and the first U.S.A. real dream team of college hockey players that stunned the world by beating the Russians. While it was painful to see the clothes and the styles of the 70's again, one of the statements the coach made exploded in my heart. Asked why he pushed the team unmercifully during practices and why he didn't give them any slack when they lost a game because of being distracted, he said that in 20 years he didn't want any of them to feel badly because they had left something on the table and hadn't given their all in pursuit of their goal.

I get this same impression from Paul as to how he lived his own life, how he's encouraging Timothy to live his, and how he wants us to live ours.

Paul reminds Timothy that God saved us and called us to a holy life, and Christ destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Paul knows the Christ he has believed in and is utterly convinced that Jesus will do what He's promised to do now and forever.

Are you leaving anything on the table? When you face Jesus Christ at your final evaluation time, will you bemoan all the time, energy, and intensity you spent on your own pursuits? Are you living your life with God with abandon? Or are you living as though you are ashamed of Jesus? Do you really know the One you say you believe in and are following?

Do you believe Him? Do you want to stay the way you are? Let's not leave anything on the table!

Walking With the Father Through 2 Timothy

2 Timothy 2:1-13

“You then, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus . . . like a soldier, athlete, or farmer.”

I haven't had any of these jobs, but my husband served in the Marine Corps before we were married, a daughter-in-law runs marathons, sons have played sports seriously, and my father's family were farmers in southern Iowa. All of them share a trait that I think Paul is getting at—single-mindedness. Whether it's enduring hardship to obtain a goal, learning endurance through training to win the prize, or practicing patience after months of hard work to wait for the results, these role models of soldiers, athletes, and farmers don't waver from their course. They choose to start with the goal of finishing well.

When we look at Jesus' life here on earth, we can see that He lived the same way. As He went to Jerusalem for the last time, we see that nothing could distract Him from completing what His Father had asked Him to do.

What are we like as we live our lives as followers of Jesus Christ? Do we get distracted by the pains and frustrations of life? Are we wooed by wealth? Are our actions motivated by the desire to fit in and be accepted? Are we single-minded, or do we go off in many directions and accomplish nothing for the Kingdom?

I know that on my own I can't be the single-minded person I want to be, but by taking a step in His direction, I experience the same grace Christ experienced as He followed the path His Father laid out for Him. And by being committed to reaching out to the next generation, I receive the encouragement I need to keep going.

How about you? Are you single-minded for kingdom work, or are you easily distracted by life? Kingdom work happens as we live life and face choices. Who are you following? Where are you going?

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2 Timothy 2:14-26

quarrelsome or kind?

This section is so full of contrasts that I just have to chart them; so bear with me, this is how I think and make choices.

Other Way	God's Way
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Produces quarrels over words that have no value.• It ruins those who listen.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Present yourself to God as an approved workman who correctly handles the word of truth.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourages indulging in godless chatter that makes followers more ungodly.• Ungodly teaching spreads like gangrene.• Followers wander from the truth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Turn away from wickedness.• Be useful to the Master for any good work.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Followers pursue the evil desires of youth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord with a pure heart.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Followers engage in foolish and stupid arguments that produce quarrels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Lord's servant must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hopefully these followers will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Lord's servant must gently instruct those who oppose him in hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth.

Let's listen to ourselves today and see if we argue with anyone: our spouse, children, parents, teachers, co-workers, friends, roommates, or even God. Are these arguments worth having?

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2 Timothy 3:1-9

“ . . . always learning, but never able to acknowledge the truth”

How did you do yesterday? Did you hear yourself starting to argue or quarrel over words? So often we can hear couples correcting each other over insignificant details, and they sound argumentative rather than loving. How about you? How about me? I know this is an area that my husband and I work on as a couple.



And then we get to read the list in this section—do you see yourself?

What struck me is the description of the weak-willed women: always learning, but never able to acknowledge the truth. What would this woman look like today? I bet she regularly attends church, is involved in at least one Bible study, has lots of friends she shares with—over and over and over—but she never seems to make any progress. She feels like she’s a victim and can do nothing about her struggles, which are many and have been going on for a long time. Knowledge is important to her, and she’s been a Christian for a while.

But for the grace of God, I think I’ve just described myself.

How would you help such a woman? What would you say to her if she asked you for help? Are you this woman—or this man?

Paul says she needs to acknowledge the truth—recognize it, agree with it, say it’s true for her. As she acknowledges the truth verbally, she can start acting on it, and then she’ll begin to sense way down deep the progress she’s making in changing her life as she cooperates with the Holy Spirit. Confidence will begin to be her friend.

Is there a truth you need to acknowledge today?

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2 Timothy 3:10-17

“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it.”

When I was a young Christian in the 70’s, we had a service on Sunday nights called Body Life. This service would include teaching, music, and the sharing and meeting of needs. People would share truth from the Scriptures and how their lives had been changed by this truth.

One night a respected man in the church stood up, took the mike, and began speaking. He encouraged (admonished?) us not to try to imitate those whose spiritual lives we respected but to learn how they got to this place of maturity and then look to the Lord to bring those same types of situations into our own lives so we could grow in grace.

I think this is what Paul is saying to Timothy and to us. He reviews his own life—his character, his lifestyle, and his hardships—and then tells Timothy to focus on what the Lord has taught him personally. Paul knows that we can speak with passion only about what we know for ourselves. As has been said, God doesn’t have any grandchildren, only sons and daughters. While we can learn from and through the experiences of others, we need to learn truth for ourselves (remember yesterday’s devotion?).

But then Paul adds the interesting statement “because you know those from whom you learned it.” Timothy knew the character and lifestyle of Paul. The disciples knew the character and lifestyle of Jesus. I knew the character and lifestyle of my early teachers, and they all—Paul, Jesus, and my teachers—matched what they said while teaching at church to how they lived at home and in their communities.

How about your spiritual leaders: do their characters and lifestyles match what they say?

What do you “say” that you believe through your actions and words? Since we’re always learning and teaching, whether we want to or not, does the “teaching” of your character and lifestyle match what you say?

Walking With the Father Through 2 Timothy

2 Timothy 4:1-8

“For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.”

This is one of the saddest and scariest set of verses I've read in a long time. Imagine people going from one church to another, one teacher to another, looking for someone to tell them what they want to hear instead of what they need to hear.

So what could we want to hear? Is it that we're fine the way we are; that it's other people who are difficult; that the type of music I like in a worship service is the right style of music; that I'm free to do whatever I want to do; that I deserve to have all that I want; and that if people around me treated me the way I deserve to be treated, life would be good? What else would you like to hear?

But what do we need to hear? It is:

- That we're sinners by birth and choice and so are the source of most of our own struggles.
- That others bring out our sin behavior and thoughts.
- That on my own I'm incapable of doing what I know I should do and be what I should be.
- That God has provided a solution: that Jesus died on the cross—taking on not only our sins but also our sin natures—and His sacrifice satisfied God's anger toward sin.
- That if we put our faith in Jesus and what He did for us, He'll give us His Spirit to live in us and we'll have new hearts and redeemed minds that only want to please Him.
- That now we can be others-minded instead of concentrating only on ourselves.

What kind of a teacher do you seek out? Do you want to be under the tyranny of your wants or be free by walking with God?

Walking With the Father Through 2 Timothy

2 Timothy 4:9-18

“Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry.”

Have we talked about Mark before? I don't think so. He's an important person in Paul's life, because Paul had to change his mind about him. Let's start with some history:

- Paul and Barnabas took John, also called Mark, with them when they left Jerusalem in Acts 12:25. Mark started out on the first missionary trip in Acts 13 but left them to go back home to Jerusalem. (Acts 13:13)
- At the beginning of their second missionary trip, Barnabas wanted Mark to join them again, but Paul would have nothing to do with this idea. Luke writes that they had such a sharp disagreement over Mark that they parted company. Paul took off with Silas, and Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus. (Acts 15:36-41)

Now back to our verse: What a surprise to hear Paul call for Mark because he is helpful for ministry. Can you imagine the changes that must have happened in Mark during those years? After initially running away when times got hard, he chose to change and stay in hard situations. Over the years Paul saw these changes and was free enough to forgive, trust, and welcome Mark back into his life.

So at the end of his life, when he knew he could only have a few trusted friends around, Paul's heart was committed to ministry and he wanted his doctor (Luke) and his two sons in the faith, Timothy and Mark, with him.

What will your heart be like at the end of your life? Who will you want to have with you?

Are you useful for ministry in someone else's life because you have become faithful and stayed under the pressure? None of us starts out being faithful; virtue is virtue after it's been tested. We can be known as faithful (or _____) only after we've been tempted not to be faithful (or whatever you wrote in the blank) and continue not giving in.

Or if someone has let you down but has learned from the experience, are you willing to offer this person a second chance? (Because we all need second chances!) Are you hard-hearted or God-hearted?

Walking With the Father Through 2 Timothy

2 Timothy 4:19-22

“The Lord be with your spirit.”

Would you believe that this is the first time we’ve read this idea in Paul’s final greetings? All of his other letters have mentioned grace, but this time Paul seems to sense how important it is for Timothy to know that the Lord is with his spirit. Why would this be important? What do you think? Here are some of my thoughts:

- Because Paul is basically by himself in prison with little freedom, he has sensed the closeness of the Lord’s spirit and has been so comforted that he wants Timothy to be comforted in the same way.
- Because Paul knows that he’s probably at the end of his own earthly life and won’t be around to be the father, encourager, teacher, and friend for Timothy, and he knows how important the Holy Spirit will be for Timothy.
- Because Timothy is on the brink of having to take over the responsibility of the church—like the adult son having to take over the family business as the father is retiring or dying— Paul is giving the best help that he can, the Spirit.

So how are you doing today? Are you feeling isolated; are you preparing the next generation to go on without you; or are you, like Timothy, just becoming the adult generation in your family, the business, or the church?

I remember when I turned 50 I realized that I was now one of the “older women” in the church. Then the last of our parents died, and we realized that we were now the elders in the family. We changed churches and had to get to know a new group of believers. Then we moved across the country and knew no one in our new church or in the community. In each situation I learned again that the Lord wanted to be with, and was with, my spirit. And He encouraged, taught, loved, and led me.

So where are you today? Are you feeling isolated, away from those you know and love? Are you at the stage of life where you need to be taking on responsibility for others? This time does come and it’s not always easy to change from being the child or young man/woman in the faith to being the adult and parent in the church and in society. And are you experiencing the Lord being with your spirit? If not, you’re in for a wonderful adventure!
