

2 Timothy: The Good Fight
Finishing Well in Christ

Lesson 45—2 Timothy 4:1-5

Finish Well

Seventy-five runners toed the starting line for the Olympic Marathon in October of 1968. The oppressive heat, humidity, as well as the high altitude of Mexico City would take its toll, and only fifty-seven would finish. The lead pack of runners, consisting of those actually contending for a medal, quickly separated from the rest of the field. The race proceeded as expected until mile twelve when a jostling occurred amongst the leaders and John Stephen Akhwari of Tanzania fell heavily to the pavement. Medical aid was quickly dispatched and he was diagnosed with a dislocated knee as well as numerous cuts and bruises. Despite his injuries, Akhwari refused to give up and against medical advice, he continued to run toward the finish line. Most of the spectators had left the stadium when Akhwari, legs shrouded in bloody bandages, hobbled into the Olympic Stadium nearly seventy minutes behind the winner of the race in dead last place amongst the finishers. Fortunately, the television crew was still on scene to record the event. As Akhwari stumbled across the finish line, he was surrounded by reporters who demanded to know why he had not simply dropped out of the race. Akhwari's simple response was, "My country did not send me 5,000 miles to start the race. They sent me 5,000 miles to finish the race." Like Akhwari, the apostle Paul refused to quit the course God had given him to run, despite incredible opposition, which is listed for us in Corinthians 11:23–33. It was only now with martyrdom imminent that Paul could write, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7 NKJV).

The late Howard Hendricks of Dallas Theological Seminary concluded that there are nearly 100 detailed biographies in the Bible and notes that nearly two-thirds of

these individuals finished poorly, falling away from God.¹ How is it that some believers seem to barely stagger across the finish line while others, like Paul, finish in triumph? A number of years ago, some of my track athletes had gotten into the bad habit of letting up in exhaustion shortly before the finish line only to have an opponent catch and pass them in the final strides of the race. My assistant coach came up with a brilliant strategy that solved the problem. “Run through the finish to what’s waiting on the other side” was his advice to them. It worked like a charm as they ignored the final discomforts of the race to look ahead to what awaited them just past the line. That is precisely how Paul finished well and what the Hebrews writer advises us, *“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”* (Hebrews 12:1–2 NKJV).

*We are near to completing our journey through five letters of Paul encompassing 24 chapters and dissecting 586 verses (two more lessons to go). It has been time well spent as we can answer in the affirmative to Paul’s admonition, ***“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”*** (2 Timothy 2:15 NKJV). Warehouse Men, congratulations on a race well run; continue to run strong and fix your eyes on what is waiting for us just beyond the finish line.

Prayer

Start by praying over the passage and asking the Holy Spirit to give you fresh insights and wisdom in understanding it. Then read through the entire passage two or three times. The depth of theology is so great that I would strongly advise using the New Living Translation for one of your Scripture readings.

Scripture Meditation/Memorization

One of the most fundamental and rewarding Christian disciplines that pays back in full spiritual dividends is Bible meditation/memorization. It is an absolutely fundamental in the formation of your spiritual development, spiritual walk and faith growth. In Psalm 1:1-2 (NLT), the Psalmist warrior, King David said,

¹ <http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/finish-well-ray-pritchard-sermon-on-faith-61626.asp>

*“Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked,
or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers.
But they delight in the law of the Lord,
meditating on it day and night.”*

Memory Verse

“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.” –2 Timothy 4:3 (NKJV)

Study Format

We have all had weeks in which the time available for preparation of our Bible study evaporates under an unexpected event or a pressing project at work. To enable everyone to complete the study, even when time is at a premium, questions are being divided into two categories: essential and expanded. The Essential Questions are those necessary to understand key points of the passage. The Expanded Questions or growth questions help expand knowledge and gain deeper insight into the Scripture.

If you are concerned about having enough time to complete the whole study, it is suggested that you start by first answering the Essential Questions for each day and answer the Expanded Questions as time permits.

2 Timothy 4:1-5—Paul’s Final Charge to Timothy

Last-minute instructions have always carried extra weight or importance. As a coach I would give my athletes only the key strategy to a successful race just before the starting gun sounded. Paul now gives Timothy, his son in the faith, his final instruction. These last minute marching orders are not for Timothy alone but for us as well. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16–17 nkjv).

Essential Questions:

1. * What incentives did Paul give Timothy to preach the Word and fulfill the duties of his ministry (v. 1)?²

² Stott, J., & Johnson, L. (1998). [*2 Timothy: Standing Firm in Truth*](#) (p. 46). Nottingham, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press; IVP Connect: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press.

a. Why is each important?

2. As if to underscore the seriousness of the charge which he is about to give Timothy, Paul reminds him that Jesus will be returning to judge mankind. Jesus will oversee three distinct judgments. From the following passages, identify who is being judged and on what basis they are being judged.

a. 1 Corinthians 3:12–15 and 2 Corinthians 5:10

b. Matthew 25:31–33

c. Revelation 20:11–15

3. Paul gives his final personal instruction to Timothy in verse 2.

a. The verse contains five imperatives or commands. Put yourself in Timothy's shoes and record what this verse means to you.

- b. Earlier in this letter Paul gave instructions to Timothy that would equip and enable him to carry out these instructions. What do you learn from 2 Timothy 2:15 and 2 Timothy 3:14–17?

4. Paul warns Timothy in verses 3–5 of a time when men will no longer accept sound doctrine. *Sound* (Greek: *hugiano*) is the word from which we get *hygiene*, meaning men will reject healthy doctrine. Most commentators feel these men are from within the church while a minority feels they are nonbelievers.

- a. Summarize Paul’s warning to Timothy in verses 3–5.

- b. If in fact the men mentioned in verse 3 are nonbelievers, why should this rejection of God’s truths come as no surprise according to John 3:19–21?

- c. If in fact this drifting away from God’s truth is by those within the church, what can we do to protect ourselves against this according to Hebrews 2:1 and Psalm 119:9, 11?

5. *If you were asked to teach at this moment, what would you say? Do you have a favourite message that you would always be ready to share?³

- a. What do people *want* to hear? And what do people *need* to hear?

Expanded Question:

6. *What is the difference between the office of “evangelist” (Ephesians 4:11) and “the work of an evangelist” (2 Timothy 4:5)?⁴

7. *Along the lines of verses 3–5, what advice does Paul give Titus in instructing his leadership in Titus 1:9?⁵

8. New or novel teaching and interpretations of Scripture to justify behavior isn’t new to our generation but it certainly seems to be increasing, especially among mainstream denominations. It has been said from the pulpit by many conservative pastors, “If it’s new it isn’t true and if it’s true it isn’t new.” What do we learn from the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah in Jeremiah 6:10–16?

³ Question taken from *Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary—1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, B&H Publishing Group, Nashville, Tenn., 2013

⁴ *Ibid*

⁵ *Ibid*

Lesson 45 Summary/Take Away

If one of your friends at work or a neighbor were to ask you what you did on Tuesday, you would tell them you went to a Bible study. The next question would likely be, "What did you learn?" We often summarize an entire athletic contest or a movie in a few brief sentences and easily convey the essence of the event. Now apply these same skills to give a summary of the passage in a sentence or two. Then, in an additional sentence or two, describe what impact this passage will have on how you live.

Memory Verse

"Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching." –2 Timothy 4:2 (NKJV)

Key Words/Phrases

Write out the definition of these key words. You can use a regular dictionary or go to one of the Greek sources listed in the Tool Box at the end of the study. You may also use a concordance to see where else and how the word is used in the Bible.

Be Ready in Season and out of Season (2 Timothy 4:2)

Itching Ears (2 Timothy 4:3)

Tool Box

Step 1: The Bible. Read the passage in a couple of different versions. If you are having trouble understanding a passage, choose a more dynamic version such as *New Living Translation*. To focus in on the exact meaning of a verse, choose a more literal translation such as *New King James Version*, *New American Standard Bible* or *English Standard Version*. *The Amplified Bible* is another excellent version.

Step 2: Study Tools. Use these to help you dig deeper. Background Information: 1) Unger's Bible Dictionary, 2) Bible Dictionaries online at biblestudytools.com and blueletterbible.com. (recommend both David Guzik and Chuck Smith's commentaries/study notes); Word Studies: 1) Zodhiates' *The Complete Word Study New Testament*, 2) Vine's *Complete Expository Dictionary*, and 3) Strong's *Dictionary of Bible Words*.

Step 3: Commentaries. Commentaries should not be used in place of studying God's Word directly, but they can give you additional insights. Some good commentaries include: Warren Wiersbe, J. Vernon McGee, F.F. Bruce, *the Expositors Bible Commentary*, *NIV Application Commentary*, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (edited by Walvoord & Zuck), *the Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, and William Barclay (*great for background and culture, but be careful of his spiritual applications).

Step 4: Online Assistance. Should you have a specific question about the study please e-mail your inquiry to: mannyqwcm@gmail.com

