



IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH
SERIES: FACING THE FUTURE
TITLE: FACING THE FUTURE ON PURPOSE
SCRIPTURE: 2 TIMOTHY 2:1-7
DATE: FEBRUARY 22, 2026

INTRODUCTION

In week 6 of our *Facing the Future* series, we are looking at purpose. We want to face the future with purposeful discipleship.

If we are not careful, we can assume that discipleship takes place simply because we have a program. Perhaps we assume disciples are being made because attendance numbers are increasing within the program. While having a program or general strategy for discipleship is positive, the true effectiveness of a program is marked by the intentionality of the people within it. We must be purposeful.

In the Great Commission, Jesus tells His disciples to “go and make disciples.” Every church must purposely seek to make disciples who will make disciples. In our lesson today, we see that discipleship is not just Jesus’ strategy. Paul also makes a disciple in Timothy. Paul charges Timothy to take the things he has heard from him and entrust them to faithful men who are able to teach

others also. In essence, Paul calls Timothy to make disciples who make disciples.

Text

2 Timothy 2:1-7

2 You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, ² and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men,^[a] who will be able to teach others also. ³ Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴ No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. ⁵ An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. ⁶ It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. ⁷ Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

Explanation

Context

Paul has a special relationship with Timothy. Paul meets him on his second missionary journey as he travels to Lystra. There, others speak well of Timothy to Paul. Paul, being impressed himself, asks Timothy to join him on his journeys (Acts 16:1–5).

Paul values Timothy as one of his most trusted companions. Paul often sends messages to various churches through him. As Paul greets churches in his letters, he often mentions Timothy as sending greetings as well.

Timothy eventually remains in Ephesus, where it appears he pastors a church (1 Tim. 1:3). Paul writes letters to him that we refer to as 1 and 2 Timothy. In these letters, Paul offers various instructions and encouragements about being a faithful pastor.

In 2 Timothy, Paul encourages Timothy to be a bold leader. Timothy is to continue serving God and the church with strength. In 2 Timothy 1:6–7, Paul writes, “I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.” Paul urges Timothy not to be ashamed of the testimony about the Lord, nor of Paul himself (2 Tim. 1:8). Both the Lord and Paul are

marked by suffering. Timothy must also be willing to suffer for the gospel and follow their example (2 Tim. 1:13).

Apparently, some former followers of Christ and disciples of Paul have turned away (2 Tim. 1:15). Paul recognizes others who remain faithful to the mission (2 Tim. 1:16–18). Paul, of course, desires Timothy's faithfulness as well.

Be Strengthened

Paul begins, "You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

Paul addresses Timothy as "my child." By this reference, Paul stresses the discipleship relationship he has with Timothy. Paul functions as a spiritual father to Timothy. Just as a father seeks to raise and instruct his children out of love, Paul addresses Timothy from the same mindset. He loves Timothy and seeks his maturity.

Paul's first command is that Timothy "be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Since others have turned away, Paul wants Timothy to double down on the mission. He is not to cower, but to be strengthened. In a sense, Timothy is called to take the offensive for the mission.

Paul adds that Timothy is to be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Timothy's strength does not ultimately rely on himself. Rather, God graciously supplies the strength Timothy needs. That grace is readily available because Timothy is a true believer in Christ.

What You've Heard, Entrust to Faithful Men

Paul charges, "...and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also."

Following the command to be strengthened, Paul challenges Timothy to take what he has learned and entrust it to other faithful men. This charge forms the basic pattern of discipleship. Jesus passes along truth and sets an example for His disciples, then commands them to make more disciples (Matt. 28:19–20). Paul passes along truth to Timothy and expects Timothy to identify faithful men whom he can teach. Those men are then to teach others also.

Timothy is to pass along what he hears Paul teach. He is not to invent new doctrine, push personal agendas, or act as an innovator. Instead, he faithfully passes down sound doctrine from the apostle Paul. These truths are not secret; they were taught publicly in the presence of many witnesses. They represent core doctrines sufficient to shape believers and strengthen the church.

The Soldier, the Athlete, and the Farmer

Paul employs three familiar metaphors: the soldier, the athlete, and the farmer. Through these images, he challenges and encourages Timothy to remain focused on making disciples.

A soldier engages in battle and does not expect comfort, but hardship. This connects to Paul's earlier call not to be ashamed of suffering. A soldier prepares for an enemy and remains focused on the mission. He does not become entangled in civilian pursuits. He receives orders from his superior and seeks to please the one who enlisted him. Paul's metaphor calls Timothy to embrace his calling with discipline, focus, and endurance.

Paul's second metaphor is the athlete. An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. Paul likely emphasizes two truths. First, God rewards faithful effort. Just as athletes receive crowns, so faithful ministry receives reward. Scripture is filled with promises of rewards for our faithfulness on earth. We can store up treasures in heaven (Mt. 6:19-21), receive a crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:7-8), and receive additional responsibilities in heaven for our faithfulness on earth (Matt. 25:21). Second, Paul stresses integrity. Ministry must be done according to God's standards, not for selfish gain or human praise (2 Cor. 2:17; Php. 1:15-18; 2:3; Gal. 1:10). Timothy is to follow Paul's example and minister with integrity.

Paul's third metaphor is the hard-working farmer. A farmer labors by planting and watering, then patiently waits for the harvest. When the harvest comes, he enjoys its fruits. Paul again emphasizes two truths: Timothy must work hard, and faithful labor eventually produces results.

Think Over What I Say

Paul concludes, "Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything."

This statement highlights the balance between human effort and divine help. Scripture consistently calls believers to think deeply about truth while also acknowledging that true understanding comes from the Lord ((Col. 3:1-3; Php. 4:8-9; Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 2:9-13; Jn. 14:26). Timothy must reflect, study, and ponder, while trusting God to provide insight.

Paul also gives Timothy general instructions rather than detailed methods. Timothy must think through how to apply these commands—who to disciple, how to structure relationships, what content to teach, and when others are ready to teach. Paul invites Timothy to depend on the Lord for wisdom as he carries out the mission.

Discussion Questions

- Does anything stand out to you about Paul and Timothy's relationship?
- What can this text teach us about discipleship?
- Of the analogies that Paul used of a soldier, athlete, and a farmer, is there one that in particular helps bring clarity for you? Are there some additional ways those metaphors could be pressed for meaning?
- When it comes to discipleship, would you say that you are like a Paul who is discipling a Timothy? Or like Timothy who has been disciplined and searching for others to disciple? Or maybe a faithful person who needs to be disciplined?
- Paul instructed Timothy to find faithful men who are also able to teach others. Do any of you consider yourself "able to teach?" Do you think that one must be "able to teach" for them to make disciples?
- A possible way of reading verse 7 is for Timothy to think of some specifics for how to go about identifying faithful men and then to practically start discipling them. From your experience, what are some specifics that you have found helpful? Or maybe did not work as well as you hoped?

Conclusions or Application

HARD BUT EFFECTIVE

God's plan for discipleship is non-negotiable. He commands us in Matthew 28:19–20 to “go and make disciples....” Jesus certainly ministers to crowds and masses at times, but His particular focus is on discipling the Twelve. Paul also has a ministry to the masses; yet close readings of Scripture reveal that he engages in intentional discipleship. Paul commands Timothy to entrust what he has learned to faithful men who are able to teach others.

Admittedly, discipleship at times may seem like a slow strategy. Jesus invests in His disciples for three years before they are released to make more disciples. Paul's metaphor of the farmer is helpful once again. A hard-working farmer waits until the crop is ready. Discipleship is a process of regular, consistent investment until the time is right for others to be released. It can feel slow at times, but in the end, the crop multiplies. Discipleship is not just about addition; it focuses on multiplication.

Discipleship is hard work as well. When we look at Jesus's example of discipleship, we see significant time and effort poured into the Twelve. There are times of forward progress and other times when it seems the Twelve will never learn their lessons. At times, Jesus teaches them a lesson and must reteach it again shortly afterward. At other times, Jesus rebukes His disciples. Yet Jesus pushes through their failures and continues discipling.

One amazing aspect of discipleship is that the method proves effective regardless of circumstances or seasons. Surely, intentional discipleship is the most effective way to teach and model spiritual growth. Through personal relationships, transformation is just as much caught as it is taught. Disciple-makers can tailor their approach to the specific needs of their disciples, and a discipleship plan provides oversight to ensure that disciples are learning to make disciples of their own.