

Living Out a Life That Matters

AN 8-WEEK STUDY *in* 2 TIMOTHY



Living Out
a Life
that Matters

CRICKETT KEETH

MOODY PUBLISHING
CHICAGO

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Represented by Cynthia Ruchti of Books and Such Literary Agency.

Edited by Amanda Cleary Eastep

Interior design: **[TBD]**

Cover design: **[TBD]**

Cover image: **[TBD]**

ISBN: 978-0-8024-3757-0

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1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Printed in Colombia

*This Bible study is dedicated to Bonnie James DeArmond.
She walked into my dorm room one Friday afternoon when I was a junior
at Louisiana State University and changed my life.
Even though I was a Christian, I had put God in the “back seat” and
was making choices apart from His leading. Bonnie helped me surrender all
to the Lord Jesus Christ, and my life hasn't been the same since.
She discipled and helped ground me in my faith. She demonstrated how to
disciple others—not just with her words, but also through her actions.*

*Bonnie, you are a true example of someone living a life that matters.
Thank you for investing in my life and equipping me to
make a difference in the lives of others.*



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What Is a Life that Matters?

What comes to mind when you hear the phrase, *a life that matters*?

- Financial wealth?
- Material possessions?
- Great achievements?

It is so much more than that. The best investment we can make during our time on earth, in addition to our own spiritual health, is investing in the lives of others. But what does that look like? How do we spur others on to become all God created them to be? How do we live a life worth emulating and one that continues to have an impact long after we're gone?

To help answer these questions, we'll look at the life of the apostle Paul in the book of 2 Timothy. In each week of this eight-week Bible study, we will address one of the qualities Paul modeled to help his young friend Timothy fulfill his God-given purpose and make a difference:

- Encouragement
- Faithfulness
- Strength
- Diligence
- Vigilance
- Equipping
- Commitment
- Steadfastness

Paul recognized the importance of investing in the lives of others, helping them grow in their faith and preparing them to carry out God's purpose. Timothy was one of those Paul chose to equip for carrying on the Lord's work after he was gone, and this young man became a leader in the Ephesian church.

Paul first met Timothy in Lystra on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:1–3), where he recruited Timothy to join him on his travels. It's unclear whether Paul led Timothy to the Lord or if he was already a believer, led to Christ by the influence of his godly mother and grandmother. Regardless, Paul disciplined and mentored this young man, helping him develop his gifts and ministry and grow in his relationship with Christ. He often referred to Timothy as his beloved son.

During Paul's final years, persecution against Christians increased under Nero's rule. Paul wrote two pastoral letters to Timothy during this time to guide and encourage him in Ephesus. The purpose of Paul's first letter was to instruct him in the conduct and organization of the church. This second letter was written to direct him as he dealt with false teaching and to spur him on to stand firm in difficult times.

Paul made a difference with his life as he prepared Timothy and others to continue the ministry he was entrusting to them. He left a legacy of eternal significance.

As you study 2 Timothy, I pray you will follow Paul's example by living out these eight qualities in your daily life, while cultivating them in your children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews, friends, and neighbors, whether you're meeting together casually or in a formal mentoring/discipleship relationship. You can make a difference as you demonstrate Christ through these qualities, pointing others to the Lord and helping them become more like Him.

How to Make the Most of This Study

As you journey through this study, allow God to teach you from His Word. Rather than providing extensive commentary or answers to the questions directly

following the prompts, I've formatted the study so that you'll need to dig into the Word on your own.

Some questions will be easy as you're asked to write down observations about the passage. But there will also be questions that go beyond simple answers—questions that will challenge and make you ponder what the original author meant. Don't get discouraged if you're not sure how to answer. The purpose of those questions is to move you to a deeper study of the passage and promote rich discussion in small groups. With the more challenging questions, try to answer them on your own first before looking at a commentary, study Bible, or the Leader's Guide in the back of this book.

Each week's lesson provides five days of study. Each day contains four sections:

Looking to God's Word directs you to the Scripture reading for that day, guiding you through observation and interpretation questions.

Looking Upward challenges you to wrestle with thought-provoking questions on your own or in group discussion.

Looking Deeper encourages you to look at additional passages that will give helpful insight into the passage for that day.

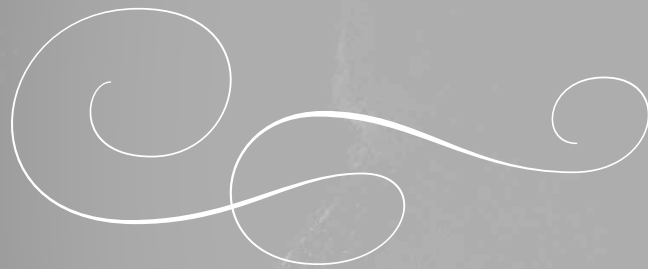
Looking Reflectively focuses on reflection of the lesson and personal application.

To get the most out of this study, take time each day to complete a lesson and reflect on the passage and main thought(s), allowing God to speak to you and work in you through His Word. Each week we'll memorize a verse from 2 Timothy.

You can listen to the recordings or watch the videos of the lectures from this study for free on my website at <https://www.crickettkeeth.com/teaching/>.

WEEK ONE

Encouragement



Imagine the emotions Paul must have experienced as he penned his final letter to Timothy, a young man into whom he had poured his life. Paul probably felt a mixture of sadness and joy: sadness that this would be his final letter to Timothy before he left this earthly home, and joy in knowing Timothy was ready to take the baton and continue the ministry Paul had been preparing him for. Paul had modeled a life that matters as he poured into Timothy. Now he exhorts Timothy to follow his example.

When Paul wrote his final words in this letter, he was in prison and knew he would finish his remaining time on this earth behind bars. Paul had seen Timothy's strengths and weaknesses and encouraged him to use his gifts to serve God and live out his purpose. He wanted to make a difference for eternity in the lives of Timothy and others. As he invested in these men, he demonstrated how we, too, can have a positive influence on those God has placed in our lives.

Memory Verse: 2 Timothy 1:7. Write it below.

DAY ONE

Overview of the Letter

Paul wrote this letter to Timothy from prison in Rome. Unlike the first time when he was under house arrest in Rome, this time he was in a dark, lonely cell. Emperor Nero imprisoned Paul in A.D. 66–67. Most scholars believe he most likely wrote this letter in the fall of A.D. 67. A few months later, according to tradition, Paul was beheaded outside Rome shortly before Nero's suicide in June of A.D. 68.¹ This was a difficult time for Christians, and some were hesitant about sharing the gospel or meeting with other believers for fear of what might happen to them. Paul knew he would soon leave his earthly home, and he wanted to encourage Timothy in his ministry during these challenging days.

In this week's lesson, we'll get an overview of how Paul encouraged Timothy by loving him, praying for him, affirming him, exhorting him, and reminding him of God's available resources for growing more like Christ and honoring Him. Let's learn from Paul's life.

*Father, thank You for the ones You've placed in my life
who have challenged me to press on in my walk with You.
Thank You for those You've given me to encourage and come alongside.
Help me keep my eyes fixed on You and point others to You.*

Looking to God's Word

Read the entire letter of 2 Timothy in one sitting to get an overview.

- 1. What is the overall tone and mood of the letter?*
- 2. What does Paul want to convey to Timothy?*
- 3. What words and ideas are repeated throughout the letter?
Why do you think Paul emphasized these things?*
- 4. List key people mentioned and write down anything you learn about them.*

Looking Upward

5. If you were the recipient of this letter, what emotions would you be feeling?

Looking Deeper

6. What key verses stand out to you from this letter and why?

Looking Reflectively

A high school or college commencement address isn't a "now that it's over" but a "now that it's beginning" speech. That may have been the thought in Paul's mind—what lies ahead—as he spoke his final words of encouragement and instruction to his student Timothy. Paul had a special relationship with this young man and wanted him to live his life for the Lord. Although his words in this letter were to Timothy, they are also relevant for us today.



*What is one thing (or more) you want to apply
from Paul's words?*

*“... in this last letter, brimming with quiet emotion, Paul reflected on his life
and encouraged, warned, instructed, and exhorted Timothy.
It's as though Paul were saying, 'I'm trusting you to carry on, Timothy.
Stay faithful, stay strong, watch out, and take care!’”²*

—BRUCE BARTON, et al.

DAY TWO

Encouragement Through Words of Greeting

When I returned home after living in East Asia for four years, I found a sign on my bed where Mom had handwritten a greeting on a poster board: *Welcome home, my darling. It's so good to have you home again. We love you!* Seeing that sign made me smile and cry at the same time, in a good way. Those words made me feel loved and valued, and I took a picture to keep with me as a sweet reminder.

How do we encourage others with our words—written and spoken? We may not send handwritten letters or notes as often anymore. Instead, we email or text when we want to communicate. In handwritten messages, we typically begin our correspondence by addressing the recipient(s). Paul began his letters this way, as well as stating up front that the letter was from him. He began with words of encouragement. Today we'll focus on the salutation and greeting that begins Paul's letter.

*Father, thank You for giving me a glimpse into Paul's relationship with Timothy.
Help me follow his example in reaching out to those You've put in my life.
Show me how to encourage others the way Paul encouraged Timothy.*

Looking to God's Word

2 Timothy 1:1–2

1. *How is the salutation in this second letter similar to the salutation in his first letter (1 Tim. 1:1–2)? How do they differ? (For your convenience, I've written them out for you below. You may want to underline what's similar and circle what's different.)*

1 Timothy 1:1–2

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus, who is our hope, To Timothy, my true son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.”

2 Timothy 1:1–22

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus, To Timothy, my beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.”

2. *What do you learn about Timothy in the above greetings? Look up 1 Corinthians 4:17. What else do you learn?*

3. *How does Paul describe himself in 2 Timothy 1:1? Why do you think he identified himself this way?*

John MacArthur explained “apostle” in this way: “*Apostolos* (**apostle**) literally means one who is sent out, ‘a messenger,’ as it is sometimes translated . . . But in the New Testament it more commonly carries the connotation of ambassador, a representative who carries with him the authority of the one he represents.”³

4. Who else did Paul refer to as a messenger or apostle in the verses below? How did he describe them?

2 Corinthians 8:23

“As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brothers, they are messengers of the churches, a glory to Christ.”

Philippians 2:25

“But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need.”

5. Paul states he is an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. Why is that significant?

6. What does he mean by the phrase “according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus”?

Looking Upward

7. Paul used his customary greeting: “Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.” How would you define grace, mercy, and peace? How are they related? How do they differ?

8. How do these words encourage you?

Looking Deeper

9. Paul was an encourager to all around him. Read Philemon, verses 4–7. How did Paul affirm and encourage Philemon with his words in this letter (epistle) to Philemon?

Looking Reflectively

Words of affirmation can go a long way in encouraging someone.

“I believe in you.”

“You’ve got this.”

“Great job.”

Those words give a bounce in our step and confidence to move forward. We all face moments when we feel unworthy or inadequate, afraid to step out of our comfort zone. Will we be sensitive to those around us who need a word of encouragement? Perhaps our words of greeting and confidence will be exactly what they need at that specific time.

Paul was Timothy’s spiritual father and wanted to help him grow in his faith and ministry. We’d be wise to follow Paul’s example with those God places in our lives.



Who is your “Timothy”?

*Is there someone you are coming alongside
to help grow in their relationship with Christ?*

This could be a child, family member, neighbor, or coworker. Perhaps it’s a young believer who has questions about their new faith and needs direction. It could be a friend who’s struggling with their faith or questioning God. Maybe it’s someone dealing with a personal struggle or illness, or a young person who’s got questions about life or the Bible. It may be a new mom or newlywed desiring to be the best mom or wife they can be.

*How are you encouraging them?
Through Bible study, talking through a situation,
praying together, helping with a need,
discussing a book, or something else?
Take a moment to pray for them now.*

If you aren't in an ongoing relationship in which you disciple or mentor, ask God to show you someone you can speak words of encouragement to.

“A natural leader by any measure, Paul became a great spiritual leader when his heart and mind were captured by Jesus Christ. Paul had boundless, Christ-centered ambition. His supreme love for Christ coupled with the obligation to share Christ’s message were his powerful lifetime motives . . .”⁴

—J. OSWALD SANDERS

DAY THREE

Encouragement Through Relationships

It's hard to imagine life without relationships—laughing and crying together, helping in difficult times, affirming one another, sharing feelings, and simply having fun. Paul and Timothy had a special friendship, and Paul made sure Timothy knew how he felt about him.

Think of all the different relationships in your life—family, friends, coworkers, neighbors, or acquaintances. How have those relationships encouraged you? God brings people into our lives for a reason, and sometimes only for a season. Embrace that time together. Encourage them with your words and actions.

Father, thank You for the relationships You've brought into my life to help me grow in my walk with You. I also thank You for those who have challenged me and the way You have used them to deepen my dependence on You. Keep me mindful that You don't want us to do life alone, but in community.

1 Timothy 1:5

Hebrews 10:19–22

4. Who are the “forefathers” Paul referred to in verse 3?

Looking Upward

5. If someone asked you why you serve Jesus Christ, how would you answer that question? What is your motivation?

6. Paul prayed faithfully and consistently for Timothy. What helps you be consistent and faithful in praying for others? What hinders you?

Looking Deeper

7. Review Timothy's background in Acts 16:1–5. What do you learn about him in this passage?

Looking Reflectively

Timothy was not only a spiritual child to Paul, but also a dear friend. Paul encouraged Timothy by praying for him, exhorting him, and equipping him for his ministry. We need people like that in our lives, and I want to be that person for others.

I'm so thankful for the women who have discipled me over the years. They loved me, prayed for and with me, taught me how to share the gospel and study the Bible, and equipped me to carry out the ministry to which God called me. I recently reunited with Bonnie, the first woman to disciple me at Louisiana State University, after thirty-five years. What a joy it was to hug her and tell her face-to-face the difference she made in my life.



Who are some people that have made a difference in your life for good? Perhaps a teacher, a Sunday school teacher, a friend, or a family member? How did they encourage and help you? (It could be an area of life you were struggling with or your spiritual growth.) Spend time thanking God for them.

Be available for God to use you in someone's life. Ask Him to show you opportunities to encourage someone today with your words and actions.

"A little word of encouragement offered at the right moment can be the difference between finishing well and collapsing along the way, can't it?"

In our everyday lives, simple heartfelt words can make such a significant impact on our strength and ability to carry on."⁵

—RACHAEL ADAMS

DAY FOUR

Encouragement Through Affirmation

My parents and my grandmother (Mamaw) taught me from an early age about Jesus and what He did for me. They helped me understand that I needed to put my faith in Jesus as my Savior to pay the penalty for my sins and not rely on my works to get into heaven. As a result, I came to Christ at the age of nine, and they set examples for how to walk with God. Daddy would read to me from his big black Bible every night as I sat in his lap. Mamaw taught me how to pray and memorize Scripture. And Mom demonstrated what it looked like to walk with Christ intimately, especially in challenging times. They helped shape my life.

Who are the people who have played a role in your spiritual growth? Who has helped you grow in your faith? Today, we'll focus on Timothy's spiritual heritage and how Paul exhorted him to stay strong in his faith.

*Father, thank You for those who have
helped me come to know You and grow in my faith.
Make me attentive to those You place in my life whom I can walk
alongside and help develop a deeper relationship with You.
Help me be an affirming spiritual mother and friend.*

Looking to God's Word

2 Timothy 1:5–6

1. What was Timothy's godly heritage? Who influenced him spiritually?

2. How did Paul affirm Timothy in these verses?

3. Verse 6 begins, "For this reason." To what was Paul referring?

4. What is the "gift of God" that Paul mentioned in verse 6? Read 1 Timothy 4:12–14 for additional insight. (Also, I address this in more detail in the Leader's Guide.)

5. Paul reminded Timothy to "kindle afresh the gift of God." What do you think that means? How would someone go about doing this?

6. What are some possible reasons why Paul would need to remind Timothy of this? (You may want to review the introduction for the setting of this letter.)

Looking Upward

7. Do you know what your spiritual gifts are? How do we determine what they are?

To help guide you in this process, read 1 Peter 4:10–11. Peter points out that there are serving gifts and speaking gifts. The serving gifts carry out the ministry of practical service—helps, encouragement, giving, mercy, hospitality, administration. The speaking gifts carry out the ministry of the Word—teaching, exhortation, prophecy (speaking the truth of God’s Word), evangelism. Both ministries are essential. You may have both a speaking gift and a serving gift, but usually your gifts are more aligned with one of these two areas.

8. Are your spiritual gifts in speaking or serving? Which area are you most comfortable in and excited about? What are some practical ways you can develop and use those gifts? (For more information on gifts, see the passages below in the Looking Deeper section.)

Looking Deeper

9. *There are several passages that list spiritual gifts, but no one passage is comprehensive in listing all of them. Read the Scriptures below and list the gifts mentioned in each. Mark any you think might be your spiritual gifts.*

Romans 12:6–8

1 Corinthians 12:4–11, 28

Ephesians 4:11–13

Looking Reflectively

On several occasions, I wanted to quit writing Bible studies. I vividly remember my first rejection of a book proposal sent to a publisher. As my small group Bible study huddled around me to pray, I cried to God, *Lord, I thought this was what You wanted me to do, but I'm obviously no good at it.* My friends, however, affirmed and encouraged me to keep writing as they shared how God had used my words to deepen their walk with God. I'm so thankful for words of affirmation from friends who wouldn't let me quit when I was overwhelmed with doubt and discouragement.

We don't know exactly what was going on with Timothy at the time, but Paul affirmed and exhorted him to keep going and "kindle afresh the gift of God." He reminded Timothy of his godly heritage through his mother and grandmother. Paul was also part of Timothy's spiritual heritage and wanted him to live out his God-given purpose. We all need encouragers in the faith who will spur us on and not let us lose our zeal for God and His work. And we need to be an encourager to others.



*How would you recognize if you need to
"kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you"?*

*Use Paul's prayer in 2 Thessalonians 1:11–12
to guide you through praying for someone who
needs encouragement and affirmation today.*

*"The heritage of genuine faith and the special relationships through which
it was transmitted to Timothy were recalled to restore his confidence.
But they also called to mind a responsibility (to continue in the faith,
to persevere in ministry) that he could not walk away from.
No matter how bitter the opposition, he could not deny his heritage."⁶*

—PHILIP TOWNER