**How To Study the Bible**

**Pastoral Epistles**

**2 Timothy 4:1-5**

### 2 Timothy 4

### OPEN

Let’s each share your name and one thing that is new in your life.

### DIG

1. 2 Timothy 4.1 – 5. How do you sense Paul’s tone in this passage?

Richard Baxter, the Puritan preacher, once said, ‘I preached as never sure to preach again; as a dying man to dying men.’ That is urgency! He meant that in the light of eternity, time is short, and the message of God’s salvation is a matter of life and death which people must hear. He was echoing the words of Jesus: ‘As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work’ (John 9:4). — Williams, P. (2007). Opening up 2 Timothy. Opening Up Commentary (92). Leominster: Day One Publications.

1. Paul was a preacher writing to a preacher, telling him to preach. What is the application for us?

Soul-winning is a perennial work for every Christian. Writing to Timothy, Paul exhorted him to “preach the word; be instant in season, out of season” (2 Tim. 4:2 KJV). How often this phrase is quoted, “Be instant in season, [and] out of season.” In point of fact, however, there is no and in this injunction. The whole point of the apostle’s command is to show that there is no “out of season” time for the true soul-winner. The sense implicit in the words is this: “Take opportunity or make it.” Formal preaching may have to be restricted to a traditional program, but witnessing and soul-winning are a responsibility to which we are committed at any time of day or night.

Nicodemus could go and find the Lord Jesus available and ready to speak to him in the night watches; the woman of Samaria met Jesus at noonday when most people would be seeking the shade of their homes. Our Christian witness and soul-winning should be “like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper” (Ps. 1:3). God make us evergreen trees and perennial fruit bearers. — Olford, S. F. (2007). The secret of soul-winning (30–31). Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group.

1. Would you say you are prepared? How would you explain to someone who did not know what it means to be a Christian?

The Bible says something remarkable about how to bridge the gap between God and man. It says that God saw the chasm that separated immoral men and women like you and me from him. He saw the infinite distance for what it really was — more immense than human beings could ever fathom. God knew that no amount of human construction — no amount of bridge work — would ever be enough to span a chasm that wide. So, motivated by love, God took on the chasm-spanning responsibility himself. He laid the foundation. He built a bridge that went the distance in order to reach sinful man. He sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to die on a cross for us — the cross that would serve as the ultimate bridge.

It was a lot of trouble to go to for a single bridge. But God’s desire to span the chasm was just that great. After hours of grueling labor that demanded Christ’s physical blood, sweat, and tears, God declared that his bridge was now open to the public, ready to be crossed by anyone willing to take the walk.

This is God’s story — his remarkable tale of redemption and restoration. And there is no higher honor in life than to be message carriers of the greatest news known to humanity. Because of what Christ has done, you can confidently tell your friends and family that the bridge they’re looking for has already been built! “You can take off your hard hat, drop your trowel, and give up your self-made construction efforts,” tell them, “because construction is complete, and God’s bridge is ready to be crossed.” Friends, the whole reason we’re here is so that we can spread this news. The bridge has already been built. — Hybels, B. (2008). Just walk across the room: Simple steps pointing people to faith. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

1. How is the message of the Christian faith different from other religions?

As the cool haze dissipated during the early morning hours of May 7, 1954, construction began for a five-mile bridge that would link the upper and lower peninsulas of Michigan. It was quite an achievement since the waters below, called the Mackinac Straits, were previously only served by ferries, often causing travel delays of up to thirty-six hours.

Requiring more than a million steel bolts, 466,300 cubic yards of concrete, 42,000 miles of cable wire, 11,350 workers, and nearly a billion dollars, the engineering feat was finally opened to the public exactly three and a half years of grueling labor later.

I’d say it’s a lot of trouble to go to for a single bridge. But throughout history, people have willingly gone to such lengths in undertaking this type of monumental feat. Any guesses why?

The desire to span a chasm is just that great.

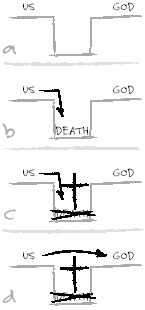
People on one cliff want to visit residents on another cliff. Merchants want to reach customers on the other side. Families and friends want access to each other. And since the beginning of time, sensing vast distance separating them, people have been consumed by the desire to somehow get over the chasm separating them from God.

But how? they wondered.

They knew that God was other. And so they tended to think of God in lofty and remote terms: Perfect. Holy. Awesome. In their minds, his otherness put a lot of distance between Creator and creation. The implications of this reality were significant: if they weren’t even living up to their own standards, and God was “other” than they were, then they figured God’s standards must be utterly impossible to reach. This is going to require Herculean effort if we’re ever going to be successful! they thought.

Over time, faith systems emerged that tried to address the question that was on everyone’s mind: How are we going to reach a holy God? One approach after another came into vogue, hoping to bridge the gap that existed, but they all had one thing in common: the construction effort to cover the chasm always began on humankind’s side.

Everyone seemed to agree that all people had to do to reach God was fly a little straighter, pray a little harder, live more nobly, become more religious, and perform more charitable deeds. The idea was that a person’s massive construction efforts amassed during the course of a lifetime could somehow entitle them to proximity with God. Hopefully, they thought, by the end of our lives, we’ll have worked our way to the other side where we can enjoy a thriving, vibrant relationship with God for all of eternity.



Study the religions for yourself. See if you don’t agree that not only does every major world religion suggest you attempt to bridge the gap through your own efforts, but also there is no evidence or assurance that you will actually get it done before you die.

Every religion, that is, except one: biblical Christianity. — Hybels, B. (2008). Just walk across the room: Simple steps pointing people to faith. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

1. Anyone familiar with the Bridge Illustration? How does that communicate the gospel?

So when you’re sensing spiritual openness in a conversation, what’s the best way to communicate this life-transforming path? I think pictures work best. On hundreds of occasions, I’ve relied on one in particular — the “Bridge” illustration — when my unconvinced friends are hoping to understand the significance of Christ’s work on the cross.

The explanation is straightforward and easy to memorize: on one side of the bridge is God. On the other side, people. Between God and people is a great chasm, a division that exists because of people’s propensity to rebel against God’s way and go their own way instead. The Bible calls this “sin.”

The dilemma people face is that we want to get to God but know we can’t just leap over the chasm. So we try exerting human effort, hoping we can get the bridge built. In the end, we realize that all the human effort in the world will never be enough to get us to the other side. But thankfully, God sympathized with our dilemma. And because he loves us so much, he intervened so that we would have a means of getting close to him. His solution was to choose his Son, Jesus, to serve as the bridge. — Hybels, B. (2008). Just walk across the room: Simple steps pointing people to faith. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

1. Bill Hybels teaches a plan of presenting the gospel he calls the “Do vss. done.” Anyone know what that is about?

The simplest illustration I’ve come across to articulate what sets Christianity apart from other religions is called “Do versus Done.” I tell people who are on the Earning-Grace Plan that “religion is spelled D-O. At the end of the day, it’s all about whether you do enough right things to earn God’s favor. To get in God’s good graces, the thinking goes, you have to do this and do that and strive and sacrifice and clean up your act and make all sorts of promises.

“But Christianity, on the other hand,” I say to people, “is spelled D-O-N-E. The Bible says that what Christ did on the cross is enough. He did what you could never do — he uniquely satisfied God’s requirement for a perfect sacrifice to take care of our past, present, and future sin — and if you receive what he accomplished, then not only will you be ‘in God’s good graces,’ but your life will be made brand new. Because of what Christ did on the cross, your sins can be forgiven and you can find favor in God’s eyes right here, right now.”

Writing those two little words on a slip of paper cements this powerful truth on a person’s heart and mind. Whether or not they make a decision for Christ at that moment, they will never forget what sets Christianity apart. The work that must occur to pay for sin and grant eternal access to God — it’s already been done. — Hybels, B. (2008). Just walk across the room: Simple steps pointing people to faith. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

1. When Paul says to “Preach the Word,” what exactly is meant by, “the Word”? Is this the message off how to go to heaven when you die, or is there more to it?

By the word, Paul doubtless means the entire written Word of God, His complete revealed truth, which the apostle also calls “the whole purpose of God” (Acts 20:27) and which he has just referred to as “the sacred writings” and the “Scripture” (2 Tim. 3:15–16). — MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). 2 Timothy. MacArthur New Testament Commentary (171). Chicago: Moody Press.

1. Verse 2. What does it mean, “in season and out of season”?

First of all, he must ‘be prepared in season and out of season’ (4:2). This means that he must always be ready to preach the Word of God. He does not have to wait for the time of the formal gathering of God’s people before he can expound the Bible. He has to be prepared to speak God’s Word whatever the time and wherever the place—even on his day off—and he is compelled to preach whether he feels like it or not. — Bentley, M. (1997). Passing on the Truth: 1 & 2 Timothy Simply Explained. Welwyn Commentary Series (283). Darlington, England: Evangelical Press.

1. Paul speaks of correcting and rebuking. How do you correct and rebuke in a way that a friend might hear? How do we keep from just making our friend mad when we correct?

In our personal relationships a word of warning and rebuke would often save a brother from sin and shipwreck. But, as someone has said, that word must always be spoken as "brother setting brother right." It must be spoken with a consciousness of our common guilt. It is not our place to set ourselves up as moral judges of anyone; nonetheless it is our duty to speak that warning word when it needs to be spoken.

He must exhort. Here is the other side of the matter. No rebuke should ever be such that it drives a man to despair and takes the heart and the hope out of him. Not only must men be rebuked, they must also be encouraged.

Further, the Christian duty of conviction, of rebuke and of encouragement, must be carried out with unwearied patience. The word is makrothumia (<G3115>), and it describes the spirit which never grows irritated, never despairs and never regards any man as beyond salvation. The Christian patiently believes in men because he unconquerably believes in the changing power of Christ. — Barclay's Daily Study Bible (NT).

1. Verse 3. If Paul were alive today, what teachers would he accuse of preaching to itching ears? Name names. Who are the preachers we should not listen to?

We tend to be a little vague in our discussions. Name names. Get specific.

1. Verse 5 says to endure hardship. Based on this, what can we expect the Christian life to be like?

Endure hardship. It is a command. It is not a holiday at sea. It is war. And war is tough.

We will never win the world with cry baby Christians. We need tough Christians. Endure hardship Christians. Soldiers. Warriors who say in Klingon-like fashion, “It is a good day to die.”

How many times have I sat in a business meeting or committee meeting and heard church leaders complain about how they don’t like this and they don’t like that? It’s war man, you are not supposed to like the jungle. This is not a holiday at sea. It is war. It is food rations. It is cots and sleeping bags and mosquitoes. It is war. Endure hardship. Put up with it. Deal with it. And smile. — Josh Hunt. Enjoying God.

1. Verse 6. What does it mean to be poured out as a drink offering?

Paul borrowed the vivid image of “being poured out like a drink offering” from the Jewish custom of pouring out wine at the base of the altar as part of the ritual sacrifice of a lamb (cf. Exodus 29:40, 41; Leviticus 23:13; Numbers 15:1–12; 28:7, 24).

The image of red wine splashing down upon the altar became an operative metaphor for how Paul regarded his life. Some five years earlier Paul had written to the Philippians about the possibility of his death, describing it as “being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service” of their faith (2:17). There it was hypothetical. Now as he writes to Timothy it is actual. He uses the present tense in its progressive sense to indicate the certainty of the event, as if it were actually taking place. Though there would be some more time before the event (he will ask for his books and a warm coat, v. 13), the last drops of Paul’s blood were in a sense beginning to fall.

Yet Paul was triumphant. It is clear that Paul did not think of himself as about to be executed but rather as offering himself to God. From the time of his conversion on the Damascus Road, everything he had was given to God—his wealth, his body, his brilliant mind, his passions, his position, his reputation, his relationships, his dreams. For years the red blood of his life had been spilling onto the altar. Now all that remained was his life’s breath, and he triumphantly gave that. — Hughes, R. K., & Chapell, B. (2000). 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To guard the deposit. Preaching the Word (250). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

1. Try to sense Paul’s mood here. How do you think Paul felt about his death?

Departing. By calling death a “departure”—“and the time has come for my departure” (v. 6b), Paul indicated the certitude that his life would not end and that he had no fear of death. The word translated “departure” is used in Greek literature to describe the loosing of a ship from its moorings or a soldier loosing the stakes of his tent. It pictures a ship lifting anchor, tossing off the ropes, and rising on the tide so the winds can carry her to sea. The word radiates sweet, triumphant continuance. Lewis had it right in The Last Battle where it is explained to the deceased children that “they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.”

Final “departure” was the culmination of Paul’s long-held dream that he had earlier expressed to the Philippians saying, “I desire to depart [to cast off the ropes] and be with Christ, which is better by far” (1:23). He believed with all his heart that it was “better by far.” Those who have departed to be with Christ are far better off. Though you have lived seventy-five years, it is better to be with Christ. Though you are the richest man in town, life in Heaven with Christ is far better. Though you are brilliant, it is far better. If you have lived only five years, it is better to be above with Christ. Though you have the greatest gifts for ministry, it is far better. The “far better” dominated Paul’s thoughts, as it should ours.

Here was a man who looked imminent death in the face and saw the stars. — Hughes, R. K., & Chapell, B. (2000). 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To guard the deposit. Preaching the Word (250–251). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

1. What do we learn about Christian living from Paul’s words in verse 7?

Those servants who refuse to get bogged down in and anchored to the past are those who pursue the objectives of the future. People who do this are seldom petty. They are too involved in getting a job done to be occupied with yesterday’s hurts and concerns. Very near the end of his full and productive life, Paul wrote: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim 4:7). What a grand epitaph! He seized every day by the throat. He relentlessly pursued life.

I know human nature well enough to realize that some people excuse their bitterness over past hurts by thinking: “It’s too late to change. I’ve been injured and the wrong done against me is too great for me ever to forget it. Maybe Paul could press on, not me.” A person with this mind-set is convinced that he or she is the exception to the command to forgive, and he is determined not to change.

But when God holds out hope, when God makes promises, there are no exceptions. With each new dawn there is delivered to your door a fresh, new package called “today.” God has designed each of us in such a way that we can handle only one package at a time . . . and all the grace we need will be supplied by Him as we live out that day. — Swindoll, C. R. (2005). Day by day. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

1. Occasionally you will hear someone say that Christian living is all about a relationship with God. Look at verse 7. Is that how Paul saw it?

We all want two things: something to do, and someone to do it with. Christianity, rightly understood, gives us both. Christianity is not all about a relationship. It is about a relationship, but that is not all it is about. It is also about a calling. It is about doing. Martha was not altogether wrong.

Bill Hybels got me on to this idea. He speaks often of following God as an exhilarating, breath-taking adventure. Exhilarating breath-taking adventure? Really? Look around church next Sunday. Does it look like most people are experiencing an exhilarating, breath-taking adventure? It was a new concept for me. Seems to be a new concept to a few other church-goers as well. But, I am starting to get it. I am starting to run the race. I am starting to reach for the prize. I am starting to fulfill the calling, not just enjoy the relationship. — Josh Hunt. The Amazing Power of Doubling Groups.

1. Verse 8 speaks of those who long for his appearing. What does this teach us about Christian living?

There are some pleasures in knowing God that we will not know until we get to heaven. This is why we are taught to long for his appearing. (2 Timothy 4:8) “Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day--and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.” This life never will be heaven. There will always be tribulation in this life, Jesus promised that. There will be the constant battle against sin, the struggle for health, relational strains, persecution, financial difficulties, natural disasters, and personal failures. This is not heaven. There are pleasures reserved for us that we will never know on this shore. That is why Jesus is preparing a place for us. One of the quickest ways to lose your joy is to demand this we be happy all the time right now with no tainting of the sadness in this world. He has not wiped every tear from our eyes yet. — Josh Hunt. People Who Enjoy Their God.

1. What do we learn about Christian living from the last part of verse 13?

My friend, Bill Sloan, spoke one sentence to me that forever changed the trajectory of my life. I have never been the same. I will never be the same. My life is richer, fuller, and better in every way because of that one sentence.

My life is a long way from perfect, but it is better. I am healthier, my relationships are better, I have accomplished more, I enjoy my relationship with God more, I am a better father–about a hundred other things are better–because Bill spoke into my life.

What was this sentence? Well, first a little context. It was my second year in college. I was bragging that I had never ever read a single solitary book outside of assigned class reading. It was a point of pride for me. I was firmly entrenched in the non-reader camp. I liked it that way. Readers? I had lots of bad thoughts about readers, and I was not about to be named among them. Bill made one sentence that forever changed all that.

“You are just cutting yourself off from so much knowledge,” he pleaded. I am not sure what it was about those 10 words that got my attention, but they certainly did. Not that I changed instantly to become an avid reader, but I did make the one change that made all of the other changes possible. I read one book. I liked it so well I read another, and another, and another.

Whatever good things have come my way, whatever success I have enjoyed, to whatever degree I have been able to do things right, I owe much of it to the habit that developed out of those 10 words.

It is fair to say I have read thousands of books on a variety of topics. I purchase and read books constantly. When I walk out the door, I usually have my keys, my cell phone, my wallet, and a book.

One of my children’s fond memories is walking in a Barnes and Noble with me and pausing just as we enter, saying: “Ah, smell those books!”

I knew I had found a soul mate when one of my hosts for a conference took my by a Barnes and Noble once. As soon as we walked in the door he stopped us and said, “Ah, smell those books!”

I think if Paul ever went into a book store he would have stopped as he entered the door and said, “Ah, smell those books.” Look what he wrote in 2 Timothy 4:13: “When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.”

Howard Hendricks said, “If you stop growing today, you stop teaching tomorrow.” Teach from a full cup. Let people drink from a living stream.

Henry Ford said, “Anyone who stops learning is old, whether twenty or eighty.” — Josh Hunt. 10 Marks of Incredible Small Group Leaders.

1. How important were books to Paul?

Do you hear what Paul is saying? Get this. Winter is coming. It is cold. Paul needs his coat. He also left a stack of books [technically parchments and scrolls]. He asks Timothy to bring these things to him. Then he makes a value judgement between them. He clarifies to Timothy which of the two things is more important to him. We could paraphrase, “If you only have so much room, forget the coat. I can live without the coat all winter easier than I can live without my books.” That is the heart of a teacher. Teachers are readers. — Josh Hunt. Disciplemaking Teachers.

1. What books have impacted you spiritually?

Here is my list:

* + Desiring God
  + Knowing God
  + Experiencing God
  + Anything by John Ortberg
  + Daws

1. What have you read recently that has impacted you?

I am reading Mastery by Robert Greene. It is a secular book, but a good read. I wonder if he is a Christian. Christians seem to be over represented in his stories.

1. What do you want to recall from today’s conversation?
2. How can we support one another in prayer this week?