

Learning to Finish Well

Series: Setting the table

Life Group Discussion

Welcome to another opportunity to connect with God and one another.

I. Getting to know one another...

What was one of the favorite trips you have ever taken and why?

II. Centering...

Take a quiet moment to center your soul on God's presence. Have everyone close their eyes... take a deep breath...and prayerfully listen as one member reads the following Scripture... slowly ...THREE times...after which they may lead in an opening prayer for the group time.

James 1:12

"Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him."

III. Exploring...

This week we are continuing engaging the Biblical Book called "2nd Timothy." Paul, an apostle, is writing to younger Timothy who has been his faithful co-worker, including having been entrusted caring for the community in Ephesus which Paul first developed. Now, Paul is in prison in Rome and anticipates these are his final days. As there are several questions to consider, it may serve well to have just two or three participants respond to each question.

1. Have someone read aloud 2 Timothy 2:1-9

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ² And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others. ³ Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴ No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer. ⁵ Similarly, anyone who competes as an athlete does not receive the victor's crown except by competing according to the rules. ⁶ The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. ⁷ Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this. ⁸ Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, ⁹ for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained.

Paul is continuing his appeals to Timothy, and all who this letter will be shared with. He begins telling us to "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." As a means to understand what Paul is describing, read how Paul describes the type of inner confidence and strength that comes from the security of faith in what Christ has done, in Romans 8:3-3, 15-17, 38-39 (NLT)

God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. ⁴ He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us, who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit.

...¹⁵ ... you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children.^[b] Now we call him, "Abba, Father."^[c] ¹⁶ For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. ¹⁷ And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.

...³⁸ And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,^[d] neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. ³⁹ No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

How does this speak to the strength we can find in the grace of Christ?

2. How does finding our confidence and strength in what God has done, something that also involves our choice and effort?

3. Back in 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul calls us to invest the truth of God in others who will do the same? Why do you think this is so important for Paul...and for Paul to charge Timothy and each of us to do?

4. Share how this may be challenging... and more importantly...possible for you to do.

*5. In verse 3, Paul calls Timothy and all of us to "join him in suffering." (Other translations translate this as "Endure hardship.") How does Paul's life and the illustrations he now uses, help clarify that Paul is not telling us that suffering is valuable in itself, but rather that what is vital is embracing what is required for fulfilling what matters most?

6. In verses 4 to 6, Paul draws upon three examples that speak to how we should live with similar dedication. Based on what Paul says, what does the example of a soldier teach us?

7. Based on what Paul says what does the example of an athlete teach us?

8. Based on what Paul says, what does the example of a farmer teach us?

9. Which of these examples speaks most strongly to you?

* These questions may serve in a more "optional" manner if time is short or the group is large.