

Invest in the Next

Word

Scripture Reference

2 Timothy 2:1-7

Discussion Questions

1. How has someone—your parents, grandparents, or a teacher—significantly influenced your life? Share with the group.
2. Read 2 Timothy 2:1-7. The apostle Paul's second letter to Timothy was his "last words" to the disciple before Paul was executed. Paul wanted to encourage Timothy to remain focused, and to invest in something of eternal significance and value that will give spiritual success and go beyond just him. He also charged Timothy to invest in someone spiritually, someone who in turn will also invest in the spiritual growth of others. Who has had the most significant role in your spiritual growth and development? Share how that person had considerable impact on your walk with the Lord.
3. Timothy had seen how Paul invested himself for the sake of the gospel, even in the midst of challenges. Paul wanted Timothy to recognize that what he would be entrusted to continue and pursue came with a lot of challenges, and so he exhorted him to depend on God (v. 1). Discuss the implications of being "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Is there something that you have accomplished by being depending on God instead of trusting your own strength and ability? Share and discuss.
4. Timothy was also given the duty to disciple others. Discipleship is a spiritual investment (v. 2). Timothy personally experienced having someone invest on his spiritual growth, and he was expected to do the same. He was to continue the building up of faithful men who would be able to teach others as well. Paul gives us three images to illustrate three key character qualities that are necessary to be cultivated in order for you to effectively fulfill the task of teaching others who in turn will also teach others to mature in the faith:
 - a. **Dedication** (v. 3). His first illustration was of soldiers who are expected to engage in warfare and experience adversity. Describe what you know about how a soldier goes through difficulties. How dedicated should a person be in order to enter the military? What boundaries/limits does a soldier need to put around himself, and why (v. 4)? Who does a soldier please when he dedicates himself to his duty? Do you have anyone for whom you have been investing yourself to disciple? Discuss how you can invest your time in helping your children, co-workers, or friends spiritually. How can you develop a passion or dedication to do it?

- b. **Discipline** (v. 5). The second image Paul used is that of an athlete. To be eligible to win and get a crown requires carefulness to obey the rules, not only during the games, but also during the training. What happens to an athlete who may have won but was found to have broken the rules? What does finishing well mean? In helping others to grow in their walk with God, how important is consistency of character and testimony? Discuss how having discipline in your spiritual life can be an example both in your action and in your character in teaching others about spiritual matters.
- c. **Diligence** (v. 6) The final image used in our passage is that of a farmer. Paul's emphasis here is on the value of hard work. It stresses the toil and work that is necessary to enjoy the fruits. Why does a farmer need to be patient until the harvest comes? Is there such a thing as an instant crop? What are some of the difficulties that a farmer may experience while waiting for his harvest? Similarly, leading others to spiritual maturity entails much hard work. Discuss why it requires a lot of patience to provide spiritual helps for others. Is there a time when your patience and diligence have helped someone else? Share and discuss.

Walk

Discipleship is not about talent or skill. It is not something we are born knowing how to do. It is not even considered a spiritual gift. It is a responsibility for which we must take ownership and by faith take action in the investing of ourselves in the spiritual lives of others. Do you want to make a spiritual investment that will last for generations? Think of someone you can invest your life in so that this person can pass on your faith to the next generation. Start praying for that person.

Worship & Prayer

Father, thank You for Your Word that reminds me of the things I should be pro-actively doing. So much of my time in church is invested in personal spiritual growth—attending classes, attending small groups, attending camps and seminars and conferences. But I have not been investing my time and effort in the spiritual growth of others. I guess fear has a lot to do with that. Fear that I'm not trained enough, that I don't know enough, that I'm not skilled enough, that it's not my gift. Thank You for the reminder that discipling others is not a gift, but my mandate as a believer. I pray first for forgiveness because I have been neglecting that responsibility. Give me courage as well to take the initiative in making myself available to help our pastors in ministering to the discipleship needs of our church. There are so many people here who needs discipling, and so I pray next for wisdom in knowing who You want me to build up in the faith. Finally, grant me the strength and help me cultivate the desire to embrace the discipleship life: a life of dedication despite adversity, discipline in my character and actions, and diligence in taking steps to move forward however long it takes. That life is a life of challenge, completely out of my comfort zone, yes, but it is a life filled with eternal rewards. I'm ready and willing, Father. In Jesus' name. Amen.