**Community Group Discussion Guide
2 Timothy 4:1-8**

*Read 2 Timothy 4:1-8*

*Set the Context…*

**Context:** Paul, nearing his last charge to his beloved disciple, Timothy, is addressing the false teachers who seek to corrupt the gospel. They are “***lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive…having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power***” (2 Tim. 3:2-5). They are like the Egyptian false teachers of Moses’ day, “***Jannes and Jambres***”, men who are corrupted in mind and oppose the truth (3:8).

 Considering the animosity Timothy will receive, Paul reminds him, “***all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted***” (3:12). This word is reassuring, for by this time Timothy would have faced opposition, which likely lead him to doubt the truth. But Paul’s words tell Timothy, and all Christians, that being in enmity with unbelievers is a sign of knowing the truth. When facing this conflict, Timothy is encouraged to embrace the truth for what it is, “***the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation***” (3:15). These same scriptures are “***breathed out by God and profitable for teaching…that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work***” (3:16-17). It is then upon these scriptures that Timothy should stand and hold fast as he faces resistance from false teachers, and it is upon this understanding of the scriptures that Paul will give him his final charge.

**Commentary:** Paul begins by disclosing the witnesses of his charge. Noticeably, he does not acknowledge any human spectators, but rather the divine, God and Christ Jesus, for it is before the triune God that Timothy will be held accountable for his ministry (2 Tim. 4:1). To Paul, ministry is not about the approval of man, but faithfulness to God. Faithfulness is then preaching, reproving, rebuking, and exhorting members in accordance with God’s word (2 Tim. 4:2). This is not as much a complicated command, as it is a costly one, for Paul knows that people “***will not endure sound teaching***”, but rather “***accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions***” (2 Tim. 4:3). Therefore, it is critical that Timothy knows his ministry is not about people pleasing but holding fast to God’s word. Whatever season he may be in he must be faithful to share the truth, for many “***will turn away from the truth and wander off into myths***” (2 Tim. 4:4). Timothy’s ministry is by no means an easy task, but one that finds sole approval in the eyes of “***Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead***” (2 Tim. 4:1).

 The effects of gospel ministry have been seemingly costly to Paul’s life, as he is “***being poured out as a drink offering***” (2 Tim. 4:6). This is likely a reference to Levitical sacrificial system (Num.15:4-5), where all the drink would be spent at the cost of consecrating the offeror to the Lord. This imagery would have a forceful impact upon Timothy, as he would understand that he must pour out his own life in service to God. Paul spared no effort in faithfulness to the Lord, and neither must Timothy. While this language appears taxing upon the Christian life, Paul reveals that it is not without reward. The one who fights the good fight, finishes the race, and keeps the faith, will receive “***the crown of righteousness***” (2 Tim. 4:7-8). The pains and hardships of gospel ministry are abundantly compensated by the Lord, who offers them a royal inheritance. It is by the approval of the eternal judge that they are commended for their work.

**Key points:**

* Ministry charge (v. 4:1-5)
* Ministry costs and gains (v. 4:6-8)

**Discussion/Application Questions:**

2 Timothy 4:1-5

1. Paul announces that “God and Christ Jesus” bear witness to the Christian ministry; how does this impact your view of your own ministry?
2. Christians often struggle with fearing man. What are some ways that you have struggled with seeking the approval of man?
3. How do Paul’s words help you fight against looking for too much approval from man?
4. Paul reveals, “people…will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions”. How do you see this occurring inside and outside the church at this moment?
5. How have you been prone to only listen to the voices you desire to listen to, and how has this affected you?
6. What are some practical ways we can fight against only listening to people who accommodate our own desires?
7. Christians often manipulate evangelism to suit their own lives. How can we fight against this tendency among Christians?

2 Timothy 4:6-8

1. Paul uses the imagery of a “drink offering” to communicate what Christian ministry is like. What does this tell you about the nature of the Christian life?
2. In the discipline of evangelism, what does it mean to practically spend yourself as a “drink offering”?
3. Our church struggles to fill children’s and youth ministries with volunteers. How can our community group spend ourselves as a “drink offering” for the sake of these ministries?
4. Paul uses the imagery of fighting and racing to describe the Christian life. How does this inform your view of the Christian life?
5. With the Christian life being described as a race and a fight, what is one way we can begin to prepare ourselves for this journey ahead?
6. With the hope of a “crown of righteousness” for Christians, how does this help you to look forward to the day of Christ’s second coming?

**Prayer Guide:**

Pray for our pastors to find their identity and calling from the Lord and not man. Often, pastors struggle with accommodating their teaching to be more palatable with the culture. Let us pray that our pastors would be bound to God’s word and then speak his truth into the culture, that we would be a congregation who encourages our pastors to be faithful to God’s word.

Pray that our church would take on the mind of Paul, “being poured out as a drink offering”. May we be willing to sacrifice our lives for the sake of gospel service. Let us pray that labors would be raised up from among our congregation who would devote themselves to gospel ministry like Paul.