

## 2 Timothy

### Lesson 4 Leader Notes – 2 Timothy 3:1-9

#### To Begin ...

1. What would you like your epitaph to say about your legacy?

Hey Life Group Leaders! Welcome to **Week 4** of our new Life Group Video Series, through the New Testament book of 2 Timothy! We hope that this series will be uplifting, challenging, and help you find your next step in your journey with God!

You have seven questions based the video lesson and scripture passage this week! Remember that these Leader Notes are to serve as a guide for further and deepening conversation with your Life Group, not as the answers! Enjoy this week's discussion and always remember to ask an extra question such as "Why do you believe that?" to draw out some more conversation from your group members!

To start off this lesson, you have one question that everyone in your group should be able to answer. It is personal and can be a little on the serious side ... but you may still have fun with it! Please make sure that your group feels the safety of sharing within the group. There is no right or wrong answer here. No snap judgments or quick fixes. And as always, be encouraging and show grace as your group members are working through their salvation with fear and trembling (**Philippians 2:12**).

#### Discussion Prompts

1. Share an idea from the video discussion that challenged or encouraged you.

This is a question that everyone in your group should be able to answer. Once again, maybe this is something that made you think, or that you possibly disagreed with? Why do you disagree and what is your biblical interpretation to support your opinion? This is great for discussion and a healthy back and forth conversation.

2. Most people tend to imagine the zombie apocalypse or worse when picturing the end of the world. Yet, how does Paul characterize the last days in **2 Timothy 3:1-9**? Give examples of how you see these things play out today.

**2 Timothy 3:1-9** reads, *“But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people. They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over gullible women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these teachers oppose the truth. They are men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected. But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone.”*

Some answers to this question may include that Paul’s reference to the “last days” reveals his sense of urgency. The last days began after Jesus’ resurrection when the Holy Spirit came upon the believers at Pentecost. The last days will continue until Christ’s second coming. This means that we are living in the last days. So, we should make the most of the time that God has given us.

N.T. Wright has this to say, “That sense of the frustration of defeat emerges in various New Testament writings which deal with what seemed at the time to be an increase in human evil. The first letter of John speaks of what it’s bound to be like living in the last days. Here Paul says much the same, warning Timothy that the forces of evil, knowing themselves to be defeated in the crucifixion of Jesus, are having a final fling, dragging people into the mud, determined to inflict as much damage on the human race as they can. We who live two thousand years later may find this language of the ‘last days’ difficult to take, though of course two thousand years, by most people’s reckoning, is a tiny fraction of cosmic history. But the early Christians staked their lives on their belief that with the death and resurrection of Jesus God’s new world had begun, so that the ‘last days’ had indeed arrived, the interval between the defeat of evil on Calvary and the final defeat that we still await. The point Paul is making, alongside other early writers, is that in this interval, however long or short, we shouldn’t expect the world to be steadily improving. We should expect, if anything, an upsurge of evil.”

3. We prioritize our immediate desires when we succumb to temptation — which brings out the worst in us. Out of the sins that Paul lists in **2 Timothy 3:2-4**, which do you struggle with the most? How do you confront this struggle? How can the group pray for you?

**2 Timothy 3:2-4** reads, *“People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God”*

This is another question may include that everyone in your group should be able to answer because it is asking for your experiences. This may also be difficult for some people to talk through because asking something very personal. Be very encouraging as your group members share with each other. We are all sinners in need of a Savior. Remember please, no snap judgments or quick fixes. And as

always, be encouraging and show grace as your group members are working through their salvation with fear and trembling (**Philippians 2:12**).

4. The bookends of Paul's sin list in **2 Timothy 3:2-4** is "Lovers of themselves" (**vs 2**) and "rather than lovers of God" (**vs 4**). How are these 2 bookends related? How do they produce all the other sins in the list?

**2 Timothy 3:2-4** reads, *"People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God"*

Some answers to this question may include that Jesus taught this very concept with a different subject opposite God. In the Sermon on the Mount in **Matthew 6:24**, Jesus says, *"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."* Lovers of self rather than lovers of God leads to all sorts of destruction. It's the love of self that leads to love of money, pride, abuse, ungratefulness, unforgiveness, slander, no self-control, brutality, treachery, conceit, and lovers of pleasure. The love of self brings a mentality that seeks pleasure all the time rather than working hard and putting others first, both of which Jesus calls us toward.

5. According to **2 Timothy 3:5**, self-centered Christians and false teachers possess outward characteristics of spiritual individuals, but reject God and the transformed life that faith produces. Why is it easy for people to be hypocrites? What can we do to prevent our faith from degrading into "a form of godliness" without God's power?

**2 Timothy 3:5** reads, *"having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people."*

Some answers to this question may include that these false teachers had the external trappings of godliness but not the real essence. The appearance of godliness includes going to church, knowing Christian doctrine, using Christian clichés, and following a community's Christian traditions. Such practices can make a person look good, but if the inner attitudes of belief, love, and worship are lacking, the outer appearance is meaningless. Paul warns us not to be deceived by people who only appear to be Christians. It may be difficult to distinguish them from true Christians at first, but their daily behavior will give them away and are unmistakable. The trap of looking righteous on the outside while remaining sinful on the inside was a constant form of contention between Jesus and the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law. He taught about this very thing in the Sermon on the Mount really hitting the points hard in **Matthew 6** when talking about giving, prayer, and fasting. He also chastised the religious leaders in **Matthew 23** for looking clean on the outside but being filthy on the inside.

6. How does Paul describe false teachers in **2 Timothy 3:6-9**?

**2 Timothy 3:6-9** reads, *"They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over gullible women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these teachers oppose the truth. They are men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected. But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone."*

Some answers may include that Paul encouraged Timothy by pointing out that the false teachers' foolishness will be clear to all. Just as he described earlier in this letter that false teachers spout lies, distort and dilute the truth, even deleting it by saying God's truth does not apply. As a teacher, Timothy helped those who were confused about the truth. Paul's advice to Timothy, and to all who teach God's truth, is to be kind and gentle, patiently and courteously explaining the truth. Good teaching never promotes quarrels or foolish arguments.

Just as a point of interest, according to tradition, Jannes and Jambres were two of the magicians who counterfeited Moses' miracles before Pharaoh in Exodus 7-8. Paul explained that just as Moses exposed and defeated them, God would overthrow the false teachers who were plaguing the Ephesian church.

7. After comparing the false teachers to the magicians who opposed Moses, Paul claims that false teachers' "folly will be clear to everyone" (**vs. 9**). How have you seen the folly of false teaching become apparent to everyone? Why does the foolishness of false teaching eventually reveal itself?

**2 Timothy 3:9** reads, *"But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone."*

Some answers may include that a person's true colors will always come out eventually. Pastor Dusty Frizzell uses the phrase, "character leaks." This is straight from Scripture! In **Matthew 12 and in Luke 6**, Jesus shares that *"A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of."* A person can only mask who they are for so long before their true identity is revealed. The shame is that they can lead so many unsuspecting, innocent people astray and bring them to ruin, especially when the wolf in sheep's clothing is malevolent and cunning. It causes very sad situations in many churches. These evil people can even fool some of the most experienced Christians for a time. But their sins will come to light eventually. Pride and love of self cannot be contained.

Remember to ask for prayer requests and close your group in prayer. Encourage one another to take steps, regardless of how small, toward Jesus and his kingdom.

## Personal Reflection & Deeper Study for this Week:

1. Each day this week, read **2 Timothy 3** in a different Bible version. You can also listen to **2 Timothy 3** in different Bible versions on the *YouVersion* Bible app.
2. Read **Colossians 1:9-14** and consider memorizing it. Also, try praying these verses each day. How do these verses encourage you? How do the verses challenge you to continue living for Jesus?
3. Read Paul's other sin lists – **Romans 1:28-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21; Colossians 3:4-10; and 1 Timothy 1:8-11**. How do these passages compare with one another? How do they compare with **2 Timothy 3:2-5**? What sins from **2 Timothy 3:2-5** are reflected in the other lists and which ones are not? Why do you think Paul includes these specific sins in **2 Timothy 3:2-5** but doesn't include certain sins from his other lists?
4. Read **Joel 2:28-32 and Acts 2:17-21**. According to these verses, what are the "last days"? When did the "last days" begin? After reading and reflecting on these verses, what are some other observations you can make about the last days?