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THE PASTORAL EPISTLES:
**“Guard the Deposit
Entrusted to You”** (2 Timothy 1)

2018–19 LCMS Circuit Bible Studies

LEADER GUIDE

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THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

A STUDY FOR DISCOVERY, MEDITATION AND CASUISTRY OF THE BROTHERS.

Every pastor strives to do as Paul exhorts Timothy, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

This series of studies has been designed to walk through the Pastoral Epistles in support of your striving toward these ends. Each study will work through these familiar texts with a search and discover mission through self-examination. To facilitate your searching and discovery in self-examination, each text will follow with a template of questions drawn and structured according to Luther’s “A Simple Way to Pray.”¹ “I divide each commandment into four parts, thereby fashioning a garland of four strands.”² These four strands are:

1. **Instruction** – What is God teaching me in these verses about the Pastoral Office and me as one called to this office? (e.g., “What have I learned ...”)
2. **Thanksgiving** - What is there in these words of God for which I get to give thanks to the Lord of the Church as I serve in the Office of the Ministry?
3. **Confession** - In light of what I have learned in these words of God, how have I fallen short in fulfilling my responsibilities in the Pastoral Office?
4. **Prayer** - Are there things I need to change/improve in fulfilling my responsibilities in the Pastoral Office?

Following the template of questions, there is an opportunity to turn what is discovered into prayer.

While this is a time of searching the Scriptures and reaffirming the Lord’s will for the Pastoral Office and those called to this Office, it is hoped that the questions will facilitate a time of casuistry among the brothers. Listening and learning according to Luther’s four strands will also hopefully foster a sharing of struggles and the mutual support and consolation of the brothers in light of God’s Word, of which we are servants and servers.

Sequence of this Series: This series begins with 2 Timothy. While this is the last of Paul’s letters, it is foundational in that it addresses the Pastoral Office more holistically, as well as the means God provides for it and the holder of that office. Second in the series will be Titus, which addresses many aspects of exercising the Pastoral Office in the context of the congregation. Lastly, the series will then look at 1 Timothy as it addresses exercising the Pastoral Office in the midst of a hostile culture and its influences on the congregation.

Leader: Work through the introduction to 2 Timothy to get an overview of the context for both Timothy and Paul. Begin the study with some overview of Paul’s second letter to Timothy.

¹ Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, eds. Gustav K. Wiencke and Helmut T. Lehmann, Vol. 43 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 193–211.
² LW 43:200.

INTRODUCTION: 2 Timothy from *Concordia Self-Study Commentary*

Second Timothy Introduction

Paul writes from prison in Rome. He has been a prisoner for some time: Onesiphorus, a Christian of Ephesus, had already sought him out and visited him in Rome (2 Ti 1:16–17). There has already been one hearing, at which Paul was deserted by all men and yet, with the Lord's help, so successfully defended himself that he "was rescued from the lion's mouth" (2 Tim 4:16–17). But Paul has no hope of ultimate acquittal; he is at the end of his course. And he is virtually alone; only Luke is with him. He longs to see "his beloved child" Timothy once more and bids him come to Rome before the winter makes travel by sea impossible (2 Ti 1:4; 4:9, 21). But he must reckon with the possibility that Timothy may not reach Rome in time; and so he must put in writing all that he hopes to tell Timothy in person if and when he arrives. The letter is thus, as Bengel has put it, Paul's "last will and testament" in which he bids Timothy preserve the apostolic Gospel pure and unchanged, guard it against the increasingly vicious attacks of false teachers, train men to transmit it faithfully, and be ready to take his own share of suffering in the propagation and defense of it. The most personal of the Pastoral Letters is therefore in a sense "official" too; for Paul cannot separate his person from his office. The man who has been "set apart for the gospel of God" (Ro 1:1) remains one with that Gospel in life and in death. Date of writing: A. D. 65–67.³

God's Grace in 2 Timothy

God's grace is the central message in all of Paul's letters — down to his last letter, 2 Timothy, composed while he was chained in prison at Rome, knowing that the end was

near. As his last will and testament, Paul again encourages Timothy to proclaim the message of God's grace, emphasizing its basic truths. This grace was given us "in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (1:9–10). "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel" (2:8), that "the elect ... may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory" (2:10), and so "we will also live with him ... we will also reign with him" (2:11–12) and will receive "the crown of righteousness" (4:8).

What an inheritance for Paul to leave to his spiritual son Timothy — the Gospel of God's grace — and for us to leave to our children!

Luther on 2 Timothy

This epistle is a farewell letter, in which St. Paul exhorts Timothy to go on propagating the gospel, even as he has begun. This is quite necessary, since there are many who fall away; and false spirits and teachers keep springing up all around. Therefore, it is incumbent upon a bishop always to be alert and to work at the gospel.

But he prophesies especially ... concerning the perilous time at the end of the world. It is then that a false spiritual life will lead all the world astray, with an outward show, under which every sort of wickedness and wrong will have its fling. Sad to say! we now see this prophecy of St. Paul all too amply fulfilled in our clergy.⁴

Leader: Read through 2 Timothy 1 with the brothers, pausing as you desire for thoughts or reflection.

READ: 2 Timothy 1:1–18

Leader: Work through the excerpts to further discussion of the text with the brothers. Encourage each to share their insights from previous study of the text.

Commentary Excerpts: 2 Timothy 1 from *Reformation Heritage Bible Commentary: Timothy / Titus / Philemon*⁵

1:3 clear conscience ... prayers night and day. This may seem like a rather arrogant thing for Paul to say. A

"clear conscience"? Isn't this the guy who persecuted the Church (Ac 9:1–2), even watched approvingly as others stoned Stephen (Ac 7:54–60)? Yes, it is Paul who used to be called Saul, but he is not the same man. Having been forgiven in Christ, the blood of Christ cleansed him and his conscience of all sin (1 Jn 1:7). A clear conscience for Paul, as for any believer, is cleared by God through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ alone. As such, Paul

³ Walter R. Roehrs and Martin H. Franzmann, *Concordia Self-Study Commentary* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1979), 2:224.

⁴ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol. 35, *Word and Sacrament I*, eds. E. Theodore Bachmann and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960), 389.

⁵ Mark W. Love, *Reformation Heritage Bible Commentary: 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon* (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 2015), 99–112.

served the Lord and His Church according to Christ's work for him, in him, and through him. While his past might have given him no cause to pray, the mercy and grace of Christ had set him free to pray constantly to the Lord for Timothy and all people. Paul knew that God's reason to listen and to answer his prayers was in Christ alone, and this made him all the more bold to pray.

1:7 a spirit. The fact that Paul refers to “a” spirit excludes this from referring to the Holy Spirit. This refers to that gift of God that orients and animates a person's life and living. In creating mankind, God oriented and animated their lives with the power of love and self-control. When sin entered the picture, all our lives were reoriented by fear: a fear that weakened love so greatly that it limited love to self and the saving of self above all else. Having been born again in Christ, Timothy, like all the baptized, is reoriented and animated to God's original created order of life with God and our neighbor. Bengel wrote, and Wesley nearly repeated these words in his own commentary: “[Power, love, and self-control] operate in us, and animate us to the discharge of our duties towards God, the saints and ourselves. Power [strength] and sober-mindedness are the two extremes, but these in a good sense; love is in the middle, and is the bond, and as it were the check upon both, taking away ... the two bad extremes, timidity and rashness.” (Bengel 4:292)

1:8 the testimony. Here, Paul uses a form of shorthand to refer to the full witness to the Lord Jesus Christ as the Scriptures testify of Him, and as Paul and other faithful preachers bear witness to Him from those Scriptures. This word “testimony” is well chosen, for it identifies exactly what a witness gives to a jury. A true witness offers testimony only to what they actually witnessed. A preacher, teacher, or evangelist in service to Christ is to testify to Him, but only according to what they witnessed of Him in His Word. Any testimony offered only from personal experience would be a witness of self and not of Christ. If it is not rooted in the Word of God, it does not bear the Gospel, and it does not bear God's promise that it will work, feed, or build another person's faith.

1:8 share in suffering for the gospel. The term “suffering” has a broad usage and meaning. Paul is more pointed, calling Timothy to be willing to share in, or accept, the same disgrace that Paul was dealing with for being faithful to the Gospel testimony. Paul was not ashamed of this testimony (the Gospel) because “it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Rm 1:16), and it is at work in the hearts and lives of all believers

(1 Th 2:13). Any disgrace the believer faces comes from those who have no grace: from sinful mankind. Our faith is in the God of all grace, who is not ashamed to be called our God (Heb 11:16), and it is He who enabled Paul and us today to suffer whatever may come, and to live by the uninterrupted favor and victory of Christ.

1:9 who ... called us to a holy calling. This refers to the Holy God who saved every person of every time through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (objective justification), using His Holy Word spoken to us to give us the holiness of Christ through His gift of faith. This speaking of His Holy Word is not an exercise of omnipotence, but a free giving of divine love, mercy, and grace to all who receive it. It is referred to as a “calling” because prior to hearing these words, we are spiritually dead, and it is through these words that we are made alive in Christ (Eph 2:5). When Jesus raised His friend Lazarus from the dead, He called him from death to life (Jn 11:43). So in speaking the Holy Gospel to us, the Holy Spirit calls us and sanctifies us through faith (subjective justification). This calling is not irresistible; sadly many do reject it — to their own destruction. This holy calling is lived out in the life of each believer in the various vocational callings the Lord has brought to us.

1:11 preacher ... apostle ... teacher. Paul identifies not so much his titles as his responsibilities according to God's appointment. Each title, though it is a noun, arises from a verb; these were the divine appointed activities that God had given Paul. It is important to note the sequencing of these titles. Notice that “apostle,” though it would seem to be the highest office, isn't set first. Paul places it between the two primary tasks of Timothy, and of every pastor: preaching and teaching. This was Paul's way of affirming that in their appointed service to the Lord, and the suffering that may come because of it, he and Timothy were on the same level. Paul doesn't do this as a gesture of self-abasement, but as a confession that, according to the appointment of God, they together were arm in arm in service of the Gospel.

1:13 able to guard ... entrusted to me. Paul is referring to the Gospel ministry that had been entrusted to his service by God's calling of him to serve as a preacher, apostle, and teacher (v. 11). Because the Gospel ministry is God's work, Paul knew that it was not his, nor was it dependent upon him. It is God's to guard and perpetuate. Paul knew himself to be a sinner who needed constant rescue (Rm 7:15–25), yet God chose to call such a sinner into His service and entrusted him with the Gospel. As such, God “guarded” the Gospel and this ministry in

such a way that He worked through this forgiven sinner to further His desire that all people be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tm 2:4). Paul knows that he is about to die and knows that God guarded the Gospel while entrusted to him, and He will continue to guard it in the hands of those who will follow after him in the pastoral office. Timothy is one of those in whom and through whom God was guarding the Gospel ministry. To this day, God is still guarding the Gospel ministry that He has given to the Church and entrusted into the hands of those He still continues to call into the pastoral ministry.

1:14 guard the good deposit. Paul here reminds Timothy that as the Gospel ministry was still entrusted to Paul, it is also entrusted to Timothy as God's called pastor. The only means by which Timothy or any pastor can rightly "guard" the Gospel, or the Gospel ministry, is by proclaiming the Gospel in all its fullness and following the pattern of practice that it lays out for the salvation of all. Like the Word of God, because it is living and active, the Gospel fully taught, believed, and trusted is its best defense. The ministry of the Gospel is the proclamation of all God's Word, which has two words: the Law (what I must do or be condemned) and Gospel (all Christ has done according to the Law because I could not, to save me). See exposition of 1 Tm 6:20.

CITATIONS: 2 Timothy 1 in Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation⁶

Leader: The following citations are taken from the 2017 Catechism and further serve to explore and examine the text under review. Discuss how the citations address the question and support its answer.

2 Timothy 1:8:

213. What are some other outward indications that the Church is present?

Such things as gatherings for prayer and worship, the fruits of faith, and suffering for Christ also serve as good outward indications that the Church is present without guaranteeing it. The Church also uses the Office of the Keys to rebuke and to forgive sins, as well as to consecrate ministers to preach and teach on behalf of all.

713 **John 13:35** By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

714 **1 Peter 2:21** For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in His steps.

715 **2 Timothy 1:8** Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God.

716 **Acts 2:42–43** And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came

upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.

717 **Hebrews 10:24–25** And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

718 **Romans 12:14** Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.⁷

2 Timothy 1:10:

159. Why is it so important for us as sinners that the Son of God has become our Brother?

As our Brother, ...

C. Jesus overcame death so that we, too, can be raised from death.

500 **1 Corinthians 15:57** But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

501 **2 Timothy 1:10** Christ Jesus ... abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

502 **1 Corinthians 15:20** But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.⁸

⁶ Martin Luther, *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 2017).

⁷ Luther, *Small Catechism*, 215.

⁸ Luther, *Small Catechism*, 171–72.

168. How did Jesus rescue me from death?

He put death to death by His own death and resurrection.

550 **Hebrews 2:14–15** Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

551 **1 Corinthians 15:54–57** When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

552 **2 Timothy 1:10** Our Savior Christ Jesus ... abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.⁹

2 Timothy 1:12:

149. Why do I confess that Jesus Christ is my Lord?

Jesus has given me eternal life and taken me under His eternal care and protection (see LC II 30).

465 **John 3:36** Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

466 **John 17:3–5** And this is eternal life, that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I glorified You on earth, having accomplished the work that You gave Me to do. And now, Father, glorify Me in Your own presence with the glory that I had with You before the world existed.

467 **2 Timothy 1:12** I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that He is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.¹⁰

FOR REFLECTION & MEDITATION

Leader: At this point, use the questions to walk back through the text to glean answers. Note that there may not be an answer to every question and responses will vary due to each brother being in a different place in their pastoral ministry. Encourage the brothers to write down their own answers to these and share them as they feel comfortable.

What is God teaching?

1. What is God teaching me in these verses about the Pastoral Office, and about me as one called to this office?
 - a. About Himself – Father/Son/Holy Spirit?
 - › About His work?
 - › About His promises/gifts?
 - b. About me/others?
 - › What have I been given?
 - › What I am suppose to do/not do?
 - › How am I to do what is given me to do?
 - c. About faith/belief/unbelief/doubt?
 - › What is it that I am given to trust in about myself?
 - › What is it that I am given to trust in as I serve in the Pastoral Office?

d. About the Pastoral Office?

e. About the congregation I serve?

f. About engaging the communities (civil/cultures) in which I serve?

Praying God's Word

Lord of the Church, grant that I may be mindful of ...

Thanksgiving

2. What has the Lord told me for which I can give thanks to the Lord of the Church as I serve in the Office of the Ministry?

Praying God's Word

Lord of the Church, I thank you for ...

Reflection and Repentance

3. In light of what I have learned, how have I fallen short in fulfilling my responsibilities in the Pastoral Office?

⁹ Luther, *Small Catechism*, 181.

¹⁰ Luther, *Small Catechism*, 165–66.

- a. Is there something God would have me to do that I have failed to do?
- b. Is there something God would not have me do that I have done anyway?

Leader: Here is where the gleanings are turned into prayer and praise. This part of the study may be left to the brothers to do privately. It would be a blessing to ask the brothers to share something from their lists that could be included in a final prayer to close the time of study.

Praying God's Word

Lord of the Church, I confess to You that ...

Petitions in Prayer

- 4. In all that I have learned, what needs to change/improve in fulfilling my responsibilities in the Pastoral Office?
 - a. What and/or How ...
 - › I have been thinking, saying or doing that I need to change/improve?
 - › I have been thinking, saying or doing that I am able to rejoice in doing well?

Praying God's Word

Lord of the Church, grant the work of Your Holy Spirit that I may ...

“This the Spirit will grant us and continually instruct us in when, by God’s word, our hearts have been cleared and freed of outside thoughts and concerns.”¹¹ May it ever be so Lord! Amen.

¹¹ LW 43:209.