
LOVING JESUS, LOVING PEOPLE, PLOWING A COUNTER-CULTURE

TEXT: 2 Timothy 4:9–22

MAIN IDEA: It doesn't just matter how you start; it matters how you finish.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- **Welcome to the fall 2025 season of Community Groups!** We hope you had a great summer and are ready to dive into an incredible ministry year as we join the Lord in his work of bringing the gospel to northern New Jersey! We especially want to welcome you if this is your first time in a Community Group. It's great that you have taken the step to surround yourself with people who love you and care about your walk with Jesus. You're in the right place!
- **Praise God for all the amazing ways he worked at Church Outside!** Between the two services, we hosted about 5,000 people and saw 115 baptized. And none of this would have been possible without the more than 400 volunteer spots that were filled.
- Aside from Community Groups, the other big way we do discipleship at our church is through serving. Not only do we worship Jesus through singing, prayer, the preaching of the Word of God, and giving, but we also worship by serving one another and making sure that everyone who comes is blessed by being among God's people. **If you're looking to serve**, one way to have an incredible impact is in our children's ministry—**eTown** for birth through 2nd grade, as well as **3rd and 45th Street**, for 3rd–5th grade. You can sign up for more info by selecting the "serve" option under the "connect" drop-down menu on our website (emergence.church).
- Calling all families with children 5 years old or younger! We will be having a **Family Dedication service on October 23 and 26**. This is where families have the opportunity to formally pledge to raise their kids to know and love Jesus, and where we, as a church, commit to come alongside them to share that awesome privilege with them. Sign up on the Digital Bulletin.
- Our Student Ministry's Winter Retreat is happening this year from February 20–22 (okay, I guess that's next year :-/). This winter, we'll be rocking out at High Point Bible Camp in Pennsylvania. This is a great way for our teens to connect with each other, their leaders, and the Lord. Sign up on the Digital Bulletin.

GETTING STARTED:

- Watch this week's Community Extras Video.
- **Optional Icebreaker:** What was the best thing you did this Summer?

We've been in 1 and 2 Timothy since mid-May. These are letters written by the Apostle Paul to his protégé, a younger pastor named Timothy, who had planted several churches with Paul and was then appointed to pastor the church in the important city of Ephesus. Paul has covered a lot of ground in these letters, including some practical instructions about how to oppose false teaching,

how churches should function, who should lead, how to discern who should receive material support from the church, and who should not. Of the thirteen letters written by Paul in the New Testament, 2 Timothy is probably his last, composed by him while in prison in Rome, knowing that his death is near. Accordingly, Paul turns his attention to encourage Timothy to continue the good fight after he is gone. This week, as we wrap up the series, we see Paul's final words to his beloved son in the faith.

Read 2 Timothy 4:9–15.

In the sermon, Ryan drew lessons from five individuals mentioned in the closing words of 2 Timothy: Timothy, Demas, Mark, Alexander, and Paul himself. Each person represents a different kind of life, marked by how they start and how they finish, either positive or negative.

Timothy: Positive to Positive

Read verse 9.

For two letters, Paul has been writing to Timothy, and now he gives him a very specific instruction: “Do your best to come to me soon.” So, it's only right that we start with him. Timothy has what Ryan likes to call a boring testimony. As far as we know, there is no dark background or shocking world of sin that he left behind after God radically changed him. Instead, he was already a disciple when Paul first met him in Lystra. His father was not a Christian, but his mother and grandmother were, and they had brought him up in the faith (Acts 16:1–2; 2 Tim 1:5). Although he's experienced some setbacks and discouragements, Timothy lived consistently as a faithful disciple, and one of Paul's most trusted coworkers.

By the way, we are speaking tongue-in-cheek when we call this a boring testimony. As we always say, we love boring testimonies! We should praise God whenever someone experiences new life at a young age and has a consistent walk with Christ.

☺ What are some of the common challenges that someone with a Christian upbringing encounters as they mature in life?

Demas: Positive to Negative

Read verse 10.

We don't know much about Demas, except that earlier in Paul's ministry, he is listed alongside other trustworthy companions such as Aristarchus, Luke, and John Mark (Col. 4:10, 14; Phlm 24). Here, however, we learn that he has deserted Paul because he is “in love with this present world” (v. 10).

Read John 3:16 and 1 John 2:15–17

🧠 When we compare these passages, we see that there are different kinds of love for the world. What is the difference between the good kind that God has (John 3:16) and the destructive kind that we are warned about?

Read Luke 8:4–8 and 9–15.

☺ In the sermon, Ryan said that Demas' heart was either the second or the third kind of soil, where the seed starts well but fails because of trials (the rocky soil, v. 13) or because of "the cares and riches and pleasures of life" (the thorny soil, v. 14). What trials, cares, riches, and pleasures are present in your life, and what is the appropriate way to guard yourself from being destroyed by them?

Mark: Positive to Negative to Positive

Read verse 11.

This is likely the individual whom Luke calls "John whose other name was Mark" (hence, John Mark), the cousin of Barnabas, who is probably the author of the Gospel of Mark. For reasons that are not clear, Mark left Paul and returned to Jerusalem during his first missionary journey (Acts 13:13). Because of this, Paul refused to take him on the second, splitting with Barnabas, who wanted to take Mark (15:36–40). There is no indication that this had anything to do with either a moral failing or a theological disagreement. Rather, it seems to have been due to a misalignment of skills, ability, vision, or attitude that Paul strongly insisted on not bringing Mark. However, in some of Paul's later letters, we see that he and John Mark had reconciled and were once again working together (Col 4:10; Phlm 24).

Leaders: It was common for Jewish people in the first century to have both a Jewish name (John) and a Greek name (Mark).

🧠 What are some reasons that don't have to do with sin that would give Christians a good reason to separate from one another?

☺ In this kind of situation, what advice would you have for ensuring that such differences do not result in disunity, grudges, gossip, and slander in the body of Christ?

Leaders: Ryan encouraged us never to burn bridges. That is, we should never separate from one another in a way that would make it overly difficult to come back together in the future. What other suggestions does your group have?

Alexander: Negative to Negative

Read verses 14 and 15.

We don't know much about Alexander the coppersmith. He may be the same Alexander mentioned along with Hymenaeus in 1 Timothy 1:20, whom Paul says, he had "handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme." There is no known good track record to speak of. Thus, Alexander seems to be a Negative-Negative.

🧠 Between what Paul says here and what he says in 1 Timothy 1:20, what can you glean about how to deal with people who simply hate God and have no interest in the truth?



Does this mean that such people should be written off as a lost cause? Why or why not?



Is there someone in your life who hates God and you have written off as a lost cause?

Leaders: It's unlikely that someone would admit this. But try to get people to see that our choices can effectively write certain people off, even if we don't think of it this way.

Paul: Negative to Positive

Read verses 16–18.

As an extremely zealous Pharisee, Paul was one of the first persecutors of the church (Acts 8:3). He includes a lot of autobiographical information in his letters. It is clear that, though he was thoroughly transformed by the grace of God in Christ, he never forgot where he came from or what God had saved him from (1 Cor 15:9; Phil 3:6).



What are the benefits of always being mindful of the sin God saved you from?



What is Paul's attitude towards Christians who disappointed him in verses 16–18, and what situations in your life can you apply this to?

PRAYER TIME

Praise God for working so powerfully at Church Outside, and pray for those who were baptized there as a result of hearing the gospel.

Pray that, however you started in your walk with Jesus, God would give you everything and everyone you need to finish strong.

Pray for someone in your life who right now is a “negative” in terms of their relationship with God.