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LifeChange
S E R I E S

A NavPress Bible study on the book of
2 TIMOTHY

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SERIES EDITOR: KAREN LEE-THORP

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Objectives

Each guide in the LIFECHANGE series of Bible studies covers one book of the Bible. Although the LIFECHANGE guides vary with the individual books they explore, they share some common goals:

1. To provide you with a firm foundation of understanding and a thirst to return to the book;
2. To teach you by example how to study a book of the Bible without structured guides;
3. To give you all the historical background, word definitions, and explanatory notes you need, so that your only other reference is the Bible;
4. To help you grasp the message of the book as a whole;
5. To teach you how to let God's Word transform you into Christ's image.

Each lesson in this study is designed to take 60 to 90 minutes to complete on your own. The guide is based on the assumption that you are completing one lesson per week, but if time is limited you can do half a lesson per week or whatever amount allows you to be thorough.

Flexibility

LIFECHANGE guides are flexible, allowing you to adjust the quantity and depth of your study to meet your individual needs. The guide offers many optional questions in addition to the regular numbered questions. The optional questions, which appear in the margins of the study pages, include the following:

Optional Application. Nearly all application questions are optional; we hope you will do as many as you can without overcommitting yourself.

For Thought and Discussion. Beginning Bible students should be able to handle these, but even advanced students need to think about them. These questions frequently deal with ethical issues and other biblical principles. They often offer cross-references to spark thought, but the references do not give

obvious answers. They are good for group discussions.

For Further Study. These include: a) cross-references that shed light on a topic the book discusses, and b) questions that delve deeper into the passage. You can omit them to shorten a lesson without missing a major point of the passage.

(Note: At the end of lessons two through eight you are given the option of outlining the passage just studied. Although the outline is optional, you will probably find it worthwhile.)

If you are meeting in a group, decide together which optional questions to prepare for each lesson, and how much of the lesson you will cover at the next meeting. Normally, the group leader should make this decision, but you might let each member choose his or her own application questions.

As you grow in your walk with God, you will find the LIFECHANGE guide growing with you—a helpful reference on a topic, a continuing challenge for application, a source of questions for many levels of growth.

Overview and Details

The guide begins with an overview of the book. The key to interpretation is context—what is the whole passage or book *about*?—and the key to context is purpose—what is the author's *aim* for the whole work? In lesson one you will lay the foundation for your study by asking yourself, Why did the author (and God) write the book? What did they want to accomplish? What is the book about?

Then, in lesson two, you will begin analyzing successive passages in detail. Thinking about how a paragraph fits into the overall goal of the book will help you to see its purpose. Its purpose will help you see its meaning. Frequently reviewing a chart or outline of the book will enable you to make these connections.

Finally, in the last lesson, you will review the whole book, returning to the big picture to see whether your view of it has changed after closer study. Review will also strengthen your grasp of major issues and give you an idea of how you have grown from your study.

Kinds of Questions

Bible study on your own—without a structured guide—follows a progression. First you observe: What does the passage *say*? Then you interpret: What does the passage *mean*? Lastly you apply: How does this truth affect my life?

Some of the “how” and “why” questions will take some creative thinking, even prayer, to answer. Some are opinion questions without clearcut right answers; these will lend themselves to discussions and side studies.

Don't let your study become an exercise of knowledge alone. Treat the passage as God's Word, and stay in dialogue with Him as you study. Pray, “Lord, what do you want me to see here?” “Father, why is this true?” “Lord, how does this apply to my life?”

It is important that you write down your answers. The act of writing clarifies

your thinking and helps you to remember.

Meditating on verses is an option in several lessons. Its purpose is to let biblical truth sink into your inner convictions so that you will increasingly be able to act on this truth as a natural way of life. You may want to find a quiet place to spend five minutes each day repeating the verse(s) to yourself. Think about what each word, phrase, and sentence means to you. At intervals throughout the rest of the day, remind yourself of the verse(s).

Study Aids

A list of reference materials, including a few notes of explanation to help you make good use of them, begins on page 81. This guide is designed to include enough background to let you interpret with just your Bible and the guide. Still, if you want more information on a subject or want to study a book on your own, try the references listed.

Scripture Versions

Unless otherwise indicated, the Bible quotations in this guide are from the New International Version of the Bible. Other versions cited are the Revised Standard Version (RSV), the New American Standard Bible (NASB), and the King James Version (KJV).

Use any translation you like for study, preferably more than one. A paraphrase such as The Living Bible is not accurate enough for study, but it can be helpful for comparison or devotional reading.

Memorizing and Meditating

A Psalmist wrote, “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:11). If you write down a verse or passage that challenges or encourages you, and reflect on it often for a week or more, you will find it beginning to affect your motives and actions. We forget quickly what we read once; we remember what we ponder.

When you find a significant verse or passage, you might copy it onto a card to keep with you. Set aside five minutes during each day just to think about what the passage might mean in your life. Recite it over to yourself, exploring its meaning. Then, return to your passage as often as you can during your day, for a brief review. You will soon find it coming to mind spontaneously.

For Group Study

A group of four to ten people allows the richest discussions, but you can adapt this guide for other sized groups. It will suit a wide range of group types, such as home Bible studies, growth groups, youth groups, and businessmen's studies.

Both new and experienced Bible students, and new and mature Christians, will benefit from the guide. You can omit or leave for later years any questions you find too easy or too hard.

The guide is intended to lead a group through one lesson per week. However, feel free to split lessons if you want to discuss them more thoroughly. Or, omit some questions in a lesson if preparation or discussion time is limited. You can always return to this guide for personal study later. You will be able to discuss only a few questions at length, so choose some for discussion and others for background. Make time at each discussion for members to ask about anything they didn't understand.

Each lesson in the guide ends with a section called "For the group." These sections give advice on how to focus a discussion, how you might apply the lesson in your group, how you might shorten a lesson, and so on. The group leader should read each "For the group" at least a week ahead so that he or she can tell the group how to prepare for the next lesson.

Each member should prepare for a meeting by writing answers for all the background and discussion questions to be covered. If the group decides not to take an hour per week for private preparation, then expect to take at least two meetings per lesson to work through the questions. Application will be very difficult, however, without private thought and prayer.

Two reasons for studying in a group are accountability and support. When each member commits in front of the rest to seek growth in an area of life, you can pray with one another, listen jointly for God's guidance, help one another to resist temptation, assure each other that the other's growth matters to you, use the group to practice spiritual principles, and so on. Pray about one another's commitments and needs at most meetings. Spend the first few minutes of each meeting sharing any results from applications prompted by previous lessons. Then discuss new applications toward the end of the meeting. Follow such sharing with prayer for these and other needs.

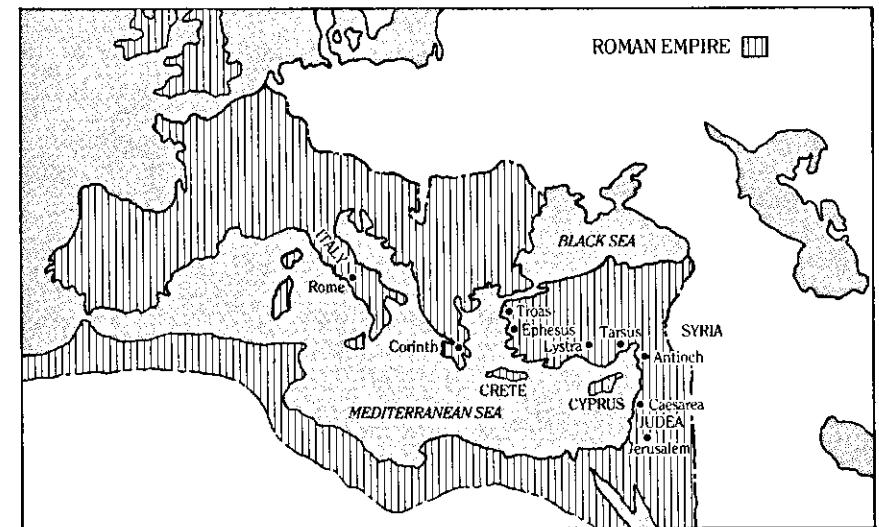
If you write down each other's applications and prayer requests, you are more likely to remember to pray for them during the week, ask about them at the next meeting, and notice answered prayers. You might want to get a notebook for prayer requests and discussion notes.

Notes taken during discussion will help you to remember, follow up on ideas, stay on the subject, and clarify a total view of an issue. But don't let note-taking keep you from participating. Some groups choose one member at each meeting to take notes. Then someone copies the notes and distributes them at the next meeting. Rotating these tasks can help include people. Some groups have someone take notes on a large pad of paper or erasable marker board (preformed shower wallboard works well), so that everyone can see what has been recorded.

Page 83 lists some good sources of counsel for leading group studies. The *Small Group Letter*, published by NavPress, is unique, offering insights from experienced leaders each month.

BACKGROUND

Paul and Timothy



When Paul wrote the letter we call 2 Timothy, he was an old man in a Roman prison. This man who had been Christ's greatest missionary for thirty years was now chained to a Roman guard at all times and awaited a death sentence from the emperor.

Timothy may have been in Ephesus, but in whatever city, he was carrying on the ministry Paul had begun but could not continue. Timothy had been working with Paul for over fifteen years, but now the apostle was departing for good. This charge Timothy received is the last of Paul's writings that remains to us.

Timeline of Paul's Ministry

(All dates are approximate, based on F.F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, page 475.)

Public ministry of Jesus	28-30 AD
Conversion of Paul (Acts 9:1-19)	33
Paul visits Jerusalem to see Peter (Galatians 1:18)	35
Paul in Cilicia and Syria (Galatians 1:21, Acts 9:30)	35-46
Paul visits Jerusalem to clarify the mission to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:1-10)	46
Paul and Barnabas in Cyprus and Galatia (Acts 13-14)	47-48
<i>Letter to the Galatians</i>	48?
Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15)	49
Paul and Silas travel from Antioch to Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Achaia (Acts 16-17)	49-50
<i>Letters to the Thessalonians</i>	50
Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:1-18)	50-52
Paul visits Jerusalem	52
Paul in Ephesus (Acts 19)	52-55
<i>Letters to the Corinthians</i>	55-56
Paul travels to Macedonia, Dalmatia, and Achaia (Acts 20)	55-57
<i>Letter to the Romans</i>	early 57
Paul to Jerusalem (Acts 21:1-23:22)	May 57
Paul imprisoned in Caesarea (Acts 23:23-26:32)	57-59
Paul sent to house arrest in Rome (Acts 27:1-28:31)	59-62
<i>Letters to Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians, Philemon</i>	60?-62
<i>Letters to Timothy and Titus</i>	?
Paul executed in Rome	65?

Saul the Pharisee

Paul was born in the first decade AD in Tarsus, a small but prosperous city on the trade route from Syria to Asia Minor. Tarsus was known for its schools of philosophy and liberal arts, and some scholars believe Paul must have had some contact with these. Like most cities in the Empire, Tarsus probably contained synagogues of Greek-speaking Jews who were often as devout as their Hebrew-speaking brethren.¹

However, in Philippians 3:5, Paul calls himself “a Hebrew of Hebrews,” which probably means that his parents spoke Hebrew and raised him in a strict Jewish home, isolated as much as possible from the pagan city around them.² They named their boy “Saul” after Israel’s first king, for the family belonged to King Saul’s tribe of Benjamin (Philippians 3:5). They must have owned property and had some importance in the community, for Saul was born not only a citizen of Tarsus (Acts 21:39) but also a citizen of Rome (Acts 22:27-28).³

Saul was sent to study Jewish law in Jerusalem under the foremost rabbi of his day, the Pharisee Gamaliel (Acts 22:3, Galatians 1:14). The word *Pharisee* comes from a Hebrew word meaning “the separated ones,” for the Pharisees felt God had set them apart to live by the Law of Moses. Some Pharisees held that a man was righteous if he had done more good than bad, but Saul evidently followed the stricter group that insisted that every least implication of the law must be kept.⁴

The Pharisees expected a *Messiah* (Hebrew for “Anointed One”; Greek: *Christ*), who would deliver them from foreign oppression and rule with justice. However, Jesus of Nazareth had scandalized many Pharisees by interpreting the Law differently and claiming a special relationship with God. Thus, when some Jews began to proclaim Jesus as Messiah and Lord (a term usually reserved for God), strict Pharisees opposed them furiously.

Saul helped to lead the fight against the proclaimers of Christ in Jerusalem (Acts 7:58-8:3, Galatians 1:13). When some were driven out, Saul obtained permission to pursue them to Damascus. But on the way there, Jesus confronted Saul in a blinding encounter (Acts 9:1-19), revealing to Saul that he was persecuting the very God he professed to worship. Saul’s life now turned from Pharisaic observance of God’s Law to a devoted obedience to Jesus Christ, the revealed Messiah. He joined the Jews who were urging other Jews to believe in Jesus, and shortly thereafter God called him to proclaim Jesus as Savior to Gentiles (non-Jews) also. Saul took the Greek name Paul when he turned to work among Gentiles.

Paul the missionary

Paul’s conversion may have marked his first move outward from cloistered Judaism into pagan culture. He spent ten years in Cilicia and Syria (Galatians 1:21), probably preaching Jesus along with Greek-speaking Jewish Christians. Then Barnabas called Paul from Tarsus to Syrian Antioch, where by this time the church was more Gentile than Jewish.⁵

Eventually, the church in Antioch commissioned Paul and Barnabas to evangelize Cyprus and Galatia. The two men traveled from Syrian Antioch to Cyprus, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, and then back to Syrian Antioch (Acts 13:1-14:28, 2 Timothy 3:11). In Lystra they were nearly murdered by a mob, but they made some converts, among whom were a Jewish woman named Lois, her daughter Eunice, and Eunice's son Timothy.

Timothy

Since children of Jewish mothers are reckoned as Jews, Timothy could have been a full Jew. No doubt his Gentile neighbors regarded him so, and his mother raised him to know the Jewish Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:15). But Timothy's father was a Greek, and because of him Timothy had never been circumcised (Acts 16:1-3). Thus, despite his mother's lineage and his training in the Scriptures, Timothy was a Gentile in the eyes of Jews. His may have been a hard childhood for a sensitive boy, excluded by Gentiles for his Jewishness and by Jews for his uncircumcision.

But when he, his mother, and his grandmother became Christians, Timothy suddenly belonged to a group of people who didn't care whether or not he was a Jew. He belonged to people who shared together their neighbors' rejection and their Lord's promises. Timothy apparently flourished in his new identity, so that even Christians in Iconium, eighteen miles away, "spoke well of him" (Acts 16:2). When Paul returned to the churches he had planted in Galatia two years later, he resolved to take this impressive young disciple with him.

Timothy commissioned

Paul had another young man with him named Titus, a full Greek. Paul had not even considered circumcising Titus, for he felt strongly that the Jewish ritual law was not binding upon Christians (Galatians 2:3-5). But because Timothy was neither Jew nor Gentile, Paul decided that Timothy would be a more effective evangelist as a full Jew (Acts 16:3). Since circumcision was neither good nor bad to Paul (1 Corinthians 7:17-20), he chose to do what seemed most expedient for the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:19-23) and circumcised Timothy.

Before Paul left Timothy's home town, he also had the local elders lay hands on the young man to set him apart for his new ministry (1 Timothy 4:14, 2 Timothy 1:6).

Travels

Timothy accompanied Paul through Asia to Macedonia and Achaia (Acts 16:6-19:21), surviving riots, prison, and a criminal trial. During six years of traveling, Timothy learned enough to be trusted with a delicate mission to

Corinth, where factions and immorality were splitting the church (1 Corinthians 4:17).

Paul rejoined Timothy in Macedonia and traveled to Jerusalem, where Paul was arrested. As a Roman citizen, he appealed for a trial before the emperor, probably hoping to have Christianity officially declared a legal religion.⁶ At this point, Timothy ceases to appear in the book of Acts; he may have gone on to strengthen the churches Paul's group had founded. When Paul wrote 1 Timothy, the young man was in Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3).

Final days

Paul was probably released from his first imprisonment in Rome in 62 AD but was rearrested sometime later, perhaps in 65. He wrote 2 Timothy during this second imprisonment. Formerly he had been treated as a political prisoner, but now he was treated as a criminal. This time he was not simply restricted to a private house but locked in a dungeon and chained to a wall or a soldier.

Emperor Nero had his reasons for this change. Back in 60-62 AD when Paul was in Rome the first time, the Empire had been running well and Nero had been popular, for he had been leaving affairs of government to some gifted advisors. But between 62 and 65 Nero had replaced his competent servants and had begun to plunder the Empire to pay for his pleasures. The provinces—especially Judah—were groaning under his taxes, the economy was slumping, and Nero was in trouble with the Roman Senate for his murdering, licentious lifestyle. When a fire broke out in Rome in 64, Nero was suspected of arson. He found a scapegoat in an unpopular religious sect; Christians in the city were rounded up and thrown to animals—officially to pay for setting the fire but really to satisfy Nero's blood lust. The Roman people soon grew disgusted at this persecution, but it was unsafe to be a Christian in Rome as long as Nero lived, for he continued to need scapegoats for his crimes.

Thus, when Paul was rearrested, he became another pawn in Nero's game to survive politically. Paul wrote 2 Timothy from his dungeon cell shortly before he was executed.⁷

1. A. T. Robertson, "Paul, the Apostle," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, volume 4 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), page 2276.
2. F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), pages 41-43.
3. Bruce, pages 32-40.
4. Bruce, pages 50-51.
5. Bruce, pages 127-133.
6. Bruce, pages 443-444.
7. Josephus, *Antiquities*, 20.8.2; Josephus, *Wars*, 2.7.8; S. Angus, "Nero," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, volume 4, pages 2134-2138.

LESSON ONE

OVERVIEW

Second Timothy is at once two extraordinary things: it is the last preserved words of one of the Church's greatest men; and it is God's Word to us, revealing who He is, who we are in Him, and what He desires from us. For the moment, take it as a letter from a man to his trusted friend. Approach it as you would a letter to yourself, not stopping to wrestle with individual phrases, but looking for the overall message.

First Impressions

1. Read 2 Timothy at one sitting. How would you describe the *mood* (tone, emotion) Paul conveys? In other words, what seem to be Paul's attitudes or feelings toward his subject matter and toward Timothy? (Is Paul formal, intimate, angry, joyful . . . ?) If you think his mood changes, note where and how it changes.

For Thought and Discussion: In this letter, is Paul primarily teaching doctrine, exhorting, rebuking . . . ?

For Thought and Discussion: What impresses you most about Paul as a person in this letter?

2. Repetition is a clue to the ideas that are most important in a book. What words and ideas are repeated in each of the following sets of verses?

1:3,4,5,6 _____

1:8,12; 2:3,9; 3:11,12 _____

1:8,12,16 _____

1:11; 2:2; 3:10,16; 4:2 _____

other _____

Study Skill—Cross-references

Other passages of Scripture can often shed light on the passage you are studying. These other passages are called *cross-references*.

3. What background information do you learn from the following verses concerning . . .

Timothy (1:5, 3:15)? _____

how Paul feels about Timothy (1:2-4, 4:21)?

Paul's circumstances (1:8,12,15-18; 4:6-18)?

Paul's feelings about Timothy, as shown in an earlier letter to a church (Philippians 2:19-22)?

Broad outline

If your impression of 2 Timothy is vague after one reading, a broad outline can help sharpen it.

Study Skill—Different Versions

The more times you read a book of the Bible, the better your understanding of it will be. Reading a different translation can help you notice new things and can make a confusing passage clearer.

4. Reread 2 Timothy, preferably in a different version. This time, think of a short phrase or sentence that can serve as a title for each paragraph. It may help you to include key words from the paragraph. Write your title below.

(There is no one right answer; the first title is given as an example. Your Bible's paragraph divisions may differ, so feel free to alter those given here.)

1:1-2 Apostle to Son

1:3-18 _____

2:1-13 _____

2:14-26 _____

3:1-9 _____

3:10-17 _____

4:1-8 _____

4:9-18 _____

4:19-22 _____

Theme/purpose

People usually write letters in response to a particular situation in their own or their readers' lives. They normally have reasons for choosing the topics they cover in their letters. Although it is often not possible to reconstruct the exact circumstances that prompted a letter, any insight in this area will help us to understand the writer's message.

Our own purpose for studying the letter will often differ from its original purpose, but how we understand and apply a writer's words should be influenced by how he and the Holy Spirit meant them to be understood and applied in the first century.

5. From your first readings of 2 Timothy, what seem to be Paul's chief aims in writing this letter?

6. If you have not already done so, read the historical background on pages 9-13. If you feel that additional background information would help you to better interpret Paul's letter, you might write down your questions here. Some of your questions may be answered later in this study guide. The sources on pages 81-85 may help you answer others.

7. Your overview of 2 Timothy may have suggested questions you'd like answered as you go deeper into the book. If so, jot them down now while your thoughts are still fresh. Your questions can serve as personal objectives for your further investigation of the letter.

Study Skill—Application

The last step of Bible study is asking yourself, "What difference should this passage make in my life? How should it make me want to think or act?" Application will require time,

(continued on page 20)

Optional

Application: Choose one of the exhortations Paul gives to Timothy in this letter. Meditate on it during the coming week, and explore how you might apply it to yourself. (Read about meditating on page 7.)

Optional

Application: a. How are you like and unlike Paul in this letter? How would you like to be more like him?

b. For the next week, ask God daily to make you more like Paul in this way. How would having this quality affect your actions?

(continued from page 19)
thought, prayer, and perhaps even discussion with another person.

At times, you may find it most productive to concentrate on one specific application, giving it careful thought and prayer. At other times you may want to list many implications a passage of Scripture has for your life, and then choose one to concentrate on for prayer and action. Use whatever method helps you to remember application when you finish your study time.

8. From what you have read so far, do Paul's words seem to apply to any areas of your life? If so, what are some of those areas?

For the group

This "For the group" section and the ones in later lessons are intended to suggest ways of structuring your discussions. Feel free to select what suits your group. The main goals of this lesson are to get to know 2 Timothy as a whole and to get to know the people with whom you are going to study it.

Worship. Some groups like to begin with prayer and/or singing. Some share requests for prayer at the beginning but leave the actual prayer until after the study. Others prefer just to chat and have refreshments for a while and then move to the study, leaving worship until the end.

Warm-up. The beginning of a new study is a good time to lay a foundation for honest sharing of ideas, to get comfortable with each other, and to encourage a sense of common purpose. One way to establish common ground is to talk about what each

group member hopes to get out of your group—out of your study of 2 Timothy, and out of any prayer, singing, sharing, outreach, or anything else you might do together. If you have someone write down each member's hopes and expectations, then you can look back at these goals later to see if they are being met. Allow about fifteen to thirty minutes for this discussion.

Reading. It is often helpful to refresh everyone's memory by reading the book aloud before discussing your overview. Second Timothy should take about fifteen minutes to read. Have a different person read each chapter, asking those people to read with the tone or mood they think Paul was trying to convey, so that the letter sounds like the work of a living person.

First impressions. Ask the group to share first impressions of 2 Timothy—its style, mood, content, and so on. If members don't understand the question, you might ask them how Paul's letter is like and unlike letters they write, or like and unlike a sermon, a graduation speech, or advice from a father. The point of question 1 is to help the group see 2 Timothy as a real letter from one person to another person for a specific occasion. However, don't belabor this question, especially if it doesn't help your group.

The setting of a letter is an important part of the context of what it says, so question 3 helps you look for clues to the setting. The background on pages 9-13 may also help. See how much you can piece together from clues in the letter, without wild speculation, about why Paul wrote to Timothy and what was going on in their lives at the time.

Looking for repeated words and ideas (question 2) should help the group see themes and main ideas in Paul's letter. You might ask members to name as many repeated phrases and ideas as they can, and then move to the letter's themes (question 5). Then share your outlines (question 4). Remember that there is no one right way to outline 2 Timothy; a glance at a few commentaries or study Bibles will show you how widely the outlines of scholars differ.

Questions. Give everyone a chance to share questions about the letter or the way you are studying it. It is good to clear up confusion about the book, the group, or the study guide as early as possible. You may want to leave some questions about the book

until later in your study; they may answer themselves as you go deeper if you are looking for the answers. You could point out the list of references on pages 81-85 or encourage members to seek answers from their pastors or other Christians they respect.

Application. Question 8 ties in with the expectations and objectives you discussed at the beginning of your meeting, but you may want to address it briefly now, after you have looked the letter over together. If some group members are unfamiliar with how to apply God's Word to their lives in specific ways, this might be a chance to think of some sample applications together. You could do this next week if you are running out of time.

Wrap-up. The group leader should have read through lesson two and its "For the group" section. At this point, he or she might give a short summary of what members can expect in that lesson and in the coming meeting. This is a chance to whet everyone's appetite, assign any optional questions, omit any numbered questions, or forewarn members of any possible difficulties.

You might also encourage any members who found the overview especially hard. Some people are better at seeing the big picture or the whole of a book than others. Some are best at analyzing a particular verse or paragraph, while others are strongest at seeing how a passage applies to our lives. Urge members to give thanks for their own and others' strengths, and to give and request help when needed. The group is a place to learn from each other. Later lessons will draw on the gifts of close analyzers as well as overviewers and appliers, theoretical as well as practical thinkers.

Worship. Many groups like to end with singing and/or prayer. This can include songs and prayers that respond to what you've learned in 2 Timothy, or prayers for specific needs of group members. Many people are shy about sharing personal needs or praying aloud in groups, especially before they know the other people well. If this is true of your group, then a song and/or some silent prayer and a short closing prayer spoken by the leader might be an appropriate ending.