2 Timothy 4:1-8  New International Version (NIV)

1 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: 2 Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. 3 For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. 4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. 5 But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

6 For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.
Bible Study Guide
Free to Risk / Free to Fail

Introduce

The book of 2 Timothy is a letter written by the apostle Paul at the end of his life to his beloved friend and trusted student, Timothy. It is an emotionally-charged letter that reflects the seriousness of Paul’s imprisonment. Prior to this passage, Paul has strongly encouraged Timothy to follow the example of his mentors by anchoring himself to Scripture throughout the storms of conflict. With Paul’s probable death looming large over this letter, Timothy’s life is about to change—and change is hard.

Read 2 Timothy 4:1-8

Discuss

1. **How do Paul’s instructions prepare Timothy for the challenges of godly leadership?**
   Paul paints a bleak picture of people inevitably choosing desire over doctrine. Like a coach during the critical moment of a must-win game, Paul exhorts Timothy with specific instructions. How do these instructions prepare Timothy for the challenges of godly leadership? What risks will Timothy have to take in order to follow Paul’s instructions?

2. **How is God’s coming judgment a source of hope and motivation for Paul and Timothy?**
   Paul opens and closes this passage with a firm declaration that God’s kingdom and righteous judgment are definitely coming. Why is the promise of God’s coming judgment a source of hope and motivation for Paul? Given all the change and struggle ahead of Timothy, how might this coming judgment provide hope for Timothy as well?

Apply

1. **“Keep your head”**
   If Timothy follows Paul’s lead, he will experience opposition and pushback from others who will instead turn away from the faith. How might following Jesus put you in opposition to others? What risks do you sense Jesus inviting you to take as you “keep your head”(4:5) and remain faithful in all that he has called you to do?

2. **Be encouraged, encourage others**
   In this moment of challenge, heartache, and transition, Paul encourages Timothy through the example of his own life to continue taking risks for the sake of the kingdom. Who is your Paul, the mentor you can learn from and be encouraged by? Who might be your Timothy, those in your community who need encouragement from you?

Conclude

Pray with each other.

For tips on leading a small group online, watch this!