

2 TIMOTHY

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# RUN THE RACE



6 INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDIES FOR  
SMALL GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS



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*Run the Race*

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## » HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF THESE STUDIES

### 1. What is an Interactive Bible Study?

Interactive Bible Studies are a bit like a guided tour of a famous city. They take you through a particular part of the Bible, helping you to know where to start, pointing out things along the way, suggesting avenues for further exploration, and making sure that you know how to get home. Like any good tour, the real purpose is to allow you to go exploring for yourself—to dive in, have a good look around, and discover for yourself the riches that God’s word has in store.

In other words, these studies aim to provide stimulation and input and point you in the right direction, while leaving you to do plenty of the exploration and discovery yourself.

We hope that these studies will stimulate lots of ‘interaction’—interaction with the Bible, with the things we’ve written, with your own current thoughts and attitudes, with other people as you discuss them, and with God as you talk to him about it all.

## 2. The format

Each study contains five main components:

- sections of text that introduce, inform, summarize and challenge
- a set of numbered study questions that help you examine the passage and think through its meaning
- sidebars that provide extra bits of background or optional extra study ideas, especially regarding other relevant parts of the Bible
- an ‘Implications’ section that helps you think about what this passage means for you and your life today
- suggestions for thanksgiving and prayer as you close.

## 3. How to use these studies on your own

- Before you begin, pray that God would open your eyes to what he is saying in the Bible, and give you the spiritual strength to do something about it.
- Work through the study, reading the text, answering the questions about the Bible passage, and exploring the sidebars as you have time.
- Resist the temptation to skip over the ‘Implications’ and ‘Give thanks and pray’ sections at the end. It is important that we not only hear and understand God’s word, but respond to it. These closing sections help us do that.
- Take what opportunities you can to talk to others about what you’ve learnt.

## 4. How to use these studies in a small group

- Much of the above applies to group study as well. The studies are suitable for structured Bible study or cell groups, as well as for more informal pairs and triplets. Get together with a friend or friends and work through them at your own pace; use them as the basis for regular Bible study with your spouse. You don’t need the formal structure of a ‘group’ to gain maximum benefit.

- For small groups, it is *very useful* if group members can work through the study themselves *before* the group meets. The group discussion can take place comfortably in an hour (depending on how sidetracked you get!) if all the members have done some work in advance.
- The role of the group leader is to direct the course of the discussion and to try to draw the threads together at the end. This will mean a little extra preparation—underlining the sections of text to emphasize and read out loud, working out which questions are worth concentrating on, and being sure of the main thrust of the study. Leaders will also probably want to work out approximately how long they'd like to spend on each part.
- If your group members usually don't work through the study in advance, it's extra important that the leader prepares which parts to concentrate on, and which parts to glide past more quickly. In particular, the leader will need to select which of the 'Implications' to focus on.
- We haven't included an 'answer guide' to the questions in the studies. This is a deliberate move. We want to give you a guided tour of the Bible, not a lecture. There is more than enough in the text we have written and the questions we have asked to point you in what we think is the right direction. The rest is up to you.

## 5. Bible translation

Previous studies in our Interactive Bible Study series have assumed that most readers would be using the New International Version of the Bible. However, since the release of the English Standard Version in 2001, many have switched to the ESV for study purposes. For this reason, we have decided to quote from and refer to the ESV text, which we recommend.



## » STUDY 1

# WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH

[OVERVIEW]

**T**HE APPALACHIAN TRAIL IS THE longest continuous walking trail in the world. It stretches for over 3,500 kilometres up the east coast of the United States. Walking the Appalachian Trail is virtually the equivalent of hiking from Sydney to Darwin, or from Land's End to John o'Groats three times. It's a long walk.

Each year, about 2,000 wide-eyed bushwalkers try their hand at the Appalachian Trail. Very few make it. Half the walkers don't even make it one-third of the way. One in ten drop out within the first week. There have been cases of people travelling halfway around the world and spending a small fortune on camping equipment, only to pull out after three days of walking. It seems that they turn up expecting a

nice stroll through the woods with the sun shining, birds singing and squirrels playing. What they get are rocks, mountain climbing, rain, hypothermia, ticks, bears and snakes. It just isn't what they expected.

As the saying goes, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going". When things get difficult—when things aren't as easy as you thought they might be—that's when you see a person's true colours. That's when you see what people are made of.

The going was tough for the Apostle Paul when he wrote his second letter to Timothy. 2 Timothy is a letter that shows us what Paul was made of—what his true colours were. And his colours are inspirational.

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## **Read 2 Timothy.**

One of the nice things about 2 Timothy is that it isn't very long. Quickly read through the following questions. Then read through the whole of 2 Timothy, and come back and answer the questions.

1. Note as many things as you can about Paul's situation when he wrote the letter.
2. How many things do you discover about Timothy?
3. Why do you think Paul wrote this letter?
4. What are some words that would describe the mood of the letter (e.g. happy, sad, angry, etc.)?
5. What topics does Paul write about?

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6. Are there any words or phrases that are repeated throughout the letter?

7. Do any verses stand out to you as being especially powerful? Is there one particular verse that you think captures the overall message of the letter?

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## Guard the good deposit

AS YOU NOW APPRECIATE, HAVING read the letter, 2 Timothy was written at a dark time in Paul's life. He was chained up in a Roman prison (1:16-17), he had been deserted by many (1:15, 4:16), and he did not expect to live much longer (4:6-7). Against this background, he wrote to Timothy to urge him to stand firm and to continue promoting the gospel. It is a stirring letter. Some of the most moving verses in the New Testament are found here.

For the purpose of these studies, we will be viewing 2 Timothy 1:14 as a good summary statement of the letter:

By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.

The "good deposit" is a reference to the

gospel (cf. 1:8ff). In other words, Paul was keen for Timothy to protect and promote the message of Jesus Christ so that when Paul died, the true gospel would still be circulating.

Throughout these studies, we will discover the ways and means by which Paul wished Timothy to guard the gospel. It's in this that 2 Timothy has great relevance for us. The gospel is still incredibly precious, and it's still worth protecting!

Throughout these studies, God's word radically shows us just how important the gospel is, and therefore just how much trouble we ought to be prepared to go to in order to safeguard and share it. Get ready to be instructed, rebuked, corrected, trained and changed! After all, that's what God's word is for (2 Tim 3:16).



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## » Give thanks and pray

- Thank God for the Apostle Paul—his life, his work and his witness through the Holy Spirit.
- Ask God to help you to “guard the good deposit” of the gospel (1:14) in everything you do.
- Ask God to help you to understand his word as you read 2 Timothy.