

DISCUSSION GUIDE

How to Serve God in a Hostile Culture

Last Letter — 2 Timothy 1:1-12

ICEBREAKER: Whom have you lost touch with but still wonder about?

OVERVIEW: There's no doubt that our culture is becoming increasingly hostile to Christians. The question now is how do we continue to serve God in this culture? The epistle of 2 Timothy is written in a similar setting; the culture was highly hostile to Christians; Paul was writing from prison; Timothy was facing fear and shame from within, and false teaching and persecution from without. In 2 Timothy 1:1-12, we can find some helpful instructions about responding to a hostile culture. Let's dig deeper.

1. Read 2 Timothy 1:1-12. What insight, principle, or observation from this weekend's message did you find to be the most helpful, eye-opening, or troubling? Explain. (Or what was your key takeaway from Sunday's message?)
2. Read Acts 5:40-42.
 - Why were the apostles put in a jail and flogged?
 - How did the apostles respond to the hostility of the Jewish government?
 - Why did the apostles rejoice?
 - How do you need to better follow the example of the apostles in your actions and attitude when facing hostility?
3. The epistle of 2 Timothy is Paul's last letter. If you could only write one last letter, to whom would you write, and what would you say?

4. What are some of the signs that our culture is becoming increasingly hostile to Christianity? Do you think it will get better or worse? Explain.
5. In the sermon we heard about the story of Coach Joe Kennedy. How do you think you would have responded if you were in Kennedy's shoes?
6. How have you personally faced hostility (unfriendliness, antagonism, and opposition) for the Gospel?
7. Paul instructed Timothy to destroy the fire extinguishers of fear and shame, and instead live with power, love, and sound judgment? What might it look like to respond to hostility with power, love, and sound judgment?
8. Paul told Timothy to not be ashamed of the Gospel. The opposite of shame is boldness, or out-spokenness, frankness, bluntness, and confidence. In what ways do you need to grow more bold for Christ?
9. Paul told Timothy to "share in suffering for the Gospel." How might it prove helpful to determine in advance that you will serve the Lord, even if it means suffering? Are you willing to make this decision? Explain.

The Last Word: God doesn't want us to run from the fight, but to it. We don't run for safety; we run to the battle. Wherever Satan is attacking, that's where we're headed. Wherever Christ is calling us, that's where we go, no matter how dangerous; no matter how costly.