

Facing Failure

Devotion

2022.2.13



TALKING POINTS WALKING POINTS

Leaders' Guide

A publication of , the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. —Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. —Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- 1 What from Sunday's message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you?
...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why**?
- 2 Lately, some "big name" pastors have defected from the faith. **Why** is that so damaging?
- 3 Who have you known personally who's "walked away from the faith"? How did it impact you?
- 4 Read 2 Timothy 1:3-14. What risk did Timothy face? What was Paul's solution to that risk?
When have you been "ashamed of the testimony of the Lord"? Tell us about it.
- 5 Read 2 Timothy 1:15—2:13. How did Paul instruct Timothy to "count the cost"?
When you became a Christian, were you told that it would be hard or easy to follow Christ?
- 6 Read 2 Timothy 2:14-26. What must Christians do in order to make sure they're a "vessel for honor"?
What evidence is there that you are on the path to being a vessel of honor or one of dishonor?
- 7 Read 2 Timothy 3. It seems as if the path of faithfulness is next to impossible (v. 1-13)!
Paul's solution is found in v. 14-17. Does that **really** seem sufficient to overcome the obstacles? How?
- 8 Read 2 Timothy 4:1-5. This is Pastor Timothy's job description. Which of these elements of church life do you see evident in the ministry of TCC? Are you engaged in them and profiting from them?
- 9 Read 2 Timothy 4:6 & 16. Paul was in prison, about to be executed. Demas was vacationing in Greece (v. 10).
As things appeared then, who was the big winner? Who was the loser?
- 10 Paul **now**—and for **all eternity**—is experiencing what's described in v. 8. Demas is not.
What changes **must** you make in order to ensure that you join Paul—not Demas?!

- 1 This is a standard, soft-ball question designed to get a conversation going, and also to allow you to assess how folks understood and responded to Pastor Doug's thoughts. Know where the rest of the questions are going so that you don't get bogged down here.
- 2 Possible answers include:
 - "He had such a huge, positive impact on me early on. Now I see he's just a hypocrite!"
 - "If **he** fell, what hope do I have?!"
 - "I trusted him—how naive I was! How do I know that any of this Christianity stuff is true?"
- 3 This question brings the abstract down to the concrete. Be ready to "prime the pump", if needed. Not everybody in your group will have a story of failure that hit this close to home, but some will.
- 4 Paul was in prison (v. 8) and condemned to die. It would have been easy to disassociate from him, to save your reputation—or perhaps even your life! Paul countered that temptation by focusing on Jesus' victory over death and his call on our lives (v. 9-12). Paul challenged Timothy to hang on (v. 13) and to "guard the gospel treasure" he'd received (v. 14).
Then, be ready with your own story of when **you've** been "ashamed of the testimony of the Lord".
- 5 Paul didn't avoid or sugar-coat the cost involved in following Christ. He hit it head on, using illustrations of soldiers, athletes, and farmers. He gave a direct command: "suffer hardship with me" (v. 3).
Then, be ready with your own answer to the question: "Were you told that it would be hard or easy to follow Christ?" Matthew 7:13-14 and Luke 13:24 speak directly to this unpopular issue.
- 6 We must "cleanse ourselves" (v. 21) of contentious conversations (v. 14), sloppy handling of the Bible due to laziness (v. 15), wicked, foolish talk that soils others (v. 16-17), straying from historic positions on biblical doctrines (v. 18). Don't gloss over the question of evidence of honor/dishonor in our lives.
- 7 The Scriptures claim to be sufficient to **thoroughly** equip us for **every** good work (v. 17). Do group members **really** believe this? What do their **actions** reveal about their view of Scripture?
- 8 You likely will need to "prime the pump", so be prepared with your own answer to this question. (But wait for others to think and answer. Check your watch—20 seconds feels like an eternity!)
- 9 Don't let folks get all spiritual on this one. Paul clearly looked to be the loser.
- 10 Don't blunt the power of this question. Let folks feel its weight. We **really can** end up like Demas. "Let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall." —1 Corinthians 10:12.

Sermon Summary (Key Text: 2 Timothy 4:10)

The Apostle Paul revealed that one his greatest fears was that he would do something that would damage his Christian testimony (1 Corinthians 9:26–27). Today we will study a man who had a triumphant beginning, but a tragic ending. His name is Demas. There are only fifteen words about him in the New Testament—and each one is packed with implications for our lives. Let's take a look at **Three Snapshots of Demas' life:**

Snapshot #1: Philemon 19-24 Paul mentioned five Christian men who worked faithfully alongside him in ministry. **Epaphras** was a church-planter who played a key role in establishing churches in Colossae, Laodicea and Hierapolis. **John Mark** had accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. For reasons we don't know, Mark deserted them on that mission. **Aristarchus** was a traveling companion of Paul and was imprisoned along with Paul for their ministry. **Luke** traveled with Paul, offering his medical expertise, and later writing the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. Paul numbered **Demas** among his "fellow workers." Demas was surrounded by godly people—a veritable "Who's Who" in Israel! No distinction was made among them—it appears Demas shared fully in the ministry.

Snapshot #2: Colossians 4:7-14 We have a list of eight individuals, and in every case but one, Paul has something commendable to say. Why nothing about Demas? This was no accident. Sadly, some people's lives are best expressed in silence. Apparently Paul was beginning to suspect something was amiss in Demas' devotion. A cloud of worldliness was beginning to creep over him. Perhaps Paul was already discerning the roots of his ruin.

Snapshot #3: 2 Timothy 4:10 Paul, near the end of his life, writes to Timothy, his protégé: "Make every effort to come to me soon, for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me..." Demas was infected with a worldly spirit—he was enamored with the present rather than with eternity. Is entertainment more important to you than spending time with God in his Word? Is your desire to be liked by your non-Christian friends more important to you than sharing your faith with them, and risking their rejection? Are you more concerned about the number in your bank account than the number of your friends who are headed for a Christless eternity? If so, then you too are worldly! Worldliness caused Demas to desert Paul when he was most needed. He betrayed Paul. At the critical moment, he jumped ship.

Three Life Lessons can be drawn from Demas' defection:

[1] Spiritual associations will not insulate you from the dangers of spiritual defection. If spiritual associations guaranteed spiritual usefulness, Demas had it made! He couldn't have been with a better peer group. He was surrounded by godly men, but his friends' spirituality could not save him from worldliness. Neither can yours. Many people belong to good Bible-teaching churches, but they are not taking advantage of the teaching, the fellowship, the worship that that church offers. They are attenders, but not really partakers. They are there in body, but not in spirit. Their heart is not engaged. They are constantly looking at their watch. Don't be here in order to be entertained—enter into that process whereby God transforms you into the image of his Son. Engage in our weekly worship services. Listen attentively and submissively as God's Word is taught. Join a small group. On your own, during the week, study the "Digging Deeper" section of *Talking Points, Walking Points*. That would be a great daily bible study. Refuse to coast in your spiritual life.

[2] Spiritual defection rarely involves a sudden blow-out; it is the result of slow spiritual leak.

Spiritual defection seems sudden, but all we see is the end product. What we know when someone falls into gross sin is merely the end of a prolonged process. Often it is quite imperceptible—even to the individual involved! It's just one small compromise at a time. Even after living together day and night for three years the disciples didn't see Judas' defection coming. He appeared to be a faithful disciple. So, in what spiritual direction are **you** walking? Are you walking towards Jesus, or away from him?

[3] There is a direct relationship between the object of our devotion and the probability of our defection. In v. 8, Paul said a crown awaited him and everyone else who "loved Christ's appearing". But Demas "loved this present world". You either love Jesus' appearing, or you are in love with this present world. These two loves are diametrically opposed. I have not yet met a person who is longing for Jesus' return who ends up deserting Christ. The moment a person begins to fall out of love with Jesus, their heart begins to grow cold. So, what do **you** love? The moment your heart grows cold, and the Word of God becomes a closed book. The moment your prayer life becomes stale and sporadic, the moment lost people no longer tug at your heart, you are moving in Demas' direction.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

Let's study God's Word to help us be those who persevere and don't fall away...

Monday—Read Acts 13:1-13; 15:36-41. What did John Mark do? Contrast Paul's & Barnabas' responses.

Tuesday—Read Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23. What are the reasons Jesus said some fall away?

Wednesday—Read John 8:31-32; 15:7-11; 13:34-35. What are the characteristics of a true disciple of Jesus?

Thursday—Read Matthew 7:21-23. What will be most important on the Day of Judgment?

Friday—Read 1 John 2:15-17. What are examples of "the desires of the flesh, eyes, and pride of life?"

Give one reason from each verse why we are not to be in love with them.

Saturday—***In preparation for worshipping the risen Lord with your church family,***
study **Acts 11:22-24** and **15:36-40**.

John Bunyan, author of the must-read classic, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, said:

"Prayer will make a man cease from sin, or sin will entice a man to cease from prayer."

Please join us!



TCC WOMEN Praying the Psalms



Ladies...

Every Thursday ♦ 9³⁰-10³⁰ ♦ Room 205

Men...



Men Moving Mountains

"I tell you the truth, you can say to this mountain,
'May you be lifted up and thrown into the sea,'
and it will happen."

—Jesus

- Guided prayer using the Psalms
- Tuesdays, during your lunch break
- Connect virtually or in-person (Room 110)
- Drop in for as long as you're able
- E-mail Pastor Dan to connect
Dan.Clement.TCC@gmail.com

Proverbs 27:12 says "Wise people see danger ahead and avoid it,
but fools keep going and get into trouble."

Let's make this our memory verse for the week! Here's how:

1. Write the verse out on a 3x5 card for each "reader" in your family (parents too!).
2. At dinner tonight, tell a story of trouble you didn't see or didn't avoid.
(Don't moralize—make sure the kids get a laugh out of it at your expense!)
3. Give each reader a memory verse card. Have paper and markers ready for the little ones to draw a picture that learn and remember this verse.
4. Each night at dinner, let a different family member recite the memory verse.

PARENTS'
CORNER