

April 27/28, 2024

“Soldier, Athlete, Farmer”

Pastor Jeff Manion



**Beyond the  
Weekend**

## **SPEND DAILY TIME WITH GOD AS YOU READ, THINK, PRAY + ACT.**

### **2024 Challenge: Finding Jesus in the Old Testament**

**April:** Read Exodus to see how people, situations and events point to Jesus

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## **Day 1** 2 Timothy 2:1-7 | Four Generations

**And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.** 2 Timothy 2:2

Paul writes a letter to the young Timothy, encouraging him to maintain the faith *and* multiply that faith in the lives of others. Paul has mentored Timothy to multiply disciples. Timothy has traveled around the Mediterranean world with Paul hearing his sermons and witnessing the consistent follow-up and teaching to those who responded to the gospel and believed. Paul passes on what he knows to Timothy, who passes it on to those he teaches, who then pass it on to others. That is four generations of tellers and teachers.

This multiplication method is what God uses to spread the good news of the gospel. Jesus provides the first example. He teaches and trains his disciples and then commissions them to go teach and train others ([Matthew 28:18-20](#)). This commission and challenge are for us today, too. One generation of Jesus’s followers is to pass along the good news and train the next generation to live out their faith. This generation shares the good news with the next, and so on. Our spiritual growth should overflow and impact those around us.

**TODAY:** Who is God calling you to share Jesus with? Who can you help grow in faith? Pray and ask God to show you the next step. Write in your journal or mobile device any names God brings to mind. Pray for those people and then begin investing in their spiritual growth. It could be sharing the gospel, inviting them to church or meeting one-on-one for conversation to talk about the Bible.

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Exodus 33-34](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus.

## **Day 2** 2 Timothy 2:3-4 | Soldier

**No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer.** 2 Timothy 2:4

Paul tells Timothy to multiply the number of Jesus’s followers by using the example of a soldier. Soldiers play a key role in holding the Roman Empire together. They are keenly refined and trained representatives of the emperor’s power—totally focused on doing their job. They don’t get entangled in civilian affairs but stay focused on their orders. They are willing to suffer to gain the approval and appreciation of their commanding officer. This example encourages Timothy to stay focused on his calling from God, which is to share what he has learned with those around him and encourage their spiritual growth so they can multiply faith in the lives of others, too.

The example of the soldier is significant for us today because our goal should also be to stay focused on God. We please him by staying committed to his purpose. It's very easy to get distracted by our latest remodeling project, our kids' sports, travel plans, social media, golf league or book club. These things aren't necessarily bad, but they can entangle and distract us from pursuing God and what he desires for us. We should make sure to take time for God and things that will last for eternity.

**TODAY:** Identify some of the good things in your life that have the potential to distract you from being intentional in your relationship with God. How can you keep those things in their proper place so you have time to pursue God and his purpose for you? To get further insight, discuss these things with your small group leader or a trusted friend.

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Exodus 35](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Note the details for the tabernacle and priests and how they may point to Jesus.

## Day 3 2 Timothy 2:5 | Athlete

**Similarly, anyone who competes as an athlete does not receive the victor's crown except by competing according to the rules.** 2 Timothy 2:5

As Paul continues to urge Timothy to multiply Jesus's disciples, he turns to the image of an athlete. Athletes train and work hard but can only win when abiding by the rules of their sport. Paul seems to urge Timothy to do the work of Jesus according to the way of Jesus. Jesus taught his followers that they are to love God and love others ([Matthew 22:37-39](#)). Sharing Jesus's message and helping others grow reflects Jesus's love and his character of grace and truth ([John 1:14](#)).

The same is true for us today. We can get caught up in doing the work of Jesus but neglect the way of Jesus. Condemnation and harsh correction can turn people away from the gospel, especially when we have not taken the time to invest in authentic, loving relationships. We can only speak truth to others if we have earned their trust. We earn trust when we display a Christlike character and spend meaningful time with people. When we love like Jesus did, we offer something different than the rest of the world. Our faith becomes irresistible and contagious to those around us. A life ruled by Christ's love results in the ultimate victory of strengthening others in faith and inspiring faith that spreads through generations.

**TODAY:** Ask God to grow your character to be more and more like Jesus. Consider the Fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control ([Galatians 5:22-23](#)). Identify one that you would like God to grow in you. Ask for his help to share that fruit in your interactions this week.

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Exodus 36-37](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Note the details for the tabernacle and priests and how they may point to Jesus.

## Day 4 2 Timothy 2:6 | Farmer

**The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops.** 2 Timothy 2:6

Paul gives Timothy a third illustration as he teaches him to multiply disciples of Jesus. Timothy should work hard like a farmer would. Without machines, farming entails long, hot days of plowing, planting, weeding and harvesting by hand. Farming requires commitment, patience and trust in God. The work was hard, but the reward was great. Long hours of perspiration led to harvested grain and bread on the table. Paul knows that if Timothy perseveres with farmer-like commitment, patience and trust, there will be a harvest of Jesus followers who can pass along what they know to others.

The same is true for us. Investing in the lives of others is hard work that requires patience, trust in God and commitment. It requires significant patience and love to lead a small group of sixth-grade boys until they graduate from high school. Leading a women's group requires the hard work of Bible study preparation and sometimes stepping into tough situations. Being a mentor means showing up week after week. Committing to teaching your kids about Jesus requires the consistency of Bible stories, conversations and prayer every night. But Paul teaches, "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up" ([Galatians 6:9](#)). We work and trust, and God grows the harvest.

**TODAY:** Join the Ada Bible Worship Team as they sing "[Finished Work of Christ](#)." Thank God for the finished work of Jesus and for opportunities to help others grow to know him too. "So, I'll sing Your praise with all of my heart; you buried my past so my future could start."

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Exodus 38](#).** Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Note the details for the tabernacle and priests and how they may point to Jesus.

## Day 5 2 Timothy 2:7 | Reflect

**Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.** 2 Timothy 2:7

Paul tells Timothy to multiply followers of Jesus by entrusting what he's learned to reliable people who will teach others. To emphasize his point, he gives three examples from their culture: a soldier, an athlete and a farmer. Each of these professions requires discipline and focus to reach their goals of victory in battle, receiving the crown and reaping the harvest. Then Paul says something unexpected—he tells Timothy to reflect. Paul wants Timothy to give God time and space to show him what's next. Reflection is essential to understanding spiritual multiplication.

Reflection is a practice that Christians have incorporated into their time with God for centuries and is beneficial for us today. Reflection involves two parts. The first is slowing down in God's presence and listening. This can include reading a Bible passage a few times slowly and prayerfully, thinking about each verse. It could be thinking and praying about growing in Christlikeness, such as humility, forgiveness or generosity. It might be inviting God to reveal what he has for us. Our part always includes God's Word. God's part is to impress upon us things we may not think about on our own, convict and guide us. The most important aspect of reflection is *slowing down and just being with God*.

**TODAY:** How can you make reflection a regular part of your chair time with God? Spend a few minutes asking God to show you how. Slow down, tune out distractions and be quiet so he can impress on you what he wants you to do.

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Exodus 39-40](#).** Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Note the details for the Tabernacle and priests and how they may point to Jesus.