



# How to Endure Suffering

## TEN PRINCIPLES FROM 2 TIMOTHY

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Suffering is a normal part of the Christian life. It is one of the realities of living as a gospel-embracing person in an increasingly gospel-hating world ([2 Tim. 3:1, 13](#)). Suffering is also one of the ways God enriches our experience of being united with Christ ([Phil. 1:29](#)).

We learn from the book of 2 Timothy that we may experience suffering because of our testimony, our godly living, or our stand for truth. We may also experience suffering when we are rejected or abandoned, or as a natural consequence of our fleshly ways.

Whatever the cause of our suffering, God offers us grace to overcome every trial and empower us to fulfill our purpose in His kingdom. In this letter to Timothy, the apostle Paul shares some important truths about how to endure suffering.

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### Ten Principles for Enduring Suffering

When you are suffering, or interceding for a loved one who is suffering, keep these truths in mind.

#### 1. Suffering accomplishes things that comfort cannot.

Paul explained that he was willing to suffer: (a) for the proclamation of the gospel, (b) for the sake of “the elect,” and (c) for the glory of God. Paul clearly understood that his suffering fit within God’s greater plan. **Do you believe that your suffering can serve God’s purposes too?** As you feel the heavy weight of pain, God can use your perseverance to touch the hearts of those who need to see authentic faith in action and to encourage believers who have grown weary from their own trials.

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead and descended from David, according to my gospel, for which I suffer to the point of being bound like a criminal. But the word of God is not bound. This is why I endure all things for the elect: so that they also may obtain salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. (2 Timothy 2:8–10)

#### Personal Reflection

*Am I willing for God to use my pain for His good purposes, even when those purposes are not clear to me?*

*Does my love for others run deep enough so that even when I suffer, my desire will be for them to be drawn to God who gives me strength?*

## 2. God is constantly present and consistently powerful.

Regardless of the cause of your present suffering—medical complications, financial pressures, ill treatment by others, or even outright persecution for your faith—know that **God has not abandoned you. He is *with* you in this hard place.** Paul's acknowledgement that he was actually the "prisoner" of Christ rather than of his circumstances gave him confidence. God's presence and power became more real to him than his chains.

So don't be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, or of me his prisoner. Instead, share in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God. (2 Timothy 1:8)

### *Personal Reflection*

*Am I truly relying on God's power?*

*What truths do I need to be thinking about rather than focusing on my pain?*

## 3. What was true in God's Word yesterday is still true today.

Suffering can deepen our trust in God—which is why the enemy works overtime in these seasons to try to make us doubt our Father's goodness. Fight against your doubts with truth. Remember what you have received through Christ. Counter every doubt and lie with truth.

Hold on to the pattern of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 1:13)

### *Personal Reflection*

*What passage or principle from the Bible has given me wisdom in the past?*

*What biblical truth would I share with someone who was going through a situation like mine?*

## 4. Suffering may *change* your calling, but it does not *end* it.

Hardship may cause you to evaluate your life and ministry, which can be a good thing. But you must also guard against despair. Even if God has brought you into a season of stillness, He is not asking you to forfeit your calling. **If you truly believe that God will give you strength to endure your suffering and that He can make you stronger and wiser through this hard process, you will be able to persevere.** So, be faithful. Don't quit. Prepare to fulfill your calling.

For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine. . . . But as for you, exercise self-control in everything, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (2 Timothy 4:3, 5)

### *Personal Reflection*

*How might my current circumstances, and my response to them, help me fulfill my calling?*

*What can I be doing in this season to grow stronger in Christ?*

## 5. The old saying, “Hurt people hurt people” is actually true.

When we suffer, it feels natural to spread negativity or even wound others with our actions, words, and attitudes. Especially if we are being maligned because of our faith in Christ, we must guard against the temptation to retaliate. Meet anger with patience and opposition with gentle words of truth. The gospel does not need our harshness to reinforce its strength.

But reject foolish and ignorant disputes, because you know that they breed quarrels. The Lord’s servant must not quarrel, but must be gentle to everyone, able to teach, and patient, instructing his opponents with gentleness. Perhaps God will grant them repentance leading them to the knowledge of the truth. Then they may come to their senses and escape the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will. (2 Timothy 2:23–26)

### Personal Reflection

*Have I begun to hold thoughts of resentment, and perhaps revenge, toward someone who has hurt me? What do I need to do with those thoughts to prevent them from getting worse?*

*Am I sinking into self-pity?*

## 6. Your present needs to hear about your past.

Suffering can either help us remember or cause us to forget. Those who remember the goodness of God that they have experienced in the past will be strengthened, while those who forget will grow faint. **Do you remember what God has done for you in the past, how He has rescued you and lifted you up? Then praise Him, even through your present pain.** Be ready to tell others that God is good.

At my first defense, no one stood by me, but everyone deserted me. . . . But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that I might fully preach the word and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion’s mouth. (2 Timothy 4:16–17; see also [3:11](#))

### Personal Reflection

*What have I learned about God and His ways from past experiences that I need to remind my soul of in this present difficulty?*

*What can I give thanks for today?*

## 7. God's resources are unlimited, unfading, and readily available.

The resources God has given you include:

- His grace ([2 Tim. 1:9](#); [2:1](#); [4:22](#))
- Gifts and abilities through which you can serve Him ([2 Tim. 1:6–7](#))
- His power ([2 Tim. 1:8](#); see also [Phil. 2:13](#); [Eph. 6:10](#))
- The Holy Spirit ([2 Tim. 1:14](#))
- His Word and the truthful perspective it brings ([2 Tim. 2:7, 9](#); [3:14–17](#); [4:2](#))

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed. You know those who taught you, and you know that from infancy you have known the sacred Scriptures, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 3:14–15)

### Personal Reflection

*Am I growing in wisdom? If not, what is stunting my growth?*

*What Scripture passage(s) is God currently using to instruct me?*

## 8. There is hope.

One of the harder challenges of suffering is that we have no idea how long it will last. Sometimes pain clings to us all the way to the day we enter God's presence. **Yet it is this eternal perspective—the hope of a full and final end to suffering—that can give us strength to endure.** In the meantime, we have the truth and promises of God's word to counsel our hearts ([Psalm 27](#)).

The Lord will rescue me from every evil work and will bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom.  
(2 Timothy 4:18)

All your suffering, efforts, labors, and faithfulness will be rewarded on “that day” when believers stand before the Lord.

There is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me, but to all those who have loved his appearing. (2 Timothy 4:8)

### Personal Reflection

*Do I have an eternal perspective? How is it shaping the way I approach life's challenges?*

*Do my thoughts about heaven and eternity align with what the Bible teaches?*

## 9. Suffering can make you compassionate.

Paul wanted Timothy to know that he remembered his (Timothy's) sorrow over their parting and therefore assured his young friend of his frequent prayers on his behalf. Interestingly, it was Paul who was suffering yet it was also Paul who was interceding and encouraging. **His own sufferings enlarged his heart of compassion.**

I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience as my ancestors did, when I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day. Remembering your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. (2 Timothy 1:3–4)

### Personal Reflection

*Who needs my prayers and my encouragement?*

*In what ways is God using my suffering to enlarge my heart of compassion?*

## 10. In all things, remember Christ.

Christ is our example for how to endure suffering. When we “consider him who endured such hostility from sinners against himself” (Heb. 12:3), the focus of our heart will begin to change. We can understand more fully the depths to which Christ was willing to go on our behalf, that our salvation cost Him *everything*. This is one way we can “remember” Christ amid our own suffering. And there is another way—**consider what He is doing now, at the right hand of the Father, on our behalf**: “Christ Jesus . . . has been raised; he also is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us” (Rom. 8:34).

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead. (2 Timothy 2:8)

### Personal Reflection

*What words of thanks and praise can I offer Christ today that would express the joy of salvation?*

*What do I love about my Savior?*

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Expect suffering; it is inevitable. But don't forget the powerful companion you have in Christ. Entrust your life to His ever-present care. He loves you, and He will help you endure.

Adapted from the series “[Enduring Life's Hardships](#)” by Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth. © *Revive Our Hearts*



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