

March 30

2 Timothy 4:10, 14 & 17 (NIV) ¹⁰ for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. ¹⁴ Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. ¹⁷ But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth.

Shirley felt the idea for a conference on marriage for the community was truly from the Lord. When she took the idea to her pastor, he agreed that it was of the Lord. As Shirley began to prepare, many joined her as they chose topics and discussed speakers. They would have refreshments and break-out sessions for group discussions. They also wanted to leave time for personal reflection. After weeks of preparation, Shirley felt they were ready to move forward. Before she could announce it to the community, she needed volunteers to help make everything work so she addressed her church and sent information to the other churches. Shirley waited and waited. A few people answered the call, but not enough for the conference to be a success. She knew she had to make a decision. She was standing on faith, yet, at the same time, she was very discouraged on the inside.

While Paul's situation was quite unique, many of us can identify with the feeling of abandonment and discouragement. We step out in faith only to reach a point where it seems we stand alone. Paul, however, was not about to give up, and he continues by saying that the Lord encouraged him. Despite Paul's amazing faith, he had to be discouraged when so many abandoned him for the world. At the same time, others were working hard to stop him. He compares it to being led to the lion's den. However, the Lord was present and encouraged him. When we encounter moments like this, we should not demean ourselves because we feel discouraged or weak. Paul admits his weakness, but he never gives up. Instead, he turns to the Lord Who is ready to encourage us in any and all situations. If Paul needed to be encouraged, we should not feel guilty because we need encouragement. The world seems to be getting more hostile to the gospel Paul taught and we teach. Others are falling away from the faith. Yet, Jesus has us by the hand and will lift us up and encourage us so we can take the next step.