



Sermon Discussion Questions

For small group leaders or for a whole small group to use

Who He Really Is (2 Timothy 4:17)

August 16, 2026

Dane Ortlund

Sermon Overview

Main Idea

In yesterday's message, "Who He Really Is," Pastor Dane Ortlund looked at 2 Timothy 4:17, breaking it down by the who, the what, and the where: it is the Lord Jesus himself who "stood by me and strengthened me." This isn't a distant, abstract God, but Christ drawing near and giving strength in the moment of need. The heart of the message was this: Christ doesn't wait on the sidelines until we've performed well enough to earn his help — he meets us in our weakness, and he is bigger than our sin, however big it feels. The invitation is to know him as he truly is: a present, strengthening, loving God who draws near precisely when we feel least deserving of it.

Sermon Outline

Christ is not a distant, performance-based God — he draws near and strengthens us, and he is bigger than our sin, however big it feels.

I. The Who — "The Lord"

II. The What — "Stood"

III. The Where — "By Me"

IV. The Result — "And Strengthened Me"

Quotation(s)

Unavailable

Discussion Questions

Read the Scripture Text (if the text is shorter, consider reading it together several times).

Initial Engagement

- What is the main idea of the text, or what did the sermon focus on? (See above to review the main point)
- What insight from the text or sermon stood out to you most, and why? (Encourage several people to share)

Deeper Reflection on the Meaning and Implications

- "The Lord" - The sermon centered on identifying Jesus, specifically, as the one present with Paul. Why does it matter that it's the Lord who stands with us — not just "God" in the abstract, but the specific, knowable person of Christ? Are there areas of your life where you've been relating to a vague or distorted version of God rather than to who Jesus actually is? What would it look like to bring that image back in line with who he really is?
- "Stood" - What's the difference between a God who "stood" with Paul in that moment versus a God who merely watched from a distance or judged from above? Think of a recent hard moment. Did it feel like Christ was standing with you in it, or did it feel like he was absent? How does this passage speak to that gap between feeling and truth?



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- "By me" - "By me" implies nearness, not distance. Where in your life right now do you most need to be reminded that Christ is near, not far off? How does Christ's nearness change the way we're meant to approach him — with confidence, or still with hesitation and hiding?
- "Strengthened Me" - The sermon emphasized that Christ's presence and strength aren't earned by good performance — he shows up bigger when our sin is bigger, not when we've cleaned ourselves up first. Why is this good news, and why is it also hard to actually believe? Have you ever tried to "perform" your way into feeling worthy of God's help before coming to him? What would it look like to bring your real, unfiltered self to him instead — sin and all — trusting he's already there? How does knowing Christ strengthens us in our weakness (not after we've fixed it) change how you'll approach a struggle you're facing this week?

Application

- What's one specific way you can remind yourself this week that Christ stands by you regardless of your performance?
- Who in your life needs to hear this truth — that God draws near especially when we feel most unworthy? How might you share it with them?