

TIMOTHY, LEADER WITH A LEGACY

“Girl, I don’t know how you made it to your silver wedding anniversary,” said Gabrielle’s coworker.

Gabrielle had shared with her coworker that she and Calvin were foregoing a party and taking a one-week cruise to celebrate twenty-five years of marriage. Her mind went back to her early married days. They had been rocky. She and Calvin were two young people beginning to navigate life together. He had idiosyncrasies and irritating ways. And so had she. During those early years, Gabrielle would complain to her friends at church about how Calvin had made her mad that week, and told them all about his flaws. But one day, as Gabrielle was beginning her rant, an older woman who was passing by asked her if they could speak privately.

“Baby,” the woman said, “I overheard your conversation. It’s not good to talk bad about your husband to others. I understand you’re newly married. There is going to be some frustration with one another. It’s natural. But whatever you want to say about your husband, tell the Lord. Because He can keep all our secrets. When you talk bad about your husband, you are tearing down his reputation and his value. If you are not in harm’s way, keep your marriage business between you and Calvin.”

It was good advice. That woman continued to mentor Gabrielle in her marriage until she and Calvin moved. Gabrielle was so grateful for this woman, and now had the opportunity to pass the woman’s wisdom down to her coworker.

1 What spiritual parent in the faith has been a good, godly influence on you? Why?

2 What ordinary acts of faith have strengthened you through difficult seasons?

¹ Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus,

² To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

³ I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day;

⁴ Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; ⁵ When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.

⁶ Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, in keeping with the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus,

² To Timothy, my dear son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

³ I thank God, whom I serve, as my ancestors did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. ⁴ Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. ⁵ I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.

⁶ For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

A Legacy Burns Brightly

The apostle Paul stands ready to meet Jesus in death when he writes to his son in the faith, sharing great love and admiration. Unlike the letter of 1 Timothy, which gives a great deal of attention to false teachers, 2 Timothy expresses hopes and concerns for a young pastor. *Young* is relative, since Timothy could be forty years old at this point.

Paul writes as an “apostle of Jesus Christ,” an apostle “by the will of God” (2 Tim. 1:1). In last week’s lesson, we discussed Paul’s encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. Jesus Himself spoke to Paul and commissioned him (compare Gal. 1:15–16). While he is imprisoned for the gospel, Paul continues to draw strength from the “promise of life that is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 1:1). Paul already anticipates giving up his earthly life; he says in 4:6, “My departure is near.”

It’s no surprise that, at the end, Paul’s thoughts go to Timothy.

Paul first met Timothy during his second missionary journey (see Acts 16:1–4). In Acts we learn that Timothy has a Greek father and a Jewish mother. We don't know if he is estranged, absent, or dead, but Timothy's biological father is never mentioned.

Paul points to the legacy of Jewish faith that he and Timothy share. Paul sees following Jesus as a continuation of the faith of Jewish ancestors, who also served God (2 Tim. 1:3). He encourages Timothy to draw from this heritage too: Timothy's mother and grandmother are notable for "sincere faith" that they passed on to him (2 Tim. 1:5). Timothy has a legacy that Paul compares to a hot ember, ready to burst into flame and throw off heat if he but fans it and keeps the memory alive (1 Tim. 1:6). The result of the Spirit's work is able to leave Timothy with confidence to speak into difficult situations, showing love and devotion to others with a consistency of character (2 Tim. 1:7).

At the same time, Paul talks about Timothy as his own son—the one to continue Paul's ministry work. Timothy's gift came when Paul laid hands upon him in prayer, sharing with him the commission to leadership (2 Tim. 1:6). That's one reason why they desperately want to see one another again, perhaps for the last time. In some ways, their bond is closer than biological family.

1 Why does Paul call Timothy his dear son?

2 What does Paul recall about Timothy's history?

3 What does Paul instruct Timothy to do with his faith?

¹⁴ But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; ¹⁵ And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, ¹⁵ and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

A Resource Ready to Be Used

Timothy learned the gospel, biblical ministry, and compassion from those whom God placed in his life. He didn't need more teachers but encouragement to remain steadfast in the work of the Lord. The apostle Paul, in writing to his son in the faith, knows that those who follow Jesus face hardship. He says, "Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim. 3:12). This type of pressure could lead even the strongest Christian to throw in the towel. But Paul encourages Timothy, despite the presence of detractors and impostors, to "continue" in the faith (v. 14). The Greek word for *continue* means to stay, persist, or abide. Jesus uses the same verb when He says that we will bear fruit only by abiding in Him (John 15:5–6).

Paul has already called attention to Timothy's legacy of family and mentors, but Timothy has other resources at his disposal. Timothy was fortunate that he was reared in the faith "from infancy" (2 Tim. 3:15). From Lois and Eunice, no doubt, Timothy has also been introduced to Scripture. Paul refers to "Holy Scriptures," which are founts of wisdom leading a person to "salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15).

There is an important clarification to make about what Paul means by this. When Timothy was an infant, he couldn't have been learning from the canonical Bible as Christians now understand it, since

the New Testament had not even been written! Paul has to mean what Christians call the Old Testament. In all of Paul's letters, he is constantly going back to the Old Testament (for Paul, just "Scripture"), where he draws strength from what he finds. Paul is masterful at demonstrating the gospel of Jesus from texts like Habakkuk 2:4, "The righteous person will live by his faithfulness." Paul writes that Scripture is "God-breathed," meaning that it is entirely useful and reliable (2 Tim. 3:16). It comes from God, and Scripture will never steer Timothy in the wrong direction or fail to lead him in righteous paths.

Even the Old Testament, without mentioning Jesus by name, is revealing the need for faith in Jesus Christ. This is very close to what Jesus says in Luke 24:27, that all of Scripture, including the writings of Moses and the prophets, is pointing to Jesus. Paul is affirming the divine origin of Scripture while focusing on the practical application.

Paul calls Scripture "useful" above all, and he lists a variety of ways to apply Scripture in ministry: "teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16). *Teaching* from the Word instructs the servant of God in right belief and action. And *training* and *rebuking* are for enhancing the character of God's people. In one short verse, Paul summarizes the purpose of Scripture as equipping leaders for whatever they might need, so that God's servant—Timothy especially—is fully prepared. Paul's encouragement is that, with a legacy of faithful people behind him and Scripture always before him, Timothy can walk in "every good work" that God has prepared (1 Tim. 3:17).

1 What is an Old Testament verse that points you to Jesus?

2 How do you most commonly make use of Scripture? How is it useful to you?

3 How would you extend what Paul is saying to include the entire Bible, Old and New Testaments?

We Need One Another

Our culture boasts of social connections through technology, apps and social media. Yet loneliness has become an epidemic. This epidemic has affected the local church, as many people adopt an individualized approach to Christian faith. But among the body of Christ there should be constant opportunities to connect and to come alongside one another. The work of Christ welcomes us into a global family of believers, all who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ. Those connections can be stronger than any biological relationship.

As the apostle Paul disciplined Timothy and encouraged him to fan the flame—making abundant use of the Word of God—we should be encouraged to do the same. In a local church, we find ourselves at different stages of spiritual maturity. But every Christian has the opportunity to pour into the life of a brother or sister in the Lord and to encourage lasting faith. If you have been following Jesus for a year or more than fifty years, you can look back on your journey and give thanks for someone who encouraged you to press forward.

When I was at the lowest point of my walk with Jesus, the Lord sent a “Paul” into my life. An older Christian took the time to pour into me more encouragement than I had ever received before. I was a young man who struggled to stand on the truth of the Scriptures, but we met weekly for lunch. Mostly, he listened. Then he would point me back to Scripture and pray over me, putting his hand on my shoulder. It’s the kind of witness that I needed.

1 How does loneliness go unnoticed in church?

2 How does the gospel of Jesus transform the way that we look at relationships and family?

3 Do you feel more like a “Paul” or a “Timothy” in this season? Are you in a position to give or to receive encouragement?

My Heritage of Faith

Timothy's upbringing in the faith by his grandmother, mother, and mentor—Paul—reminds us that, in most cases, people learn to find and follow Jesus through the loving, patient training and modeling of others. Who were the spiritual mentors who led you to faith in Jesus? Who are the mentees whom God has placed in your circle of influence for you to pour into spiritually? Pray for them.

My Spiritual Mentors:

My Spiritual Mentees:

Key Text

When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also. —2 Timothy 1:5 KJV

I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also. —2 Timothy 1:5 NIV

Quiet Hour[®] and Cross Daily Bible Readings

Week of August 24 through August 29

- Mon.** 1 Peter 4:7–11—Use Your Gifts to Serve.
- Tue.** 2 Kings 4:8–17—God Rewards Hospitality.
- Wed.** Proverbs 31:10–22—A Capable, Entrepreneurial Woman.
- Thu.** Matthew 25:14–23—Good and Faithful Servants.
- Fri.** Matthew 25:24–30—The Wicked Servant.
- Sat.** Job 31:16–28—The Righteous Provide for Others.

Next Week: Acts 16:11–15, 40

We will end the quarter by discussing Lydia and her hospitality. If you are engaged in a mentoring relationship, how do you give or receive hospitality?