

A Protégé with Promise

Paul came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived. . . . Paul wanted to take him along on the journey. (Acts 16:1, 3a)

Scripture: Acts 16:1–5

Song: “I Gave My Life for Thee”

F.B. Meyer (1847–1929) was a preacher and evangelist in England. He wrote of the time when God required of him full surrender. Mr. Meyer wrestled. He held tightly to one passion he did not want to release. Finally, Meyer prayed, “I am not willing, but I am willing to be made willing.”

Timothy was well aware of the hardships Paul experienced. He knew potential persecutions, beatings, imprisonments, shipwrecks, even stoning could await him. And we sense from Paul’s letters to Timothy that the young man tended to be fearful—yet he yielded to the apostle’s will. Through Paul’s faithful mentorship, God was able to transform a timid, yet obedient, young disciple into a soldier of Jesus Christ. Timothy endured hardship. He pastored a church in an idolatrous city. He faithfully led by example “in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12).

We may hesitate to surrender fully to the will of God, fearful He’ll send us to some far-off land or place us in an unwanted position. Yet, when we are willing and yielded disciples like Timothy and F.B. Meyer, God will transform our lives and our ministries.

Father, where I am fearful or resistant, make me willing. I want to be a yielded disciple. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

August 17–23. **Sandra Vosburgh** is a Bible teacher and women’s ministry leader. She and her husband have five children and 14 grandchildren.

Receive Instruction

Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance. (Proverbs 1:5)

Scripture: Proverbs 1:1–9

Song: “Let the Lower Lights Be Burning”

A buoy off the southern shore of Wales bears a bell intended to warn mariners of a dangerous sandbank. The location marks the site of multiple shipwrecks. When the winds are strong and the sea is stirred, the bell’s solemn tones can be heard for miles. Wise sailors will hear the warning, understand its meaning, and adjust their course.

King Solomon’s proverbs serve as warning bells to those navigating the stormy seas of life. Considered the wisest of all men, Solomon draws from his experience to warn those who come behind him. The summation of his proverbs could be “Sin has consequences.” These insightful sayings are not intended to limit our freedom but to keep us from making a shipwreck of our life. They are truths from the mind and heart of God for the good of His people—particularly young people who lack experience and are, therefore, vulnerable to learning these lessons the hard way.

Regardless of our age or spiritual maturity, we are wise to listen to God’s Word, learn its meaning, heed its warnings, and adjust our course. The storms will come and go, yet we are sure to reach a desired haven when we are open to receive God’s instruction.

Father, grant me discernment. Let Your Word guide me in every matter I face and every decision I make. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Learn from Your Parents

Buy the truth and do not sell it—wisdom, instruction and insight as well. (Proverbs 23:23)

Scripture: Proverbs 23:22–25

Song: “To Every Generation”

Greg Jao currently serves as Senior Assistant to the President of InterVarsity’s campus ministry. In a recent interview, Jao stated that college is the time when Christian young people often start making their own decisions about their faith. “They have to decide, ‘Do I still believe this, and how will I continue to engage in this faith?’”

Solomon cautions young people ready to leave the oversight of their parents. He warns them to retain the truth that their father and mother instilled in them. An independent young man or woman will walk streets lined with the world’s wares. Barkers will call to them with the promise of pleasure, popularity, and profit. These are cunning merchandizers. Their offers are deceptive and their products inferior. A wise son or daughter will walk circumspectly. When challenged with amoral philosophies and humanistic reasonings, those who fear the Lord will hold to the Scriptures. They will buy the truth and never sell it, regardless of the cost.

As parents or grandparents, we understand John’s declaration in 3 John 4: “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.” Our joy is deepened when we hear that our children and grandchildren are walking in the truth by their own convictions and not ours.

Father, help me to understand the value of biblical truth and never sell it, at any cost. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

A Worthy and Trusted Minister

But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. (Philippians 2:22)

Scripture: Philippians 2:19–24

Song: “Make Me a Servant”

The name D.L. Moody is known around the globe. Few, however, have heard of John Farwell, Moody’s assistant and supporter. When Moody entered full-time Christian work, Farwell gave him a home rent-free. Moody’s Chicago revivals were held at the tabernacle designed and built by John Farwell. When Moody traveled abroad, Farwell served as his Chicago contact. This selfless man proved invaluable to Moody’s ministry.

Paul testified of the same trustworthiness in Timothy. The young man had served the apostle selflessly whenever and wherever needed. Others had forsaken Paul to pursue their own interests, yet Timothy remained by his side. The young missionary’s entire purpose had been to encourage and support Paul for the sake of the gospel. He walked with Paul as a son with his father and developed the heart and passion of the apostle. Paul’s burdens became Timothy’s burdens. Timothy held a genuine concern for the churches; therefore, Paul could send him to Philippi, confident he would be faithful to the mission.

Those in the forefront of ministry are vulnerable to spiritual attack. They face complex challenges and carry private burdens. When we come alongside them, we prove ourselves invaluable to their ministry.

Father, enable me to be a faithful, trusted servant. Show me ways to honor You by encouraging my brothers and sisters in Christ. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Teach Your Children God's Ways

“Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.” (Deuteronomy 4:9)

Scripture: Deuteronomy 4:9–13

Song: “Tell Me the Old, Old Story”

My husband says I am easily distracted. I proved him right when I began to clean a closet and pulled out a box of photo albums. I abandoned my cleaning project and spent the next hour lost in reviewing the captured moments. Snapshots of people we love and events we shared have been intentionally memorialized, ready to pass on to our children.

Over the decades of wilderness wandering, the children of Israel had seen and heard miraculous things. The generation about to cross the Jordan had heard of the great deliverance from Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea. They had seen water gush from rocks and manna fall from the sky. They had heard the voice of God. Throughout their history God often commanded the Israelites to set up a memorial. These stone markers were to remind the people of His mighty works and the command to teach their children to fear Him.

Throughout time, statues and memorials have stood as reminders of national sacrifice and triumphant victories. We too must be intentional in passing on to future generations the stories of God's work in our lives and in the world.

Father, thank You for Your wonderful works in my life. May I be faithful to testify of them to the generations that follow. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

A Father's Message

What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 1:13)

Scripture: 2 Timothy 1:1–16

Song: “Make Me a Blessing”

My four-year-old grandson is like most boys. He imitates his father. The child's walk, his mannerisms, even the words he says are a miniature reflection of what he sees in his father. Like every parent, my son must invest his time and energy into mentoring his little disciple in the Word of God and the Christian life.

The apostle Paul chose Timothy to accompany him on his missionary journeys. He mentored the young believer, investing his time and energy into Timothy's spiritual growth. Their relationship became like that of a father and son. In this second letter to Timothy, Paul affirms his expectation that death awaited him in Rome. So, the apostle emphasizes what he wants Timothy to remember. Paul tells him to hold to the pattern he showed him and teach the Word of God as Paul did—unashamedly, unwaveringly, with a sincere faith and a pure heart. Timothy is also charged with training up others to teach.

We may not be at the age or have the opportunity to teach little ones. But there are others who need the example, encouragement, and (possibly) instruction we can provide. Then they too can teach their children to guard the pattern with faith and love in Jesus Christ.

Father, lead me into relationships where I can point others to You. May I encourage and support them so they will teach others also. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Continue What You Have Learned

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it. (2 Timothy 3:14)

Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:10–11, 14–17

Song: “Holding Forth the Word of Life”

I recently joined a women’s Bible study. The selected study guide was packaged well. It looked promising. But we soon realized the content was deceptive. The questions in the study guide generated discussion. They also generated doubt by their subtle departure from God’s teaching. We quickly abandoned that course for one rooted in truth.

Paul warned Timothy that false teachers would increase and grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. They would attempt to seduce believers, including Timothy, to follow them. They may be packaged attractively, but they are imposters. They make extravagant claims to gain power. They use a sprinkling of Scripture to pacify the doubts of their victims. To ensure Timothy did not fall prey, Paul instructs him to continue in the things he’s been taught. Timothy is to hold fast to the Scriptures he learned from his mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5). He is to follow Paul’s example in defending the faith, even in the face of persecution.

In this day when the stream of voices is unending, it’s important that we take the time to evaluate those who influence our beliefs. Like Timothy, the only way we can guard ourselves from lies is to know the truth and hold it fast.

Father, grant me a discerning spirit. If I must defend my faith, let me do so in humility. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.