



KEEP THE FAITH

BIG IDEA: Faith is a gift we are to guard and pass on to others.

DATE: Wednesday, October 29 and Sunday, November 2, 2025

SCRIPTURE: 2 Timothy 1:1-14

OPENING QUESTION

Who passed on their faith to you? *Was it a family member or friend? How have you rekindled your faith or kept it going?*

LEADERS: Write "Four Generations" on the board and then reveal the following statements one at a time as you explain them, numbering them as you go. **OR** prepare 4 pieces of paper ahead of time with the statements written on them (one statement per page) and enlist 4 people to come stand at the front of the class, revealing their page one at a time.

- MY FAITH IS ESSENTIAL
- FAITH IS OPTIONAL
- FAITH IS UNNECESSARY
- JESUS WHO?

SAY: These four people/statements represent four generations of a family. We have a grandparent, a father/mother, a son/daughter and a grandchild.

The grandparent says, (reveal the paper) "My faith is essential. It is the most important part of my life. My church family helps me stay strong in the faith."

The father or mother says, (reveal the paper) "Faith is optional. It is a part of my life but not the most important thing. I go to church occasionally and pray to God when I need something." Note the word "my" was dropped - it is no longer a personal relationship; there is no ownership of the faith.

The son/daughter then says, (reveal the paper) "Faith is unnecessary. I don't really need it for anything." This lack of dependence on God was modeled to them.

The grandchild then asks, (reveal the paper) "Jesus who?"

We are called to pass on our faith to the next generation. Timothy's faith was passed down from his grandmother Lois to his mother Eunice and then to him. We are not only to keep our faith but to keep passing it down from generation to generation. This exercise shows we are just one

generation away from extinguishing the flame of our faith. Today's lesson is Paul's final letter to Timothy, urging him to keep the faith. (Share the Setting the Stage section below for context.)

SETTING THE STAGE

In order to fully appreciate the letter of 2 Timothy, we have to understand what happened in the two or three years since Paul sent his first letter to Timothy. Timothy was still pastoring the church at Ephesus, but Paul was now imprisoned in a Roman dungeon, suffering "even to the point of chains" (2 Timothy 2:9). Many of Paul's friends and fellow workers have been killed in the persecution enacted by the emperor Nero. The outlook for Christians seemed dire. Paul himself would be executed shortly after sending this final letter.

Surprisingly, the emotion that comes through in the letter is not fear or regret but loneliness. Just look at some of Paul's opening words. Twice within the space of a few verses he asks Timothy to visit him. It's a time of grim reality for the apostle. He sees the things to which he has committed his life teetering on the edge of extinction.

As for Timothy, this young man continued to be responsible for the church at Ephesus and all its sprawling daughter ministries. He was stationed in a city renowned for its wickedness and idolatry. To our knowledge, the church had little structure or organization, and the believers knew nothing about worship. It was filled with people who were older than him, many of whom likely doubted his ability to lead, based on his age.

It would not have been surprising if the circumstances Timothy faced, including the imminent execution of his spiritual father, brought about doubt and struggle in his life. So, Paul is careful to offer words that will keep Timothy's faith burning.

STUDY THE BIBLE

2 Timothy 1:3-14 (NLT)

³ Timothy, I thank God for you—the God I serve with a clear conscience, just as my ancestors did. Night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. ⁴ I long to see you again, for I remember your tears as we parted. And I will be filled with joy when we are together again. ⁵ I remember your genuine faith, for you share the faith that first filled your grandmother Lois and your mother, Eunice. And I know that same faith continues strong in you.

⁶ This is why I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you. ⁷ For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline. ⁸ So never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord. And don't be ashamed of me, either, even though I'm in prison for him. With the strength God gives you, be ready to suffer with me for the sake of the Good News. ⁹ For God saved us and called us to live a holy life. He did this, not because we deserved it, but because that was his plan from before the beginning of time—to show us his grace through Christ Jesus. ¹⁰ And now he has made all of this plain to us by the appearing of Christ Jesus, our Savior. He broke the power of death and illuminated the way to life and immortality through the Good News. ¹¹ And God chose me to be a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of this Good News.

¹² That is why I am suffering here in prison. But I am not ashamed of it, for I know the one in whom I trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until the day of

his return. ¹³ Hold on to the pattern of wholesome teaching you learned from me—a pattern shaped by the faith and love that you have in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ Through the power of the Holy Spirit who lives within us, carefully guard the precious truth that has been entrusted to you.

DISCUSSION

THANKFUL FOR TIMOTHY

READ: 2 Timothy 1:3-5

In prison, facing execution, Paul still found reason to be thankful to God. What are some of the practices that Paul has maintained, even in chains? (verses 3-4)

The word *genuine* that Paul uses in this passage can also be translated *unhypocritical*. What are some reasons that Paul provides for Timothy's remarkable genuine faith? (verse 5)

In what ways was Timothy equipped by God to be a disciple of Jesus?

How is a person's spiritual growth impacted by the lives of others? Share examples from your own life.

TIMOTHY'S FAITH AND HERITAGE

READ: 2 Timothy 1:6-11

It is likely that Timothy did not have a strong father figure in his family. As a result, he may not have been as comfortable with confrontation or dealing with opposition. What did Paul, his spiritual father, want him to remember about his calling? (verses 6-7)

Just as Jesus was deserted by his disciples before the crucifixion, so has Paul been deserted by many of his friends and fellow workers. Paul therefore calls on Timothy to "share with him in the sufferings for the gospel" (v. 8). Why would Timothy, or anyone, want to share with Paul in the sufferings of the gospel? What was Paul's greater focus? (verses 9-10)

How does Paul describe the calling that he and Timothy received?

What are the dangers of relying on our own strength and abilities to complete a God-given task? How can one tell the difference?

NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL

READ: 2 Timothy 1:12-14

Why do Christians need reminders that we shouldn't be ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ?

- As Christians, we're at odds with the secular culture, which tries to belittle, bully, and stigmatize our choices in order to minimize our impact and influence.
- Too often we ignore the persecution of other Christians when we aren't directly affected; however, sharing in Christ's sufferings also means supporting fellow believers through trials.

What gives you the confidence to serve or suffer for Christ without fear of being ashamed? How do our attitudes toward suffering dictate our abilities to withstand it?

- Although we glory in the cross, when we're in the midst of suffering it doesn't feel or look particularly glorious. Embracing the big picture of suffering helps us to bear up under it.

- Understanding that God is the ultimate guardian of our faith empowers us to do our parts. We stand up under pressure as people protecting a sacred trust.

God gives a particular call to believers, including a set of responsibilities and ultimately new life through the Holy Spirit. What is the responsibility of believers? (verses 13-14)

What help did Timothy have in keeping the sound teachings that had been entrusted to him?

How does loyalty to our leaders and spiritual mentors impact us when our faith is under fire? We can stay committed, knowing the teachings of our ancestors in the faith were solid and trustworthy. We can let the same faith and love they showed be our guide.

Who has been a role model of the faith to you and in what way? How did they help you fan the flame of your faith to keep it burning?

Who in your circle has lost their passion for Christ? How can you help them rekindle it?

RESPONSE

We are all called to pass on our faith and thankfully where God calls, He equips. What are some ways God has gifted you to build up the church? Think about spiritual gifts and experiences you have gone through that have shaped your faith. These experiences have given you wisdom and empathy that you can pass on. Ask God to give you divine opportunities to share your gifts or story with someone this week.

Excerpted from “1 & 2 Timothy & Titus: The Way to Live and Lead for Christ” by Dr. David Jeremiah. Peachtree Publishing Services: Copyright 2020.

COMMENTARY

VERSES 3-4

Paul pointed to Timothy’s religious heritage to encourage him to remain faithful. He began by expressing gratitude for Timothy while, at the same time, mentioning his own *ancestors*. Paul affirmed that he served God *with a clear conscience* even as his forefathers had done. This reference is interesting since Paul had not grown up in a Christian family but was raised under the strong influence of the Pharisees. Likely the statement meant that his ancestors served God sincerely, even though they predated Christ’s ministry. The term *ancestors* could refer to Paul’s immediate parentage in the same way that he appealed to Timothy’s mother and grandmother. Another approach views the ancestors as the patriarchal forefathers, such as Abraham. Paul used his personal history to bring up Timothy’s spiritual background.

Paul’s prayer of thanksgiving for Timothy is reminiscent of his salutations in other epistles. (See Phil. 1:3; Col. 1:3; 1 Thess. 1:2.) He prayed for the young preacher consistently—*night and day*. As he did so, he thanked God for him. Timothy had been Paul’s companion, co-laborer, and son in the ministry. Their relationship was a continuous source of encouragement for both men.

Some time had passed between Paul’s first and second letter to Timothy. They probably had ministered together before Paul was arrested and sent to Rome for his final imprisonment. We do not know whether Timothy said goodbye prior to Paul’s arrest or later. In either case, Paul witnessed

Timothy's *tears* as they bid farewell. Remembering the way Timothy had wept over the situation, Paul yearned to see him again.

The phrase *I long to see you* likely referred to Paul's anticipation of a visit by Timothy to Rome (2 Tim. 4:9,13). He knew he would be filled with joy by seeing his son in ministry again.

VERSE 5

Having introduced his personal spiritual heritage, Paul transitioned to Timothy's *faith*. Timothy's belief was *sincere*. Timothy's commitment to the Lord had been evident from the day he left his family to accompany Paul on his missionary journey.

Having met Timothy during his visit to Lystra, Derbe, and Iconium, Paul had heard many good commendations of the young believer. The son of a Jewish mother and a Greek father, Timothy became a Christian before encountering Paul. (See Acts 16:1-2.) His *grandmother Lois* and his *mother Eunice* were believers and had obviously influenced Timothy toward faith in Christ. Nothing is said about Timothy's father being a believer, but he did not hinder Timothy from leaving to accompany Paul.

Paul mentioned Timothy's heritage at this point to encourage him. Perhaps Timothy had encountered some level of self-doubt, possibly due to the opposition he had experienced at Ephesus. If he had fallen short of personal expectations, Timothy would be encouraged by Paul's confidence that his faith was as firm as that of his mother and grandmother.

We can find strength from people who invest in us spiritually. If the way we meet challenges produces a sense of failure or doubt, we can find renewed vigor by being reminded that others believe in us.

VERSES 6-7

Dealing with adversity in church can be daunting for a mature pastor. Timothy was a younger man and may have responded to opposition in Ephesus with some level of fear. Paul reminded the young pastor to *fan into flame the gift of God*. Referring to Timothy's giftedness by the Holy Spirit, Paul challenged him to remain bold.

The phrase *fan into flame* means to bring to flame again. It does not suggest that Timothy had lost the gift but that he needed to fan the embers and keep the fire of faithfulness blazing. Conflict has a dampening effect on a church and its leaders. It can lead to withdrawal and hesitancy. Paul urged Timothy to respond with renewed fervor not in the flesh but with the spiritual gift God had given him. The text does not specify what *the gift of God* involved. Some scholars suggest it refers to God's gift of the Holy Spirit. All believers receive the Holy Spirit at conversion and are gifted for service. The gift could refer to Timothy's gift of preaching, which would be consistent with Paul's previous letter (1 Tim. 4:14).

In any case, we can know several facts: (1) The gift was a spiritual empowerment; (2) it was not a natural ability but had been conferred by God; (3) the gift resided within Timothy; and (4) it had been confirmed by the symbol of Paul's laying on of his hands.

The *laying on of ... hands* was a typical expression found in appointment for service. (See Acts 6:6.) This description should not infer that any spiritual gifts passed from one person to another but rather implied recognition and consent for service.

The opening of verse 7 introduces the reason Timothy needed to rekindle his gift. Rather than

responding to critics with timidity, he should be bold. Paul contrasted the spiritual gift of God in verse 6 with the spirit of fear that Timothy may have been experiencing. The word *timid* can also be translated as "cowardice." This emotion does not come from God.

Instead, God gifts His servants with the spirit of *power, love and self-discipline*. The term *power* does not necessarily mean mere strength but endowment with ability to perform God-ordained tasks. Joining this word with *love* suggests the Holy Spirit does not give supernatural power to overwhelm others but to minister to them effectively and compassionately. Alongside this giftedness, God grants believers *self-discipline* to know how they should respond to whatever situation confronts them.

Believers can act boldly with the power of the Spirit working through them. We are enabled to minister confidently because of the inner working of God's Spirit. God gifts us with whatever we need to carry out His mandate.

VERSE 8

Paul declared his assurance despite being persecuted for his faith in Christ. He was Christ's *prisoner*, meaning he was in prison because of his faithfulness to Jesus. His confidence was not based on his own abilities but on his belief in Christ and the power of the resurrection. Accordingly, he urged Timothy not to be *ashamed of the testimony about our Lord*. Paul's admonition may suggest Timothy had responded poorly to the opposition at Ephesus.

Given Timothy's affection for Paul, it is difficult to imagine why Paul had to encourage Timothy not to be ashamed of him because of his imprisonment. His follow up statement offers some context. If Timothy remained faithful to the testimony of the Lord, he might *join ... in suffering for the gospel*. Instead of shying away from that possibility, Timothy should embrace it. He could do so only by relying on the power of God.

VERSES 9-10

Timothy and Paul could trust God even during adversity because God had proven His faithfulness. He had *saved* them and *called* them. Notice Paul's use of the word *us* to bring together their common experiences. Throughout this section, Paul constantly used the plural pronoun to identify himself with Timothy. They had received a *holy life*, indicating both the nature of the call and its source.

In the economy of God, His *purpose and grace* were theirs *before the beginning of time*. The point of this eternal aspect of God's work was not to focus on them but on *Christ Jesus*. In eternity past, God had established His plan of salvation in Christ. That plan resulted not only in their salvation but also in their calling to proclaim the good news of Jesus to the nations.

What had been a mystery has been *revealed* through the appearing of Jesus. (See 1 Tim. 3:16; Col. 4:3.) Many people did not understand or accept Jesus as Messiah, but He was Savior for Paul and Timothy and anyone else who would receive Him by faith. The reference to Christ's appearing included His divine birth, earthly ministry, and death and resurrection.

Through His victory over the tomb, Christ *destroyed death*. Death is the last enemy to be abolished (1 Cor. 15:26), yet in Jesus' resurrection it is an accomplished fact. This does not mean that people would not die physically prior to Christ's second coming. Rather, it refers to spiritual death, contrasted to the *life and immortality* that Jesus brought to light. The *gospel* is the vehicle through which the life of Christ is revealed.

VERSES 11-12

Paul drew a direct connection between the good news of Jesus and his purpose in life. He did not choose the life that wound through several missionary journeys to his cell in Rome. Instead, he was *appointed* by God.

Paul's calling encompassed many roles. As a *herald*, he proclaimed the Christ. He did not claim a message of his own but spoke as the Holy Spirit directed. As an *apostle*, Paul was sent out with a mission to bring the gospel to the nations. As a *teacher*, Paul used not only his missionary opportunities but also his epistles to educate believers in sound doctrine.

Anyone with Paul's accomplishments should have been acclaimed. Instead, his ministry in the gospel was the reason why he would *suffersuffer*, a reference to his imprisonment and pending execution. As Paul served the Lord, he experienced numerous imprisonments, beatings, shipwreck, and other perils. (See 2 Cor. 11:23-27.) Through it all, Paul maintained his bold faithfulness to Christ.

Paul had no cause *for shame* of his service to the Lord. His confidence rested not in himself but in the Lord. He knew intimately the One whom he had believed. Paul's faith was not merely in a set of principles but in the person of Christ. By personal experience, he knew Jesus to be faithful.

As a result, Paul was persuaded of a singular truth: Christ was fully able. He was sufficient for all things. In this specific instance, He was *able to guard* what had been *entrusted* to him. The term translated *entrusted to me* can mean either a deposit that Christ gave him or that he had given to Christ. Both understandings are true, and in both the One who preserves the deposit is Christ. The phrase *until that day* looks forward to a future revealing of Christ at His return.

We can live with confidence knowing that Jesus demonstrated His power through the resurrection. His power works in believers who embrace their roles in God's eternal purpose and calling.

VERSES 13-14

Paul charged Timothy to follow his example, loyally carrying the gospel to others and standing for the truth. He acknowledged that Timothy already had experienced a *pattern of sound teaching* from watching Paul. The Greek term translated *pattern* refers to a form or example.

Timothy had ample opportunity to observe Paul, absorb his doctrine, and learn from his model. Timothy was well equipped with theological truth and practical experience.

Some people express their faith with firm conviction but do so in a way that lacks compassion. As Timothy resisted the false teachers, he should do so in *faith and love* found in Christ Jesus. Jesus was both Timothy's source and object of faith. Christ's love had transformed Saul into Paul and brought Timothy into the forefront of missional ministry.

Paul repeated the term he used in verse 12 regarding the deposit entrusted to them. He charged Timothy to *guard* what had been consigned by the Lord. This verse is reminiscent of Paul's closing charge to Timothy in his previous letter (1 Tim. 6:20).

Timothy did not have to carry out this commission in his fleshly strength but could depend on *the Holy Spirit*. The Spirit of God lives in us. Repeating his inclusive approach, Paul returned to the plural reference *us* to remind Timothy that they shared the Lord's commission and empowerment. The indwelling Spirit serves as our sentinel, guarding that which God has trusted to us.

Many scholars believe what had been deposited was the gospel. As such, it is a *good deposit*. It also is a godly deposit, entrusted by the Lord and kept by His Spirit. Like Timothy, we are charged with delivering the gospel not only to our generation but also to the next.

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