

Timothy, a Leader with a Legacy

Devotional Reading: Matthew 12:46–50

Background Scripture: Acts 16:1–3; Philippians 2:19–22;
2 Timothy 1:1–6; 3:14–16

2 Timothy 1:1–6

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.

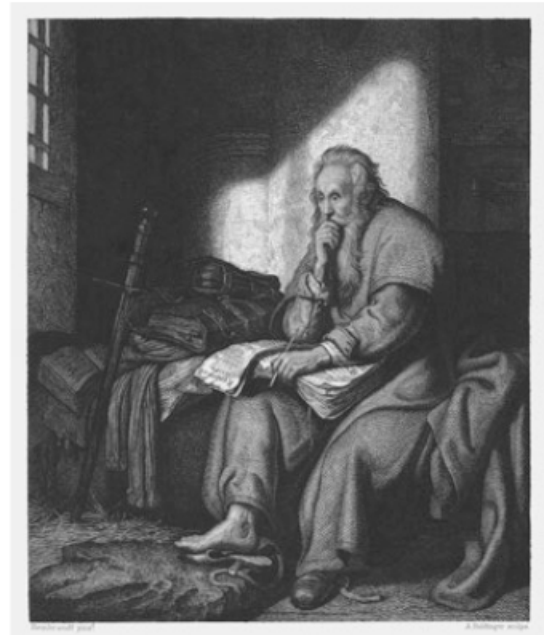
⁶ For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

2 Timothy 3:14–16

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,



Key Text

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

A. Running Partner for Life

The individualism of modern culture takes many forms. Recently, I noticed individualistic tendencies in physical fitness. If we eat a balanced diet, it is because we choose one *ourselves*. If we work out each day, it is because we set *ourselves* a routine. In contrast, my fitness breakthrough came when I invited others to join me.

It took three years, but eventually, I lost 60 pounds. I had to commit to personal change: healthy eating, visiting the gym daily, and running. However, I'm sure I wouldn't have followed through if I had made those changes alone. I needed the support of the people closest to me, especially my wife. She prepared healthy meals for the family, came with me to the gym, and joined me on my runs. Somehow, she anticipated trouble and hang-ups that were positioned to frustrate my fitness goals. When I was tempted to throw in the towel, her kindness and companionship encouraged me to persist in the habits that honored my commitments.

B. Lesson Context: Paul

The persecutor-turned-apostle Paul is responsible for writing a large percentage of the New Testament epistles. He wrote letters to churches and individuals. "Writing" is a flexible term for an era without mail service, widespread literacy, or inexpensive paper. Several of his letters list coauthors: Sosthenes (1 Corinthians 1:1); Timothy (2 Corinthians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:1; Philemon 1:1); and Silas together with Timothy (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1). Paul also employed the help of specialized scribes, perhaps relying heavily upon them when he was confined in Rome. The writing secretary (called an *amanuensis* in Latin) sometimes carried the letter to its destination, delivering and interpreting the contents. For example, see the commendation of Tychicus in Ephesians 6:21 and Colossians 4:7.

As far as we know, Paul had no children and never married. He had a sister and nephew (Acts 23:16), so he was an uncle. Scripture gives us little information about Paul's parents, but we know

The Testimony of Faithful Witnesses

Unit 3: Faithful Witnesses Spread the Good News

Lessons 9–13

Lesson Aims

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Identify the parts of Timothy's upbringing that contributed to his identity as a faithful witness.
2. Explain the wisdom that comes from the study of God's Word.
3. List practices that might nurture children into becoming faithful witnesses.

Lesson Outline

Introduction

A. Running Partner for Life

B. Lesson Context: Paul

C. Lesson Context: Timothy

I. Sincere Legacy (2 Timothy 1:1–6)

A. From Father to Son (vv. 1–2)

Father in the Faith

B. Foundation of Faith (vv. 3–5)

C. The Gift of God (v. 6)

No Time "Before Christ"

II. Continued Legacy (2 Timothy 3:14–16)

A. Persist in Learning (v. 14)

B. Know the Scriptures (vv. 15–16)

Conclusion

A. Imitation and Encouragement

B. Prayer

C. Thought to Remember

he received high-level religious education, learned tent-making as a trade, and was a Roman citizen. We know he studied under the famous rabbi, Gamaliel, in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3). Paul’s relationship with Gamaliel as a spiritual father may have influenced his decision to consider Timothy as a son in the faith (1 Timothy 1:2).

Since Paul’s production of letters involved Timothy to a large degree and he thought of Timothy like a son, it is fitting that Paul would write to him when they were apart. Even as Paul endured imprisonment in Rome and his day of martyrdom drew near (around AD 67), he continued planning correspondences. Paul wrote two letters to Timothy while the younger man served as a pastor in Ephesus. Through them, he offered guidance, reassurance, and encouragement. Eventually, Paul requested that Timothy visit him in Rome and “bring . . . the scrolls [and] especially the parchments” (2 Timothy 4:9, 13). In some ways, 2 Timothy reads like a last will and testament, sent from a spiritual father to a spiritual son (4:6; compare Philippians 2:22). As any father would, Paul wished to see Timothy again before he died.

C. Lesson Context: Timothy

Though Timothy is often perceived as a youth, he was approximately 40 years old when he received Paul’s second letter. Paul first met Timothy while traveling through Lystra (Acts 16:1–3). According to Acts 16:1, Timothy’s mother was Jewish, but his father was Greek. Strict Jews con-

sidered such a relationship dangerous and sometimes even sinful (compare Nehemiah 13:23–27; Ezra 9:1–10:44). Greek culture placed fathers as the head of the household (*paterfamilias*), and therefore, the one responsible for decisions regarding matters of religion. Timothy’s Greek paternity is evident in his lack of circumcision, which, as a Jew, should have occurred on the eighth day of his life (Acts 16:3; Leviticus 12:3). However, Timothy possessed some education in Jewish faith by way of his mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5). Much of Timothy’s further ministry education and training came from the time he spent with Paul while they served as missionaries planting churches across Macedonia.

I. Sincere Legacy
(2 Timothy 1:1–6)

A. From Father to Son (vv. 1–2)

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

Like other ancient letters, 2 Timothy begins by sharing information that modern letter recipients would find on an envelope. *Paul* identifies himself as the sender and *an apostle of Christ Jesus*. The title “apostle” is significant for Paul because he was not present with Jesus during Jesus’ earthly ministry. Nonetheless, *God* is the one who commissions Paul by his *will*. Paul reminds the letter’s recipient that in *Christ Jesus* we find *life*. Jesus came “that [we] might have life, and . . . to the full” (John 10:10)—it is a *promise*.

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

Paul identifies *Timothy* as the letter’s recipient. He describes Timothy in affectionate and familial terms (compare Titus 1:4). Paul considers Timothy not only a *son* but one *dear* to his heart—he is highly cherished.

Grace and *peace* are traditional greetings found in many of Paul’s letters. In contrast, the standard salutation in nonreligious Greek writing of the time was a wish for good health. Paul asks instead for marks of spiritual health: God’s unearned

How to Say It

amanuensis	uh-man-yew-en-sis.
Ephesus	Ef-uh-sus.
Gamaliel	Guh-may-lih-ul or Guh-may-lee-al.
Habakkuk	Huh-back-kuk.
Lystra	Liss-truh.
Macedonia	Mass-eh-doe-nee-uh.
paterfamilias	pah-ter-fah-mil-ee-us
presbytery	prez-buh-ter-ee.
Septuagint	Sep-too-ih-jent.
Sosthenes	Soss-thuh-nee-z.
Tychicus	Tick-ih-cuss.

favor (*grace*) and an anticipation of wholeness in God's restorative work (*peace*). Paul also adds the term *mercy*, which indicates a desire for God's compassionate treatment. As a father in the faith, Paul desires the fullness of favor, compassion, and wholeness for his son.

Father in the Faith

Joe grew up in a single-parent household and wished for a father. He loved his mother and admired her grit, but he spent long hours alone after school and on weekends while she worked two jobs. When Joe was young, he stayed in the house with the doors locked. As he grew older, Joe went home with friends for dinner and to do homework. Participation in other households provided the chance to observe how different families interacted. He witnessed the ways other parents demonstrated love for their children. Joe paid careful attention to the dads.

Joe was in middle school when a friend invited him to church. There, he met a youth pastor with whom he formed a special bond. Quickly, Joe became a regular part of this church community. He was baptized and became a true son in the faith to this pastor. Their friendship continues to this day.

Scripture says little about Timothy's biological father, but we know he had a strong spiritual father in Paul. Who are your mentors, guides, and spiritual parents in the faith? —L. M. W.

B. Foundation of Faith (vv. 3–5)

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.

This verse begins a sentence in Greek that stretches to the end of verse 5. It is customary in ancient letters to include a note of thanksgiving. Paul offers his gratitude to *God* and then connects his mention of God to the legacy of Jewish and Israelite *ancestors*. In other letters, Paul defends the continuity between his faith and the devotion of Jewish predecessors: those who “have faith” are “children of Abraham” (Galatians 3:7–9). Here, he makes the connection more personal—he continues to serve the same God as his Jewish forebears.

By reiterating his spiritual heritage, Paul emphasizes the importance of faith that is passed down from one generation to the next.

Paul also introduces the topic of remembrance as he describes the consistent *prayers* he offers for Timothy. He is reflecting upon their relationship from the vantage point of many years of fruitful association. Paul's son in the faith comes to mind throughout the *night and day*. Such frequent prayers indicate deep and enduring love. They model a vital facet of spiritual mentorship: prayers of intercession.

What Do You Think?

Who are your spiritual ancestors?

Digging Deeper

In what ways are you supporting the faith of future generations?

4. Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy.

Paul wants to *see* Timothy in person. There is no substitute for face-to-face interactions with our loved ones! In other epistles, Paul also expresses a longing to see his ministry partners (Romans 1:11). Typically, he intends to do the traveling (15:23; 1 Thessalonians 3:10–11), but in this case, Paul must rely on Timothy to come to him (see Lesson Context: Paul).

The term *recalling* is a form of “remember” (compare Matthew 5:23; 26:75; Luke 23:42; 24:8; Acts 11:16). Paul may remember a previous moment of connection or refer to a message he received from Timothy. He may be acknowledging Timothy's difficulties in opposition to false teachers and the backsliding of close companions (1 Timothy 1:3–7, 18–19).

Paul indicates that the resolution of his wish (and perhaps Timothy's sorrow) shall come at their next meeting. Even without the physical attainment of Paul's desire, his words speak *joy* and encouragement into a season of grief.

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.

This verse ends the lengthy sentence that began

Is your legacy marked by sincere faith?



Visual for Lesson 12. Display the visual in a prominent place. Point to the visual and ask the class to spend one minute contemplating the question.

in verse 3. Paul now purposefully remembers Timothy's *sincere faith*. The adjective translated as “sincere” means “without acting” or “without putting on a show.” Paul knows that Timothy's faith is genuine, giving him confidence in his protégé. Moreover, Paul reminds Timothy that he has a legacy of faith from his *grandmother Lois* and his *mother Eunice*.

There is little information about Lois and Eunice in Scripture. Therefore, there are at least two ways of interpreting Paul's statement. First, Lois and Eunice were Jewish followers of Christ, making Timothy a third-generation Christian. Acts 16:1 calls Timothy's mother “faithful” (translated “a believer”), which could mean that she received the good news of Jesus before Paul arrived in Lystra. Second, since Paul is drawing a parallel to himself—as he connects his faith to the worship of his Jewish ancestors (verse 3 above)—it is also possible that Paul is describing the continuity between Timothy's obedient Jewish training and his later reception of the gospel. In a broad sense, Paul credits Timothy's faith to his Jewish mother and grandmother, who taught him the truths of God from the Old Testament. It may not have been easy for Lois and Eunice to teach Timothy about God since Timothy's father was Greek (Acts 16:1). Timothy's mixed heritage (the son of a Jewish woman and a Greek man) makes him a living parable of Christ's reconciliation, which brings Jews and Gentiles together as one people (see Ephesians 2:13–18).

Paul is impressed with Timothy's faith—he was from their first meeting (Acts 16:1–3). He knows Timothy has not abandoned his devotion to God or renounced the truths he learned in childhood. Paul encourages Timothy to remember that his legacy comes from God.

What Do You Think?

Who do you know who has “sincere” faith? How does it influence you?

Digging Deeper

What habits or rhythms of remembrance do you use to keep such examples of faith in the forefront of your mind?

C. The Gift of God (v. 6)

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.

Paul changes the subject, now encouraging Timothy toward action. He asks Timothy not to let his *gift* drift into stagnancy. The Greek verb translated *fan into flame* is used to describe nursing a spark—one nearly extinguished or burning low. Other English translations ask Timothy to “stir up” his gift. Utilizing that metaphor, we may consider Newton's First Law of Motion or Inertia: “An object in motion stays in motion.” The converse is also true—it takes energy and force to initiate motion in resting objects. Paul knows it is important for Timothy to keep his spiritual fervor animated. The spread of the gospel message needs ministers who remain active, alert, and passionate about the work of God in their lives.

Timothy's *gift* is not formally stated but may refer to his leadership, teaching, or shepherding abilities. Later in the letter, Paul also mentions this gift (1 Timothy 4:14). There, Paul calls it “your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you.” In both places, the *laying on of . . . hands* is significant. The purposeful gesture could refer to the transference of a miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit, like those listed in 1 Corinthians 12:7–10 (healing, performing miracles, prophesying,

etc.). However, it certainly refers to Timothy’s ministerial commission. By placing their hands upon Timothy, church leaders granted him authority, charged him with the responsibility of ministry leadership, and affirmed his call.

What Do You Think?

In what ways can you encourage others to keep their spiritual fire aflame?

Digging Deeper

What are you doing to “fan into flame” your faith, ministry gifts, and commitment to God’s calling?

No Time “Before Christ”

I was preparing the testimony for my baptism, and I struggled with the question, “Where does my story begin?” My pastor encouraged me to discuss my “BC life” (as in, “before Christ”). I knew what he meant and was happy to tell of God’s work in my life. However, the idea bothered me because I knew that God was faithful to me *long* before I was ready to accept Christ. I kept thinking, “I don’t think there was a time before Christ.” You see, friends prayed, teachers planted seeds of wisdom, and God pursued me with sign after sign of his love.

None of us have ever lived in a “BC world.” Jesus was with the Father from the beginning, and Christ rescued us, even while we remained enemies of God (Romans 5:10). Have you thanked God for his faithfulness to you even before you called yourself a believer? Can you identify how God prepared you to hear and respond to the good news of Jesus? —J. D.

II. Continued Legacy
(2 Timothy 3:14–16)

A. Persist in Learning (v. 14)

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,

Paul encourages Timothy to persist. It is one thing to learn something, and it is another to be entirely confident (*convinced*) of its truth. The verb

translated *become convinced* of is from the same root as the word for “faith.” The things Timothy knows fill him with faith. Remembering and trusting in his education will allow confidence and steadfastness to remain in motion. Just before this verse, Paul reminds Timothy that he is also full of endurance and tenacity (2 Timothy 3:10–13). Now he reminds Timothy that his teachers are trustworthy, and that Timothy knows the integrity of his mentor.

B. Know the Scriptures (vv. 15–16)

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.

Paul returns to the idea that Timothy learned the Scriptures and truths of God from his mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5). What Paul calls *Holy Scriptures* cannot refer to a complete Bible as modern Christians understand it, since Timothy’s childhood came before most of the New Testament was written. Paul is referring to the Old Testament, particularly the Greek translation of the Old Testament called the Septuagint, which Paul frequently quotes in his letters.

Paul gives a theological reason for Scripture as the basis for *faith*: Scripture’s contents make a person *wise* and lead toward *salvation*. Salvation comes to fruition through the Messiah, who is *Christ Jesus*. Paul encourages Timothy to remember the incredible tool that he has in his ministry toolbox: long-term knowledge of God’s Word.

What Do You Think?

What is your history with Scripture? How do you stand firm on the things you know? How does Scripture increase wisdom?

Digging Deeper

What study tools do you use to thoroughly learn the Holy Scriptures?

16. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

Paul still has the Old Testament in mind as he

speaks of *all Scripture*. Paul was masterful at demonstrating the truth of the gospel from texts like Habakkuk 2:4, “The righteous person will live by his faithfulness” (quoted in Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11). Now we may extend the same principles to the New Testament, including the letters of Paul! Second Peter 3:15–16 describes Paul’s letters as containing wisdom, as with “other Scriptures.”

Paul names two essential truths that apply to Scripture: it is *God-breathed* and *useful*. First, the message is from *God*. The single word translated *God-breathed* is a rare compound word. It is possibly original to Paul. This type of original language use is like Shakespeare and other gifted writers who adaptively invent language to communicate new ideas. Paul uses this word to describe the God-giveness of Scripture. Timothy can trust the Scriptures because God is the life force behind them. As 2 Peter 1:20–21 explains, “No prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” God’s Word is entirely true because God cannot lie (Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18), but God works through human agency, using human writers.

Second, Paul affirms Scripture’s utility. It is helpful for teaching reliable doctrine about God and our proper response to him. Scripture serves as reproof by identifying wrong and sinful behavior (*rebuking*), giving correction, and describing the right way to live. Scripture demonstrates how to live in holiness according to the standard set forth by God. By knowing God’s instructions, Paul recognizes that Timothy will “understand what is right and just and fair—every good path” (Proverbs 2:9).

Conclusion

A. Imitation and Encouragement

Timothy had a surrogate parent and mentor in Paul. Paul lived a life worthy of imitation and spent significant time reaching out to his son in the faith to encourage and support him. Through

Paul’s writings, we learn essential truths about Timothy that help us identify him as a faithful witness of Christ.

Timothy’s rich heritage of faith was passed to him by his mother, grandmother, and spiritual father. Strong parental influence in faith is an incredible blessing. May we all find the mentors we need for steady growth in discipleship, and may we, in turn, develop into devoted mentors ourselves! Timothy’s example shows us that spiritual heritage comes from various places. If you lack spiritual support from your family of origin or extended family, don’t dismiss the power of relationships built out of a church family.

God gave Timothy a gift, a church leadership position, and beloved relationships. He had a spark implanted in him that remained burning. Timothy had endurance, a long memory, diligent trust in God, and supportive, helpful companions on the journey. He didn’t succumb to discouragement in the face of hardship and opposition. However, Timothy’s success didn’t come through individualistic means. He submitted to relationships that supported him through tough times.

What Do You Think?

Do you think discipleship and ministry are designed to be done alone? How do Mark 6:7; Acts 13:2–3; and Hebrews 10:24–25 influence your answer?

Digging Deeper

In what specific ways are you leaning on the community of faith?

B. Prayer

Father God, we are grateful for our spiritual fathers and mothers. Develop us into godly mentors and leaders as well. Help us to faithfully encourage our fellow believers when they face discouragement and persecution. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

C. Thought to Remember

Remember your faith heritage and trust Scripture’s instruction.