

## **Disciples Take Their Faith Home**

Scripture: 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 6: 1-14

In September, Pastor John began the current sermon series, “What Disciples Do.” Let’s just go briefly back to the beginning. First, the word Disciple in this case means Jesus Follower, someone who wants to learn from Jesus and live and love like Jesus did. The first week of the series encouraged us as disciples to Take our Faith Seriously. In short, to be sure that Faith is important and is the priority of our life. The second week we were reminded that disciples Seek People for Christ, as in the Great Commission, in Matthew 28, to go out into the world and make disciples for Jesus Christ, given to the earliest followers - and passed on to us - by Jesus Himself. We talked about Resisting Greed and Being Generous in the last two weeks. This week we are invited to bring all of those together, as we consider that Disciples Take their Faith Home.

If you haven’t already, please open your Bibles to 2 Timothy chapter 1 as we prepare to hear Paul’s words to Timothy on Faith brought Home.

Will you pray with me?

Gracious and Merciful God, let the words I speak be Your words. Let our hearts be prepared to love You and each other. Let all of our thoughts be pleasing to You, and lead us each to serve You and others for Your glory. You are our Foundation of Faith, our Origin of Love, and our Source of Knowledge. Amen.

Who is your family?

Who is part of the family in which you grew, or in which you are growing now?

Are there other families to which you belong, say, outside of the home?

Have you considered the Body of Christ, or the worldwide church that spans across denominations, as a family?

I had a close family growing up, and my parents made sure we attended church and Sunday school, Confirmation and Youth group. I got married in the same Connecticut church I had been baptized in as an infant. And a year later John and I moved to South Dakota. I left my family and his, all my friends, my job, and my church. But John's Aunts and Uncles and Rapid City cousins embraced us into their family events. John's parents eventually joined us in Rapid City, and were parents to me as well. We also had a close church family as we raised our children, and I'm forever grateful to Rapid City First UMC for teaching them so much about Jesus, the Bible, and their faith. But if we hadn't been steadfast in faith at home and in our world, would they have grown into the bold disciples they are today?

Someone once said, "The church is always one generation away from extinction." Did you hear that? One generation away from extinction. What does that mean? If we don't pass our faith along to our children, who will? What will they learn, and from whom, if they don't learn at home and in our faith community?

And who is responsible for this teaching?

Parents?

Grandparents?

Sunday school teachers?

Youth workers and mentors?

The Pastor?

Yes, of course, to all of those --- but what if you don't fit into those categories?

If you are a worship leader, usher, greeter, church attendee, school teacher, coach, medical person, boss, classmate, banker, store clerk, etc. etc. etc..... Guess what, it IS your responsibility as well! If you are a disciple – a follower – of Jesus Christ, and if any of our children or youth come into contact with you anywhere, at church or in the community, you have a responsibility to live out your faith in a way that inspires their faith to grow.

I can show you two ways in which that is instructed to us:

One is our mission statement on our back wall. Everyone turn around and look – would you read it with me? ("To bring people to Christ... To help people grow deeper in Christ")

And then there is the statement we make together every time a child is baptized or confirmed: we vow to help raise and nurture that child in Christian faith, by our presence, our generosity, our prayer support, and our witness. Virtually every follower of Christ has at least some opportunity to influence the faith of children.

Timothy is a good example of a man who was taught faith from his family.

From an early age he was taught about God by the strong faith of his mother and grandmother. In verse 5 of our text Paul writes of the “sincere faith which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice, and now in you.” How do you imagine this was lived out? I suppose they had prayers at meals and at bedtime. We know the ancient Hebrews were told to teach the Scripture to their children and to each other, to write the words on their doorframes. Although Timothy wasn’t Jewish, I’m sure his mom and grandma taught him Psalms, maybe in song form, much the way we teach Scripture to young and old today. Even if Lois and Eunice themselves didn’t have written scrolls of verse, education was important in the Greek culture, so they would have made sure Timothy could read it. I would guess that he saw their faith in action as they served those in their community. They also most likely brought him along to gatherings of believers. He watched and eventually participated when they shared the Lord’s Supper, known as Communion to us. If you doubt the significance of this experience for the very young, let me tell you a story:

I was attending a meeting and a pastor friend had her two young children with her. The meeting was finally ready to close, and my friend was going to lead us in a brief closing worship which included Communion. When she told her 4 yr old daughter that it was time for the Lord’s Supper, the girl joyously exclaimed, “Oh, is it time for the good stuff?” Yes, Dear one, the Good Stuff. Grape juice liberally seasoned with the best love there is!

But Timothy’s faith family was not limited to the women he lived with. Right away Paul writes in verse 2: “To Timothy, my dear son:”

Scholars believe that Paul did not have natural children, but that Timothy was a spiritual child to him. As recorded in the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts, Paul met Timothy when Paul was heading out on his second missionary journey. Timothy was well-spoken of in Lystra, so Paul had him circumcised and brought him along as a sort of assistant and apprentice. Timothy's father was Greek and there is no indication that he was Christian, so Paul became the spiritual father to Timothy. I can imagine that that was a period of intense growth and learning for Timothy, since Paul as a Pharisee would have been quite knowledgeable about the Scriptures, and as a champion of Christ, very in tune with the Message of Love and grace. Paul would teach Timothy how to be a man of God. As we see in his salutation in this letter, Paul speaks to Timothy words of God's great love for God's children. He says, "Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord." In the next few verses we see that Paul is not shy to express his affection, his longing to see Timothy, and the joy Timothy brings him. He tells Timothy he prays for him constantly.

All of us as parents, natural, adoptive, foster, and as mentors, pay attention! Paul Prays constantly for this son of his. The first step to bringing faith home is to PRAY!

Pray alone, pray as a family. Pray for your children, and pray with your children. Pray for the children of our church who are in school. Pray about your own faith, and not just at church. Pray in your home, in your workplace, in your car. Pray for the faith of those in your family, and watch as God answers with grace upon grace.

And the second step is love. Let me tell you, love flows directly from prayer. My first response on becoming a parent was, “O Lord, I don’t know how to do this, help me!” There were times when the ONLY way I could love misbehaving children was by praying for them, can anyone relate??? I think this is true as an educator as well! Seriously, in all the relationships I have, I could not have love without prayer first. But the more I pray for, about, and with someone, the more my love grows!

So, step 1, pray. Step 2, love. Step 3, speak. Speak words of encouragement, words of faith.

Paul speaks words of encouragement to Timothy in verse 5, saying, “I am reminded of your sincere faith....” In verse 6, Paul reminds Timothy that Timothy has the gift of God, and continues in verse 7 with words of power, love, and self-discipline. In 8, he speaks words of exhortation and instruction: “do not be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, join me in proclaiming it! Bring it to the world! Tell them of the grace given us in Christ Jesus, tell them how Christ brought us life and light!” Folks, this is our message as well. Live your faith. Hear the Word proclaimed on Sunday, then bring it home. Teach your family. Teach your friends, your classmates, your coworkers. Bring your faith to life at home by praying about it, reading scripture daily, and speaking words of truth and grace to those you know and love.

Look at how Paul is teaching Timothy even while spurring him on to teach others. Starting at verse 9 he lays out the message of grace:

“He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and

grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, <sup>10</sup> but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel....<sup>13</sup> What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. <sup>14</sup> Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

How do we guard this good deposit? How do we bring these messages to the world in our daily greetings and conversations? We're called to teach faith, to model faith, and it begins at home. What daily practices can you engage in that not only expand your faith but turn it into living witness?

I ask you, in what ways do you let the children see your faith? If there are kids in your home, do they see you reading the Bible? Do they hear you pray, and do you pray together? Do they see acts of kindness and generosity? And whether or not there are young ones living with you, how do you bring your faith home? Is there prayer? Is there studying of Scripture? What music do people hear at your house or in your car? What do your decorations say about your faith?

I have one more story to share. There was a teenage boy who grew up in a Christian home. Like his parents, he took his faith extremely seriously. One day his youth minister asked him, "Why is faith so important to you?" The teen replied, "I don't know. I guess it just runs in the family."

There can be no doubt that we are each called to bring the Gospel, and our faith in the Lord Jesus, out from church into the world in which we live. God bless you

as face this challenge. God bring you opportunities to spread the love of Jesus to all the world. Amen.