

Love Letters

Lesson 18: 2 Timothy 1

How does a parent know the best way to motivate a child to live up to their full potential? Paul had to face that question and others as the end of his own life drew near. Soon he would pass the mantle of responsibility to those that would come after him and carry on the work of the ministry. One such servant was Timothy, Paul's son in the faith, who was about to receive the charge to remain strong and fulfill his calling from the Lord. It was time for Paul to take a look back at what mattered most and remind Timothy of who he was in Christ.

Fast facts ~

- Paul, the aged apostle, writes to a young, inexperienced Pastor Timothy, who faces the heavy burden of responsibility for the church at Ephesus.
- Timothy is about to face the challenge of addressing false doctrine as well as the conduct of the believers, and he must not allow his youth to become his liability.
- Timothy became a convert when Paul was in Lystra on his first missionary journey. Subsequently, on his second journey, Paul took Timothy along while he served as a devoted assistant and traveling companion, laboring with Paul throughout his third journey.
- Paul left him in Ephesus to oversee the work there, considering him a gifted teacher who was trustworthy and committed to the ministry.
- In this final letter, Paul assures the young pastor of his continued love and prayers, while reminding him of his spiritual heritage and responsibility. Paul warns him that the one who perseveres must act as a diligent soldier, determined athlete, patient farmer in order to receive his reward.
- Perseverance and endurance are two of the prominent themes of the book; and central to everything is the sure foundation of God's Word.

Read 2 Timothy 1:1–18.

Day One: **Passing It On**

Paul and Timothy shared a deep abiding friendship but in the salutation of this letter, Paul reminds Timothy of his appointed position as apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God. We see in these verses that in addition to the loving counsel of a spiritual father, Paul firmly declares the truth to his beloved but wavering son in the faith.

1. Once again in great personal suffering, what does Paul state that made it possible for him to write with a thankful heart (verse 3)?
2. As a loving father to a son, how does Paul attempt to console Timothy (verses 4–5)?

- a. Interestingly, who was responsible for bringing Timothy to faith in Christ (verse 5)?

Timothy's grandmother Lois and mother Eunice listened to Paul preach the gospel on his very first missionary journey (Acts 13–14) when they became converts. By the time of Paul's second journey, these two godly women had led Timothy to saving faith. It was due to their influence that Timothy "from childhood . . . had known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15). Paul commends these women for their spiritual nurturing, and Timothy for the sincere faith that Paul was assured was in him as well.

It's interesting to note that Paul speaks of his service to God in these opening verses as a *present* activity; and yet we know that Paul was confined to a dark filthy prison cell.

- 3. Looking again at verses 3–4, see if you can determine a few of the ways Paul was still actively serving God.

Selah~

We don't normally realize the influence and impact of a person's life until that individual is gone; then it's too late to tell them what they meant to us. Consider a few of those that have influenced you to become a believer and grow in your Christian walk—note them in the space below. Next to their names, jot down what you'd like them to know if you had the opportunity to tell them. Looking at your list, what impresses you about the impact we believers have on one another?

Memory verse: 1 Timothy 1:7 NKJV

Write the verse out below; repeat it each day to commit it to memory.

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

Day Two:

Don't Be Fearful

Reread 2 Timothy 1:6–7.

Paul presented the motives for serving Christ in verses 1–5: authority of the call, thankfulness, love for others, praying for their needs. Now he focuses on the instructions of an apostle—and spiritual father—passing along the most vital things for his son in the faith to remember as he steps forward to begin his ministry for the Lord. Whatever difficulties Timothy had already encountered had indeed taken a toll on him. Paul knew well that this young man would become a target for persecution, possible imprisonment, and even death after he was gone. It was important for him to deal head on with Timothy's fears in order to be effective.

1. Based on Timothy's strong faith, what does Paul remind him to do? What made it possible for him to persevere? Verses 6–7

Paul emphasizes that Timothy's fear was *not* from God. Verse 7 contains a singular reference to the kind of fear that carries with it a negative connotation. It refers to a shameful, cowardly fear that is generated by a weak selfish character. Timothy may have had a strong faith, but he was vulnerable to a very debilitating kind of fear that could render him useless to Paul and the ministry. Paul wants to prevent that.

2. If God did not give Timothy a spirit of fear, from which direction did it come? When you are overtaken with *fear*, whose voice are *you* listening to? What difference can this make in terms of your ministry?
3. Think about the fact that succumbing to fear as Timothy had done could also prevent *you* from being able to use *your* gift(s) and be equivalent to quenching the Holy Spirit, meaning to *put out* or *extinguish* a fire.

Paul's admonition to "stir up" (verse 6) the spiritual gift within also applies to believers today. It means to *fan to full flame* the gift within you. In other words, take it out and use it! Don't let it lie dormant.

4. When you're willing and obedient, what kind of spirit does God supply (verse 7)?
5. "Sound mind" can also be translated *secure, sound, disciplined*; carrying with it the idea of a self-controlled, prioritized mind. Why would it be necessary for an effective servant to exercise discipline in the thought life?

Selah ~

Perhaps you too have experienced disappointment, discouragement, or even defeat that has cooled your spiritual fervor. Are *you* lacking in any of these areas: *power, love, sound mind*? Pray and ask God to manifest these qualities in your life. Tell Him you are stepping out in faith expecting Him to make up the difference where you are lacking!

Day Three:

Hold Fast

Reread 2 Timothy 1:8–14.

In this first chapter, Paul drives home several key elements to Timothy: to stand against his opponents, to be unashamed of the gospel, and to remain uncompromising in his commitment to proclaim the gospel no matter the consequences. Of these three, we can surmise that due to Timothy's tendency to fear, perhaps the biggest struggle for him was remaining unashamed of the gospel. And whether or not we like to admit it, most of us have at one time or another been ashamed to speak up on behalf of our faith in Christ. It behooves us not to point fingers; in fact, it's quite humbling to realize that today for the most part, we are not called on to suffer greatly, be imprisoned, or even face death whenever we share the gospel message.

1. Personal: What are some of the risks you have faced when sharing your faith in Christ?

2. When are you most likely to be fearful of sharing the gospel? Is it in social or family gatherings, when you witness an injustice taking place, when it comes to praying aloud in public, or when a group tries to influence you to take part in something that dishonors God? Please explain.

3. Was the apostle Paul ashamed of being in chains for Christ? Why (verse 12)?
 - a. What do *you* think Paul had committed to Christ for safe keeping? Share your thoughts.

4. Paul goes on to instruct Timothy about being loyal in two things regarding God's Word. What are they?
 - a. Verse 13
 - b. Verse 14

The Phillips translation of these verses reads: *Keep my words in your mind as the pattern of sound teaching, given to you in the faith and love of Christ Jesus. Take the greatest care of the treasures which were entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who lives within us* (verses 13–14).

5. Paul will instruct us in 2 Timothy 3 about the value of God's Word. Look ahead at verses 16–17 and recap them in your own words. Take a moment to pause and ponder what God has entrusted to you! Record what the Lord ministers to your heart.

Day Four:

You Gotta Have Friends!

This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me . . . The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very diligently and found me (1:15a, 16–17).

Rejection by the world is an unpleasant thing to experience, but to be deserted by ministry companions is a devastating betrayal to endure. Paul states that everyone in Asia had turned away from him; becoming ashamed that he boldly preached the gospel. This would be particularly painful for Paul since this included Ephesus, where Paul had faithfully served for three years (Acts 20:31). Two of these deserters are mentioned by name: Phygellus and Hermogenes. It is possible these men were leaders in the church and co-laborers along with Paul and Timothy. Perhaps this contributed to Paul's longing in this letter to see Timothy again.

1. Think of a possible “real-life lesson” Paul may have wanted to communicate to Timothy as he wrote of his abandonment.
 - a. With the above thought in mind, why do you think it's important to share our struggles with younger individuals in the ministry rather than pretend to be unaffected by them?

In contrast to those who deserted Paul, he singles out Onesiphorus as one who faithfully supported and encouraged him. His name means “help-bringer.” Onesiphorus befriended Paul while he was in prison and regularly visited the aging apostle to minister to his needs.

2. Onesiphorus diligently sought Paul out in Rome, investing time and effort in his search, at times risking his own life. What are some of the character qualities you can find in Onesiphorus? How did his search for Paul prove out that he was unashamed of Paul and the gospel message?
3. As a result of his dedicated service, what did Paul ask of the Lord . . .
 - a. On behalf of Onesiphorus' family?
 - b. For Onesiphorus personally?
4. Personal: What are some character qualities that *you* look for in ministry companions?
5. Why would it be important for you to have things in common with co-laborers in the ministry?
6. If you were to ask God to pick your ministry partners, what would you ask Him for? Are these qualities evident in *you*?

Day Five:

In Touch with Jesus ~

This section of the lesson is intended to be a review of what you have learned and what God has spoken to you this week. Go back over your lesson with a marking pen or highlighter and mark those places and points that stand out to you. Use the margins to make personal notations. Be sure to indicate which points or questions you'd like to share with your discussion group.

1. *LISTEN*: In what way did the Lord Jesus meet *you* in His Word this week? Be specific.

2. *LEARN*: How can you apply this understanding to your daily Christian walk?

3. *LIVE*: What step of obedience will you purpose to take in our walk of faith this week?

Prayer Requests ~
