

Adult Teaching Resources

October 2, 2016



An Apostle's Apprentice – Lessons from Timothy (Sept. 11-Oct 23)

2 Timothy 1:1-14 – “Keep the Faith”

2 Timothy 2:8-15 – “Don't Be Ashamed”

2 Timothy 3:14-4:5 – “Read the Instructions”

2 Timothy 4:6-18 (RCL 4:6-8, 16-18) – “Finish the Race”

Luke 19:1-10 – “Little Big Man”

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Keep the Faith

2 Timothy 1:1-14

FIT Teaching Guide

by Rick Jordan

This adult teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Before the Lesson: Have blank sheets of paper and writing instruments for the Information session.

Fellowship Question

(Use *one* of these to break the ice, to begin some discussion and lead into the study):

What one person has most significantly affected your faith?

Tell us the name and one interesting fact about your paternal grandmother.

Information

[Note to teacher: Scholars are divided on whether the apostle Paul was the actual writer of I and II Timothy. Many believe Paul may have been the author of II Timothy, but not I Timothy. For the lesson plan, I will refer to the author as Timothy's mentor.]

Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin, John Knox, Martin Luther. These persons shaped your Christian theology, whether you know it or not. If you're a Baptist, you've been shaped by names such as John Smythe, Thomas Helwys, Roger Williams, and Walter Rauschenbusch. Those are all "dead white males" that you have no relationship with. Were I to ask, "what one person has most significantly shaped your faith?" you would likely reply with the name of someone you knew personally – someone whose name will not make it into a list of "most influential theologians."

When Timothy's mentor wrote him, he reminded Timothy to keep in mind the persons who had shaped his faith.

[Have a class member read II Timothy 1:1-5.]

How does the mentor describe his relationship with Timothy? ("my beloved child")
We know the author is not related to Timothy because Timothy's family lineage is listed elsewhere. In Acts 16:1-3, we find that Timothy's father was a Greek, a non-Jew and a non-Christian.

[Distribute blank paper and pens/pencils.]

Information *continued*

For today's lesson, I would like for us to reflect on the persons who have shaped your faith and the ways in which they have shaped your faith. On the middle of your sheet of paper write "my faith" – then draw a circle around those words. Eventually, we will have six circles surrounding this center circle.

Now, draw a line from the center circle where you will draw another circle. Within that circle, write the name of a family member who has been a father/mother for your life of faith.

[Give time for class members to make the circles, then ask:]

Who can tell us about a father/mother/mentor for your life of faith?

[Read or tell this story:]

"Stephanie Paulsell, now a professor of theology at Harvard, writes, 'When I was a little girl, I used to read psalms every day with my father. He reads six psalms a day and writes down one verse from each in a little notebook, whatever strikes his heart on a particular day. I used to sit in the backyard with him and talk about which verses we might write down. I loved the feeling of handling those holy words with my dad as a child.' That is what we want to give to our kids: a sense that handling these words is both a privilege and a great source of joy!" [Susan R. Garrett. "Beyond Noah's Ark." *Children*. *Christian Reflection*. The Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University, 2003. <http://www.baylor.edu/ifl/christianreflection/ChildrenarticleGarrett.pdf>]

Can someone share a story of a faith memory you have of a family member?

[Have a class member read II Timothy 1:6-7.]

What does the "therefore"/ "for this reason" in verse 6 refer to?

Sometimes, our faith grows cool. We need a rekindling.

Draw a line from the "my faith" circle to a space on your paper in which you can put another name in a circle. How has the faith of others around you been a means of rekindling your faith? Put the name of a person who was instrumental in rekindling your faith in the circle.

Who can tell us about a faith rekindling experience in your life?

Draw another line from the "my faith" circle. The mentor says that we are not given a spirit of cowardice, but of power, love, and self-discipline. Who has modeled one or more of these characteristics for you? Put their name in a circle on this line.

Who can share with us a story of someone's power, love, or self-discipline?

[Have a class member read II Timothy 1:8-10.]

We must read between the lines here. Apparently, Timothy was facing the threat of persecution. If he demonstrated his spiritual giftedness, there would be pain to pay. Timothy's spiritual gift is not identified. Maybe that is good as it allows us to identify with this passage.

Information *continued*

Each of us is gifted in some way or ways. None of us has every spiritual gift, but all of us have some spiritual gift. However, it may be that we do not demonstrate that gift. Timothy's block seems to have been a fear of persecution or suffering. What are some other blocks that keep us from using our spiritual gifts?

On your paper, draw another line for another name and circle. In this circle, put the name of a person whose spiritual giftedness affected your faith in a positive way. [For this exercise, "spiritual giftedness" may include gifts listed in passages such as Romans 12:6-8 or I Corinthians 12:8-10 – or may include other skills or abilities used for spiritual purposes.]

Who is a person in your life who is/was "unblocked" spiritually – that is, their freely demonstrated gift blessed your life?

It seems that Timothy did overcome his fear.

[Have a class member read I Thessalonians 3:2-7.]

The mentor concludes by challenging his disciple to follow his example.

[Have a class member read II Timothy 1:11-14.]

One last circle on your paper: draw a line from the "my faith" circle to a blank area of the page. Put the name of a spiritual teacher or minister in a circle.

Would someone share the name and maybe a story of how a teacher or minister has shaped your faith?

Transformational Exercise

As we have noted, Paul may or may not have been the author of this letter. If it was Paul, it is fascinating to think of the setting (Paul in prison) and of how Paul's thinking changes. In Paul's earliest letters, I and II Thessalonians, Paul believed that Jesus' second coming was imminent. However, years have passed since those words were penned. Those who walked with Jesus are mostly gone. An entire new generation has been born.

"Paul [now] knew that the future of the church depended upon the transmission of that faith, not just from Lois to Eunice to Timothy but from Timothy on to the next generation and the next generation. The intergenerational transmission of apostolic faith was of urgent concern to Paul. That is what he seemed to be most seriously pondering in prison." [Thomas C. Oden. *First and Second Timothy and Titus*. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Louisville: John Knox Press. 1989. p. 29f.]

Let's draw one final line from the "my faith" box. In another circle, put the name of someone who is much younger than you that you hope to influence in their faith.

Transformational Exercise *continued*

As we close our lesson, look over again all these that have nurtured your faith. And, remember to live in such a way that, years from now, your name could be circled on someone else's page. In a moment of silence, offer a silent prayer to God for each of the persons you have circled. Then, I will close us in a sentence prayer.

[Close in a prayer something like this: *Thank you, God, for the family, and friends, teachers, and ministers who have nurtured our faith! Amen.*

Comments or Questions for Rick Jordan? You may send comments to the lesson plan author at rjordan@cbfnc.org. Rick is also available to lead workshops and conferences on Christian Education, with particular emphasis on how best to use the FIT Faith model.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartlege

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

About 2 Timothy — The letter we call “2 Timothy” bears many similarities to 1 Timothy. It also purports to be written by Paul, and may have a stronger claim since it includes more personal references. The letter states that Paul is in prison (1:8, 2:9). He seems to have recently traveled, however, to Troas (4:13), to Corinth (4:20), and to Miletus (4:20). As we have seen with 1 Timothy, this does not match Paul’s itinerary as we know it from Acts and his other letters, but those sources certainly do not capture all of Paul’s activities. A reading of Acts suggests that Paul died in prison after having been taken to Rome, but some scholars postulate that he gained a temporary release from the imprisonment described in the last chapters of Acts, that he traveled about for a time, and was then re-arrested and sent to Rome to await execution.

Regarding his advice to Timothy, we find a similar situation to that in 1 Timothy, where Timothy was in a leadership position in Ephesus. The heart of the letter is Paul’s warning that Timothy must resist the allure of false teachings and remain true to the teachings of Christ, as he had learned them from Paul.

Greetings — Paul’s greeting in vv. 1-3 follows the standard formula used in most of his letters: the name of the sender (Paul) plus a descriptive phrase, the name of the recipient(s), and a short blessing.

Why did Timothy weep? — In v. 4, Paul wrote “Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy.” Why had Timothy wept? The most common guess is that Timothy had wept at their last parting, not wanting to be separated from his beloved mentor. We could also imagine that Timothy had wept in sympathy when he learned of Paul’s imprisonment, or that others had deserted him. We have no way of knowing precisely what prompted Timothy’s tears, but they are testimony to the close bond between the two.

Digging Deeper *continued*

Books, or scrolls? — Paul’s instruction for Timothy to bring “the books and the parchments” (4:13) must refer to something he owned, but had not been able to bring with him. The word translated as “books” in the NRSV is *biblia*, the word from which we get “Bible” and “bibliography,” but it could refer to writings of any type. Most lengthy writings in Paul’s context were composed on parchment – thin sheets of carefully treated and scraped leather – that were either sewn together into a long roll, producing a scroll, or stacked and bound into a codex similar to later books. When Jesus “unrolled the scroll” in Luke 4:17, the same word is used.

If the scrolls he asked for were from the Hebrew Bible, we can understand why he wanted them “above all else.”

The word translated as “parchments” is *membranas*, the root of our word “membrane.” It could refer to blank sheets or to written documents.

A devout mother? — Paul credits Timothy’s mother and grandmother with contributing to his faith and life as a Christian. Apparently, his mother was more devout in her Christian faith than in her Judaism: she had married a Greek man, which went against the teachings of Jewish law.

Both Eunice and Lois are Greek names, rather than Jewish ones. It was not uncommon, however, for Jews living outside of Palestine to adopt names cognizant with their culture.

We do not know the name of Timothy’s father, or anything else about him. He is mentioned only in Acts 16:1, when Luke wrote that Timothy “was the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek.” Some have assumed that his father was dead, since he is not mentioned elsewhere, but we have no further evidence.

Shame — Paul’s challenge that Timothy not be ashamed “of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner” (v. 8) should be understood against the background of Paul’s culture: for Greeks and Romans as well as Jews, shame and honor were major issues. Honor was prized and shame was – well, shameful. Different people or groups, however, might prize different values. Both Jews and Romans would have considered Jesus’ arrest, public humiliation, beatings, and ultimate crucifixion to be intensely shameful. Christians held Christ’s actions and the values they represented in high honor, which put them at odds with their neighbors, who might have derided them for worshiping a crucified God, associating with prisoners, and practicing a love ethic that had no apparent economic value. Some believers may have struggled to remain faithful when others sought to embarrass them, but Paul insisted that Timothy and other readers should follow his example (v. 12) by standing tall, without shame, and trust that honor in God’s eyes was more important than human acclaim.

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartlege

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How could Paul the Christian missionary say he served God “as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience” (v. 3)?

Paul’s reference to serving God “as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience” is interesting, because in many ways Paul served God in a far different fashion than his forefathers. Paul was raised as a Jew and trained as a Pharisee. He was a scholar in the law, a strict adherent to the legal tradition, and a staunch opponent of those who violated its precepts. In that sense, he had certainly served God in the tradition of the rabbis, who had emerged to become the most powerful force in Judaism hundreds of years previously. Like them, he had been completely devoted to the law and its interpretation.

So zealous was Paul, that when Christ confronted him in a blinding light on the road to Damascus (Acts 9), Paul had been on a heresy hunt, determined to flush out Jesus’ followers and have them brought back to Jerusalem in chains to be tried as a threat to Judaism, and perhaps killed, as Steven had been (Acts 6:1-8:3).

Meeting Jesus brought about a radical change in Paul, however, and he turned from trusting in the Hebrew law to trusting in the grace of Christ. Yet, he claimed to serve as his forefathers did, with a clear conscience. How could he do this? Paul did not think he was violating his Jewish upbringing, which anticipated the arrival of a Messiah. After his visionary encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus, Paul came to believe that Christ was the ultimate fulfillment of Judaism, the long-awaited Messiah. As Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had followed God in faith, so Paul followed the same God in faith. As Moses expressed God’s teaching through the law and as the prophets declared God’s will for Israel with the revelation they had been given, so Paul was faithful in proclaiming the fuller revelation of God that was known in Christ. Thus, though in many ways he opposed Jewish teachings of his day, Paul did not think of himself as betraying his heritage, but of having made the right choice and continuing to serve or worship God “in a good conscience.”

W. Hulitt Gloer has noted, “When Paul speaks of a “clear conscience,” it can be taken to mean that morally and ethically he has made the right choices. The phrase can also mean “with undivided attention,” i.e., that Paul has given his undivided attention to the worship and service of God and God’s people. He has been single-minded in his devotion to God and in his service of God and God’s people” (*1-2 Timothy, Titus*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary [Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2010], 219).

Example: Pen & Paper Exercise

