



“Family Discipleship at Home and in the Church”

Selected Scriptures

Main Idea: Family is the foundation for passing faith from generation to generation at home and in the church.

Pass the faith that you have to the generations that follow (2 Tim. 1:5).

- *This applies to your natural family (2 Tim. 1:5).*
- *This also applies to your spiritual family (2 Tim. 1:2).*

Paul's second letter to Timothy is a very personal letter. It's written near the end of the Apostle Paul's life, and it's written to someone that Paul loved deeply and had invested in heavily. Timothy was a young pastor whom Paul disciplined and trained up in the ministry of the Word. He was someone with a sincere faith that Paul prayed for and encouraged, and in 2 Timothy 1:5, we learn that Timothy's faith was a faith that had been passed down from generation to generation in his family. It had first dwelt in his grandmother Lois and then in his mother Eunice. Now remember, this was the first century, so we're talking about a faith that was passed rapidly from generation to generation. What a beautiful picture of the design for discipleship in the Christian home. Parents who are believers should do all they can to pass their faith to their children and grandchildren. This is true in our natural families, but it's also true in our spiritual family. In 2 Timothy 1:2, Paul called Timothy his "beloved child!" Timothy wasn't Paul's natural-born son. Timothy was Paul's spiritual son. Paul loved Timothy and invested in a relationship with Timothy as if he was his own son. In Christ, they had a familial relationship as a spiritual father and son. They were a spiritual family, and the heart of their relationship was their faith and life in Jesus. What beautiful reminders of God's design for family to be the foundation for discipleship at home and in the church!

1. Who was your spiritual mother and/or father? Perhaps it was your natural family or your spiritual family, but we all have someone who was instrumental in nurturing our faith when we were spiritual infants. Share testimonies, and thank God for these people in your lives!
2. Who are your spiritual children? Perhaps you have natural children or grandchildren, or only spiritual children at this point, but to whom are you passing along your faith? Share testimonies, and pray for those people that sincere faith will come to dwell in their hearts!
3. What does it mean to pass down your faith? How do you do that? What exactly are you passing down?
4. Paul said he trusted that Timothy's faith was the sincere faith of his mother and grandmother, but someone's faith is ultimately something that only the Lord knows for sure. Does passing down your faith always result in saving faith in the lives of the next generation? Why, or why not?

The terminology of discipleship is grounded in family relationship (1 Tim. 5:1-2).

- *There's a higher level of commitment and responsibility in a family (1 Tim. 5:8).*
- *The church is a spiritual family that fills gaps in our natural families (1 Tim. 5:3-9).*

In Paul's first letter to Timothy, he used family relationships to describe how Timothy should relate to his church family: Older men as fathers; younger men as brothers; older women as mothers; and younger women as sisters. There's much implied in this analogy that reinforces how family is integral to God's design for discipleship. One of the important and clear consequences of this relationship perspective, however, is that there's a higher level of commitment and responsibility in a family. Paul made this clear a few verses later, when he emphasized that those in the church who don't care for their natural families are worse than unbelievers, since they bring shame to the name and to the cause of Christ and his church. The command to Timothy, though, was to look at other believers in his church in light of the level of commitment and responsibility in a family. *Why?* Because there are gaps in every natural family at different times and in different ways. In dealing with the issue of caring for widows, Paul indicated that natural families have that responsibility first and foremost; however, where that responsibility couldn't be met by the natural family, the church should step up and step in for their widows. This is true in a ministry sense in the body of Christ, and it's also true in a spiritual sense in discipleship in the church. Where Christian fathers or mothers are absent in the home, they are found in the church. Where Christian brothers or sisters are absent in the home, they are numerous in the church. In other words, the church is the spiritual family that fills gaps in our natural families. The church is where Paul became Timothy's spiritual father and gained a spiritual son. We should see one another in light of God's perspective: A spiritual family!

1. Why does God require that members of a natural family take care of one another? How do these verses reveal how serious this expectation is to the Lord?
2. Why does God want church elders (and the church, following their leadership) to view one another in terms of family relationships? How do family relationships change the commitment that people have to one another? How do family relationships change the responsibility that people have to one another? What else is implied in the perspective of a family relationship (father, mother, brother, sister...)?
3. What gaps exist in your family? Only share what you are comfortable sharing, but it's important – and often encouraging – to recognize that there are different gaps at different times in every family: Unbelieving parents; the loss of a parent, grandparent, or child; and everything in between!
4. How has the church filled gaps in your natural family? Perhaps the Lord has used your spiritual family to fill different gaps at different times in your life. Take time to think about examples in your life and to encourage one another by sharing those examples with your group.