



Shelby Christian Church

FOLLOWING JESUS: ENCOURAGEMENT FOR GRADUATES

2 TIMOTHY 1:1-7 * 5/17/2026

MAIN POINT

As the church we need to help our graduates remain steadfast in their faith as they pursue the call of God in their lives.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is one thing you know now that you wished you had known when you graduated from high school?

What would it have meant for you for someone to have invested in you and helped you through the transition from high school to college, or from college/post-graduate work to the working world?

Graduation is an amazing time of transition for students. Whether they are going to college, the working world, the armed forces, or some other destination, the years that follow will be ones of amazing change and growth where they test their strengths and interests. Many of these experiences will challenge and stretch the faith of the graduates in ways they never could have imagined. What our graduates need more than anything is our support and encouragement to remember the faith they have been raised with so they can rely on it always.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 TIMOTHY 1:1-7

From verses 1-2, what sort of relationship did Paul and Timothy have?

Have you ever had a parental love for someone who is not your physical descendent? Have you ever been on the receiving end of that kind of love from a “spiritual parent”? How do those kinds of relationships form?

Have you been an active presence in any of the current graduates’ lives? How can that continue as they move on?

Timothy’s father was Greek, but his mother and grandmother were Jewish and had clearly instilled a love for the Scriptures in Timothy as a young boy. Paul stood as a spiritual father to Timothy as well, giving Timothy no less than three strong examples of godly leadership. These were all strong, lasting influences.

In verse 5, Paul affirms Timothy’s “sincere faith.” What characterizes a sincere faith? Describe the elements of faith that you consider essential for the next generation (including the current graduates) to understand.

What are some things we can do to remind ourselves to take an active role in the faith journeys of our family members and friends?

As Paul longed to see Timothy, he also was clearly recalling Timothy’s “sincere faith,” a faith that had first lived in his grandmother Lois and then in his mother, Eunice. The faith Paul was referring to was belief in the God of the Old Testament who had revealed Himself in His Son, Jesus. Hopefully, our graduates have been taught faith through their homes and the ministries of the church. Each graduation is a reminder for us to continue to invest in young men and women early on, so that they learn to rely on their “sincere faith” as life goes on.

Read Acts 16:1 and 2 Timothy 3:14-17. What additional information do we learn about Timothy’s spiritual upbringing from these texts?

Take a few moments to think back through the communities of faith of which you’ve been a part. In those experiences, was faith passed down to a new generation?

In this letter, Paul wanted to continue discipling Timothy, a ministry Lois and Eunice had started long before Paul had visited their city. Paul wanted Timothy to keep stirring up God’s gift, the ministry Timothy had received through the first-century church action of the laying on of hands. Paul was reminding Timothy that it was time to add fuel and fan the coals of his ministry into an open flame by recalling the passion he had felt at his ordination into ministry and the presence of the Holy Spirit in his life. God’s desire is for His people to demonstrate a strong, enduring lifestyle of faith.

Why is it important to affirm the spiritual gifts and callings of your loved ones? What impact does this have on their lives and their faith? How can you affirm one of the upcoming graduates before he or she moves on from our congregation?

Timothy’s mother, grandmother, and Paul all modeled a life of faith in Christ and commitment to the gospel, nurtured the gifts God had given Timothy, and challenged Timothy to live up to his calling. As Christian adults, it is our responsibility to affirm the value of younger believers so they can embrace who God made them to be. Every person is created with unique gifts, talents, and callings, and it is our responsibility to support and encourage one another to discover those gifts and purposes.

APPLICATION

What will you do to encourage the current crop of graduates as well as their families?

How can we as a community send these young men and women off well?

How can we help them to understand the calling in their lives to make disciples and spread God’s glory to the places God is calling them?

PRAYER

COMMENTARY

| 2 TIMOTHY 1:1-7

1:1-2. What would you say if asked to describe yourself? Paul always saw himself first as a servant or an apostle of Christ Jesus.

Apostle means literally “sent one.” The early church recognized as apostles those leaders with a special call who had seen the resurrected Christ. Paul was always eager to establish his apostleship, not because he desired adoration or special privilege, but because he wanted others to recognize that his authority came not from self-appointment, nor from man’s selection but by God’s personal choice: by the will of God.

It is possible that, with death so imminent, Paul became more cognizant of the eternal life into which he would enter. Certainly he understood this promise of life that is in Christ Jesus as experiential to some degree in this present world. But with his approaching execution, he must also have felt the anticipation of seeing Jesus and entering fully into the promise. He must have been aware of standing on the threshold to a blissful existence.

With no expectation that he would be released from prison again, he wrote to Timothy, [his] dear son. This attests to more than spiritual kinship; it announces an intimate and emotional bond. Their love for each other increased over time as they stood together in difficulty and worked in ministry. Paul thought about this young man, now separated from him by distance and prison, and considered him with the affection of a father toward a son.

With these emotions, Paul offered to Timothy grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

1:3. Paul began with thanksgiving. It is important, however, to sift through all the clauses of the sentence in order to arrive at the object of his thankfulness. I thank God ... as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers.

Paul, at the end of life’s journey, offered thanks for this young man of faith. Sitting alone in the chill of a Roman prison, perhaps Paul reflected upon the shared struggles and joys of ministry together. As events replayed in his mind, there stirred within him a thankfulness for Timothy’s loyalty and commitment to Christ. So with gratitude and concern, even though he knew Timothy’s weaknesses. Paul continued in prayer night and day.

In the middle of his thanksgiving, Paul inserted a personal tribute to his heritage of faith. He probably did this to establish a parallel between himself and Timothy. Later he directed Timothy to consider his own upbringing.

Paul thanked God, whom I serve, as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience. No one could convict Paul of pandering to public opinion, faddish philosophies, or personal ambition. He served God and no other. The God he served was the same one to whom his ancestors were committed. He drew the line of his faith through previous generations. Paul had not denied his Hebrew heritage by following Jesus Christ; he had fulfilled it (Acts 13:16–33). This he did with a clear conscience, one that was healthy and not diseased by the misinterpretation of Scripture or the hardening of his heart through sin.

1:4. Paul inserted a very personal word to Timothy, one of deep affection. These two men were obviously close companions. They were not afraid to talk about this or to display the emotions of their friendship.

Paul thought back on the last time they saw each other: recalling your tears, I long to see you. Why Timothy shed tears, we can only guess. Perhaps it was the frustration of having to deal with difficulties he felt were beyond his ability to manage; perhaps Paul’s leaving left Timothy feeling

utterly alone; perhaps it was simply the heartache one feels when a dear friend departs. Whatever the cause, it seems Timothy had a sensitive and tender disposition.

This tenderness in Timothy evoked from Paul a greater desire to see the young man. Like a parent for a child, Paul sensed in Timothy a vulnerability, and he wanted to strengthen him through God—he wanted to see him. But Paul also knew that this relationship was not one-sided. Seeing Timothy would benefit him as well: he would be filled with joy. This joy is a delight that breaks the bonds of circumstances, centering itself in the person of Christ and his people.

1:5. Paul returned to the subject of spiritual heritage as he thought about Timothy: I have been reminded of your sincere faith. He had watched Timothy and worked beside him for years. In Timothy, Paul recognized a genuine faith, one adhering to the teachings of Christ and the apostles, which in turn produced righteous behavior. Proper belief and proper actions are components of sincere faith.

Paul realized that genuine faith had been modeled for Timothy through his family. It was evident in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice. Though true faith cannot be inherited, it can be demonstrated in convincing ways within the context of a family. Even so, each person must entrust himself personally to Jesus Christ. True faith is individually claimed.

Timothy's father was Greek. His mother and grandmother, however, were Jewish (Acts 16:1). Apparently they had trained Timothy in reading and memorizing Old Testament texts because Paul later remarked how Timothy had from childhood known the holy Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:15). This had proved a good foundation as he developed into faith in Christ. The genuine faith Paul had noted in Timothy's mother and grandmother, he was convinced now lives in you [Timothy].

1:6. Having established Timothy's heritage of belief in God and confirmed his conviction that Timothy shared in this genuine faith, Paul issued a command. For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you.

The reason Paul could remind Timothy of God's gift was because Timothy was an authentic believer. The gift of God, which is in you was probably the Holy Spirit. Every genuine believer receives this gift from God. This is why Paul told Timothy that he was persuaded of his sincere faith. Timothy had this powerful gift within him, enabling him to perform all that God required.

Even so, Timothy must fan into flame the Spirit's power. This is a present-tense verb. It might better be translated "keep fanning." It was not that the Spirit's flame was weak or needed to be alive by human effort but that the Spirit only works in cooperation with those who desire his enablement. We keep fanning the flame by keeping "in step with the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25), by disciplining ourselves in godliness to produce the fruit which is his nature (Gal. 5:22).

1:7. Having confirmed that Timothy possessed this great gift of God's grace, his own Spirit, Paul pointed Timothy toward the boldness that should belong to every believer: For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

Timothy, many interpreters surmise, was a man of quiet disposition—a retiring, timid individual who had been thrust into a leadership role for which he had no predilection. The battle against the false teachers was strenuous, leaving Timothy weary, perhaps even questioning what he was doing. It is possible that he was overwhelmed by these circumstances.

But Paul countered our natural tendencies and excuses by directing us to consider this great gift which we all possess—the Spirit of God. Our natural abilities can only supplement what God calls us to do. The important consideration in all of life's challenges and duties is to remember that God's Spirit resides within us. He is the giver of power, love, and self-discipline.

Power is simply enablement to do what God requires. We are never asked to do anything beyond what God gives strength and ability to accomplish. Love is expressed first to God, then to others. It is the distinguishing quality of Christians, this unnatural love, and it comes only as we allow the life of God's Spirit to live through us.

Self-discipline denotes careful, sensible thinking. It is the ability to think clearly with the wisdom and understanding that God imparts. Fear is a driving force in society today. It is the main subject of the evening news, the underlying premise of advertising and marketing. Fear often spawns confused thinking, irrationalities, and misunderstandings. Thoughts and speculations swirl in our mind when fear enters. This is why Christ calls us to healthy, orderly thought processes.