

Paul and Timothy: Passing the Torch

On Being (and Having) a Spiritual Father

Rough Transcript

Brett Clemmer

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Well, guys, good morning. It's great to be with you. If you're joining us here live, if you're listening to us on the podcast, or watching us online, we're just so excited to be together. We're going to be kicking off a brand new series today called **Paul and Timothy: Passing the Torch**. I want you to imagine that you are going to climb Mount Everest. Some of you're like, "I don't even want to imagine that." You're going to climb Mount Everest. If you decided to climb Mount Everest, what would you do? I'll tell you the first thing that I would do is I would hire a guide.

Does that make sense? I'm going to hire a guide, and I'm probably going to interact with them a little bit, email and some phone calls. And then the day is going to come where I'm going to walk into base camp and I'm going to meet my guide. I want you to imagine you're walking to base camp and you meet your guide. He looks like a mountain climber. He looks experienced. He looks like he knows what he's doing. You read about him online. He's been to the summit multiple times. You meet him and you shake his hand.

He's really warm. He gives you a great smile, and then he goes, "All right, I got some stuff for you." He goes into his bag and he pulls out a book on mountaineering, and he hands it to you. He says, "Here's a book on mountaineering. I got an equipment list for you here, a gear list. There's a pile of like tanks and parkas and tents over there, ice crampons. Just go over that pile, get whatever you need to climb Mount Everest. Here's a map of the mountain with a red line that shows where you're going to go, and X is where you're going to camp at night.

All right? And then also, the best part," and he pulls out a piece of paper out of his pocket and unfolds it and he hands it to you, "I printed out this PDF, top 10 mountaineering tips." And then he walks over and he puts his arm around you, and he points you to the mountain. And he says, "Go get them, tiger." Guys, I think too often that's exactly what discipleship looks like in the church. A guy that's been there, that's done that. That's grizzle. Looks like he knows what he's talking about.

And then somebody says, "Hey, I want to grow my faith. I want to climb the mountain of Christian faith." We give him a Christian Living book, and we give him a PDF that we printed out and a couple websites that he can go to, maybe a YouTube channel that he can watch. We put our arm around his shoulder and we pat them on the back and we go, "Go get them, tiger." And then we wonder why so many guys quit. We wonder why we have such a lack of mature Christian disciples, mature male Christian disciples, in the church.

I think there are some models that we have for discipleship that we've relied on that frankly they're a part of discipleship. But if you think that this is all discipleship is, it doesn't work. For instance, a teacher. We think, well, discipleship is about teaching, but teaching just imparts knowledge. You need knowledge. A teacher meets a student in a classroom or a learning environment, gives them information that they need, and then sends them off, or a mentor. Oh, it's about mentoring, right?

When you think about mentoring, especially when I talk to young guys about mentoring, what they think of when they think of a mentor is somebody who's an expert on something, who's had success on something. The communications mostly one way. They're imparting these life lessons. A lot of times they'll have like a system and they'll listen and they'll get feedback from them. They'll give them advice, and they'll give them counsel, but they're not doing anything together. They're not going through those experiences together.

The mentor is just imparting wisdom, and you need that. You need wisdom. You need the wisdom of experience. You say, "Well, what about a coach?" Oh, that sounds good. We're guys. We like coaching, right? Well, what does a coach do during the game? Stands on the sidelines. Let's go back to a guide. Let's say I walk into Everest Base Camp and I meet my guide. He doesn't give me a book on mountaineering. He's been talking to me for months about what to expect. He's been preparing me for this journey.

When he meets me in base camp, he's got the tent all set up for me. He's gotten our team. He's put our team together that we're going to ascend the mountain together. He checks all my equipment personally. He goes through it. If there's something that he doesn't like, that he knows from his experience isn't going to work for me, then he has replacements ready to go, so that I have the right equipment for the journey that's ahead of me. Sure, he gives me a map, but I don't need it because how am I going to get up the mountain?

I'm going to follow my guide. Because he's not pointing at the summit and saying, "Go get them, tiger." He's saying, "Hey, tomorrow morning at 4:00, be in front of the tent, man, because we're taking off together. We're going to go through the Khumbu Icefall." You know what happens in the Khumbu Icefall? Ice falls. People die in the Khumbu Icefall. The guide's not going to be like, "Well, here's the best path through. Hope you make it." He's going to share that risk with you. He's going to walk through that Khumbu Icefall with you.

You're going to start at 15 or 16,000 feet, and then you're going to go up a couple thousand feet. In that first night, you're going to realize that the air is thin and the wind is cold and the tent is thin. You're going to be shivering, and you're going to be having trouble breathing, and you're going to be suffering. And you just got started. And you know what the guide's doing? He's shivering, and he's cold, and he's suffering, and he's right there with you. He's with you. He's on the journey with you. This guys, I think, is what discipleship is supposed to be all about.

Not that the mature believers tell the immature believers what they should do and say, "Go get them, tiger," but that we go along the way with them. And that is what the life of Paul and Timothy is all about. It's all about Paul and Timothy doing a long journey together. And then at the end of this journey, we get this letter. We're going to be looking in this series. We're going to go through 2 Timothy. We're going to go through it pretty much verse by verse, and we're going to look at the relationship between Paul and Timothy.

Now, why is 2 Timothy the book that we picked? Because 2 Timothy is the last letter that Paul wrote to Timothy. Paul is in prison when he writes the 2 Timothy. He's hopeful that he'll get out, but he's realistic because the emperor is a guy named Nero. And Paul knows that it's probably unlikely that he's going to get out of prison. He's writing this last letter. In fact, it's similar to what they call in the Bible a farewell discourse. You see farewell discourses like the end of Deuteronomy, Moses gives a farewell discourse. At the end of Joshua, Joshua gives a farewell discourse.

David in 1 Chronicles 23-24 gives a farewell discourse. If you read John 14-16, that's Jesus' farewell discourse. What does that mean? It's like this is the stuff I want you to remember, right? It's not in a vacuum. It's not like a letter to the public. It's a personal communication to people that know you best,

reminding them of the things that you most want them to remember. 2 Timothy is a farewell discourse from Paul to Timothy. If you have a Bible open it to 2 Timothy and let's look at this scripture together.

The first thing we're going to talk about in this series, we're going to talk about on... The title today is **On Being (and having) a Spiritual Father**, On being and having a spiritual father.

PAUL & TIMOTHY – A SPIRITUAL FATHER AND SON

Let's talk about Paul and Timothy, a spiritual father and son. Who was Paul, right? We talk about Paul in the church probably after Jesus, we probably talk about Paul the most of all the New Testament figures, right? Peter's up there too and James and John, but we talk about Paul the most. Why? Because Paul wrote 13 of epistles, right? He wrote all these letters.

He was a consummate church planner. But what else was Paul? Paul was a murderer. Paul was a persecutor of the church. And then on the road to Damascus, he has an experience where God talks to him and he has a radical conversion. Paul becomes this prolific church planner who travels all over the Middle East and Asia Minor and Southern Europe and plants churches in places like Ephesus and Philippi and Colossae and Galatia, right? You recognize all those names from the books, Corinth, Rome. He goes and he plants churches.

He fosters leaders, and he builds it up. The letter starts with this phrase. He says, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus." What is an apostle? An apostle is somebody who has met Jesus. Paul had that face-to-face confrontation or experience in Damascus, and then he talks about being with Jesus later. Paul is what some people would say is the asked biblical apostle. He had that experience with Jesus that changed everything about him. He says, "By the will of God, according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus."

Paul says, "By the will of God. I didn't go find God. God came and found me." He's an apostle. It's not by his choice right from the start. It's not about me. It's about the will of God and according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus. He recognizes that this is a promise that we have received, a promise of life in Christ Jesus. As we think about Paul being Timothy's spiritual father, this is what he wants Timothy to understand, and he wants Timothy to then communicate out to the church where he's at.

Timothy at this point is in Ephesus, and Paul wants Timothy to communicate this out. This is the promise of the life, Jesus' life. Jesus said what? John 14:6. "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Paul's trying to remind Timothy of this. Now, a murderer and a persecutor and an apostle. If you've done something that worse than multiple murder, you might not be qualified to be a spiritual father.

But even if you've murdered people, when you have been found by God and you understand the promise of the life that is Christ Jesus, you are just as qualified as Paul to be a spiritual father. Some of us, I think, especially some guys that are like, "Well, I've screwed up in my life. I've messed up a marriage. I have failed businesses. I've hurt people." Maybe you've even been to prison for murdering somebody. You are not worse than Paul was. I promise you. He held the people's coats while they threw stones at Stephen until he was dead.

That's cold, right? But God got a hold of his heart. Has God gotten a hold of your heart? You're qualified to be a spiritual father. Who is Timothy then? Well, Timothy was Paul's protegee. I told you that Paul wrote 13 epistles. Timothy's in 11 of them. Did you know that? Timothy is mentioned by name in 11 of Paul's epistles. He's also in Acts and in Hebrews. Now, the only epistles he's not in his Galatians and Ephesians, which is kind of interesting, because Timothy ended up being a pastor in Ephesus. And that's where he was when Paul wrote in this letter.

He's listed as a co-author on six of the letters. Paul and Timothy. Paul and Silas and Timothy to the church in wherever. He's called many different things by Paul. He's called a helper. He's called a fellow worker. He's called a brother. He's called his brother five times, but he calls him his son four times.

When you look at how Paul looked at Timothy, he looked at him as a brother, but he also looked at him as a son. We know from Acts 16:1, if you just want to write that down, this is where we're introduced to Timothy.

It says Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra, a disciple was there named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. His mom was a believer and his father wasn't. His mom was Jewish, his father was Greek, which could mean actually Greek or it could just be not Jewish. Sometimes they would use that. Two verses later, it says Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him.

Paul saw something in Timothy when he met him and he said, "I want this guy with me. I want to bring him along with me as I go on my next missionary journey to plant churches. This is a guy I want with me." Paul saw that in Timothy right away. If we look at verse two in 2 Timothy 1, it says, "To Timothy, my beloved child, grace, mercy, and peace from God the father and Christ Jesus our Lord." This is virtually the same greeting that Paul gives to Timothy in 1 Timothy as well. But I want to point out this phrase here, my beloved child.

I got here early and I asked Jim Angelakos, "How do you pronounce this word in Greek? These two words in Greek?" I'm going to butcher it, but he said it's agapetos teknon. Is that all right? Thank you very much. Agapetos teknon or Agapetos teknon. How many of you recognize the word agape, right? What does that mean? Love, right? The deepest, most moral kind of love, the love that you choose to have, not brotherly affection like Phileo, not erotic affection like Eros, but agape, moral, intentional, deep love for someone.

And then teknon, when you put... Teknon means son or child. But when you put agapetos teknon, it takes on a bigger meaning. It takes on a more full org meaning. One of the dictionaries I read said, this is that intimate and reciprocal relationship formed between men by the bonds of love, friendship, and trust, just as between parents and children. Not just my son, not just like this biological or sort of this like ushy-gushy feeling, but an intimate and reciprocal relationship. It goes both ways. It's got these bonds of love, friendship, and trust.

This is Timothy. In 1 Corinthians 4:17, you see Paul's affection for Timothy. He says, "That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ as I teach them everywhere in the church." If you remember, we've talked about 1 Corinthians in here before, but 1 Corinthians is like Paul planted a church in Corinth and they are screwing it up. They're doing all kinds of crazy. He's mad at them. There's there's incest, there's political strife. There's socioeconomic strife, and on and on.

Who does he send to Corinth to help? Timothy, right? He sends Timothy. I think sometimes we get this... There's a couple verses like don't let them put you down because you're young. Timothy was probably 40 when Paul said that to him. Okay? I mean, I don't want to say he's a millennial, but you know what I mean? He was not an 18 year old or 23 year old. He was probably 40 when Paul said that to him. Paul spent a lot of time with Timothy, and he had disciplined him along the way. He had been his guide along the way.

They had these experiences. He had built trust, so much so that Paul sends him to this church that he loves but he's ticked off that, Timothy's the guy that he sends. You see, Timothy go to Macedonia on Paul's behalf with Silas and they pick up an offering and bring it to Paul so that he can't get continue in his ministry. You see Paul just call Timothy my brother, my son, my child, my brother. And then finally in Hebrews is the last time that we hear about Timothy, this is not most likely written by Paul. Some people think it is, but most likely not.

And even in Hebrews, Timothy comes up. It says, "You should know that our brother, our brother Timothy." He was well enough known that even in the letter to the Hebrews, Timothy's well enough

known by everybody that it's like, "Hey, by the way, Timothy's out of jail." That's basically the message, because everybody wants to know about that. Timothy goes from this young man who's got a spiritual mother and grandmother, we find out, to the troubleshooter that gets sent to Corinth, to the guy that's well known enough in Hebrews.

They're like, "Hey, guys. Hey, guess what? Timothy's out of jail. He's been released. He's back doing ministry again." These are the two guys that we're going to talk about for the next 18 sessions or so, as Paul passes the torch to Timothy. Let's then look at the affection between Paul and Timothy. In verse three Paul says, "I thank God whom I serve as did my ancestors with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day, as I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy.

I'm reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother, Lois, and your mother Eunice. And now I am sure dwells in you as well." What is the word that you see several times in this passage? Anybody notice what that word is? Remind, right? I remember. I remember. I'm reminded. Paul, he's at the end of his life. He's at the end of this long journey that he's been on with Timothy, and he's reminding Timothy, "Hey, I remember you all the time. I pray for you all the time. I remember the tears that we shed the last time we said goodbye.

Our affection for each other was so deep that we cried when we left each other." We're American men. We don't cry. Only here, guys. Everywhere else. Everywhere else. Nobody else would have this like, "Well that's wimpy." No, no, no. This is a sign of strength, the fact that they loved each other so much, that they cried when they left. Paul, he says he longs to see him. There's this affection that they have and Paul says, "I know the faith that you got from your mom and your grandmom." Who's missing from that picture?

His dad, right? Paul was his dad. Paul was his dad. And all around us, guys, there are young men who don't have a dad, a spiritual dad, a dad that loved them and helped them build their faith. We can be that to a young guy that does not have that in his life. We can be the father that lives life with them, that gets to the end and reminds them, has this Christian affection. Affection is like this concept that I don't think we talk about enough or really grasp as men sometimes. But this idea of... Well, I think it's what that definition of *agapetos teknon* is.

It's built with bonds of love and friendship and trust. That's Christian affection. Don't you long to have that with another guy? Love and friendship and trust. If you have that, you know how sweet it is, right? You know how wonderful it is to have another man, a close friend, somebody who loves you and somebody that you can trust in those difficult times. We know that Paul and Timothy spent long journeys together, because Paul's reminding him all these things. That brings us to our Big Idea, and our Big Idea is this; **Discipleship happens along the way.**

It doesn't happen in classroom, doesn't happen on a playing field, doesn't happen in a business office. That can be part of it. But if you're just doing dive bomb discipleship, if it's sort of episodic, it's not going to create lasting change. You can't create the bonds of love, friendship, and trust with a weekly one hour meeting. Sound familiar? It has to be more than just a weekly one hour meeting. It has to be along the way. Mike Achison, who speaks here sometimes, we were talking about this idea of how does one man make an impact as a spiritual father.

THE IMPACT OF A SPIRITUAL FATHER

He says, "It starts with proximity," Mike said. "It starts with proximity." What's that? Closeness. Physical presence. That's what it takes to do discipleship. It happens along the way. So then what is the impact then of a spiritual father of Paul? What's Timothy's spiritual father. What's the pack of a spiritual father? When he says, "I remind you," what's he thinking about? I think Paul's thinking about the literally years of experiences that they had together, traveling all around.

Think of the hundreds of conversations they must have had sitting around a fire at night or maybe a guest in the upper room of somebody's home, where they might have had a guest room, which is pretty typical. They had these conversations over meals and as they're walking on the road and as they're going to sleep at night. And then Paul's like, "Timothy, I need you to go to Macedonia for me." He starts sending him on to do task for him. He's like, "Timothy, I got this church that's in trouble, man. I need you to go to Corinth."

I don't know how Timothy felt about that, but Paul reminds him a little bit later here, we'll talk about it in a second, to not be afraid. Maybe Paul was even a little bit of a... I mean, Timothy was maybe a little bit of an introvert or maybe a little timid, some people think, but Paul saw past that to who Timothy was as a man and who he could be as a man. Think about all these experiences that they had together. What does he say to him?

He says, "For this reason, I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands," which probably means that Paul like ordained him or commissioned him. I commissioned you. I ordained you. What happens when you don't use gifts? Like a fire, they fade. When you don't feed a fire, it fades. Paul's saying, "I'm reminding you, man. You got to use your gifts." This is what a spiritual father does with a spiritual son. He's like, "Man, you've got this gift. You've got this calling. You've got this talent.

Use it. You can't lose it. I want you to use it. I'm reminding you that I sent you to do this." As a spiritual father, as we identify gifts and talents in the men that we're doing life with, that we're along the way with, we need to remind those guys and encourage them and commission them to go use their gifts out in the world. Not keep them close to us, but to get them out, to get them out making a difference. And then he says this phrase, this phrase is pretty famous. He say, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and love and self-control."

This is the end of sort of this opening of the letter, and Paul ends it with this punch, right? "Timothy, don't be afraid. When you're afraid, Timothy, that's not the spirit of God. The spirit of God is a spirit of power and love and self-control. You can do this. You've got this. Why? Because the Holy Spirit is with you. The Holy Spirit is with you, my son, my beloved son, my agapetos teknon. The spirit of God is with you." What a powerful reminder for Paul to be giving to Timothy. This is the relationship they had.

This is the impact that Paul had on Timothy along the way, as he disciplined him along the way, as they spent years doing ministry together.

TO BE (OR FIND) A SPIRITUAL FATHER

What does it take then to be or to find a spiritual father? Well, I think the first thing to realize is, like Paul said, it's by the will of God. If you're called to be a spiritual father... And honestly, I think every mature Christian man is called to be a spiritual father. It's not your choice. It's by the will of God. Here's the thing though. If it's by the will of God, then he'll make a way for it.

If you're like, "Well, I don't know if I can be a spiritual father. I don't know who I could be a spiritual father to," I guarantee you, all you need to do is like open your eyes. Look around. There's a guy and here's the problem. I might be somebody that you got a lot in common with and that you really like, and that you connect well with, but probably not, in my experience. It might be that guy that like, "Why is this guy always around me? Everywhere I go, this guy's there." That's the will of God. Sorry. All right? We need to look around.

We need to pray and look around for the guys that are around us. We need to know that it's by God's will that we're spiritual fathers. The second thing is that we need to... If you're going to be a spiritual father, what do you do? Well, let me just give you a real simple thing. You're reminding a younger man of who he is in Christ. That's the essence of it. You're reminding a younger man of who he is in Christ.

If you're a young guy and you are looking for a guy who could be your spiritual father, look for somebody that will remind you of who you are in Christ, because they know who they are in Christ. You want to remind them of God's grace and the meaning of the gospel. That it's not about performance. It's about Jesus' performance. It's about his sacrifice. You need to look for and remind him of his gifts. What's he good at? What's he talented at? What's he successful at? How can you remind him of his gifts and help him figure out how to put those gifts into action?

And then finally, you need to remind him of the way God wants him to live. This is our ethics really. It's the way we work. It's the way we love our family. It's the way we spend time with God. It's the way we engage in our church and in our neighborhood. As spiritual fathers, we need to remind the younger men around us, how does God want us to live? And part of that reminder, like Paul, is exemplifying it. If you're a spiritual son and you really want to know what to look for in a spiritual father, 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul says, "Therefore imitate me as I imitate Christ."

Look around for a man that you want to be like. Look around for a man that you want to imitate. That's the guy that could be your spiritual father. And guys, older guys, we need to live lives that are worthy of imitation. So that when those young guys come to us, we're giving them something to look at. We're giving them an example to follow. Here's the Big Idea again. **Discipleship happens along the way.** I'm going to give you a corollary, or I'm going to flesh this out really quick here at the end.

This is the Big Idea; Discipleship happens along the way, but this is a qualifier to it. Okay? It requires presence over time, shared experiences, and Christian affection, right? This is what we talked about in the first part. And then before that, we talked about it forges bonds of love, friendship, and trust. I mean, this is probably a book right here, like seven or eight chapters in a book. It requires presence over time, shared experiences, and Christian affection. Discipleship along the way forges bonds of love, friendship, and trust.

Guys, let's be spiritual fathers. Let's have men that at the end of our lives, we can write a letter like Paul did to Timothy. We can have a man in our lives that we remind them of how God made them, of what we've accomplished together, of how they can go build God's Kingdom, of God's grace and mercy, and the power of the gospel in their lives. Let's not get to the end of our lives and go, "Man, I wish I'd had an impact on somebody. I wish somebody could call me a spiritual father."

If you don't know what to do, if that still scares you to think that you could be a spiritual father, just stay tuned. Because over the next 18 weeks, we're going to go through this book and we're going to learn from the master. We're going to learn from Paul what it looks like to be a spiritual father. You ready for the journey? All right. Let's pray. Father, thank you for confronting Paul on that road to Damascus, a murdering hateful spiteful, persecutor of people who followed Christ. Thank you for knocking him off his feet and showing him the truth.

Lord, if that's what any of us need so that we can follow you more closely, so that we can have the impact of a man like Paul, Lord, knock us off our feet too. Dazzle us. Blind us, Lord, and restore us to be the men that you've called us to be. Lord, I pray that everyone that's listening to this would see themselves in this letter from Paul to Timothy, that they would see themselves in the role of being a guide to someone.

Lord, men that are listening to this that need a spiritual father, that need a guide to show them the way, that they will find a man to walk with them, to suffer with them, to take all the same risks that they take, to sacrifice and to lead them in a way that they've already gone. Lord, we pray that we would recognize you as the ultimate father. That we are reflecting you to the men around us, Lord. That Jesus, we would grasp the promise that from your sacrifice and your resurrection.

Lord, make us spiritual fathers and sons for your glory and your kingdom. In Jesus' name, amen.