

Paul and Timothy: Passing the Torch

The Faithful Friend

Rough Transcript

Brett Clemmer

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Hey, guys. Good morning. Well, it's great to see you. Welcome to the Man in the Mirror Bible Study. We are continuing in our series, **Paul and Timothy: Passing the Torch**. Today we're in 2 Timothy. We're at the end of chapter one. And the title this morning is the faithful friend. **The Faithful Friend**.

I want to start with this verse... Keep your finger in 2 Timothy and flip over to Proverbs 20, and this might be one of those verses that you underline in your Bible. What does Proverbs 20:6 says? It says, "Many a man proclaims his steadfast love, but a faithful man who can find? Many a man proclaims his steadfast love, but a faithful man who can find?"

So I want you to think back in your life to a time that you went through some kind of a crisis. Maybe it was a job loss, or a divorce. Maybe it was a bad breakup. Maybe you had a illness, your own or somebody else's illness. We've all had times in our lives where we have gone through a crisis. We've felt maybe fear. Maybe we've felt paralyzed. Maybe we've felt like this crisis has been like shackles on our ankles that's just kept us from moving forward in our life. Everything else in your life comes to a stop sometimes when you go through a crisis. Think about that time that you went through an experience like that, maybe some of you are even in that experience now, and let me ask you this question, what did your friends do? What did your friends do?

When a brother goes through some kind of a crisis, it is a tremendous opportunity for us as friends to come alongside that friend, that brother, and be who they need to be. Come alongside them and help them through that crisis. In fact, I would say a crisis is one of the most accurate tests of your friendships that you can even have, because when you see a friend going through a crisis, the way you react to that really is going to determine the level of your friendships. What do you need when you go through a crisis? You need somebody to show up. You need someone that will bring refreshment to your soul. Somebody that will bring strength to your resolve. Somebody that will just bring you reassurance that you're not alone in your crisis. So as you think about that crisis, was there a friend there for you when you went through that crisis?

As I was thinking about preparing this talk, three specific crises came to mind. I'm not going to tell you about all three, I'm going to tell you about the middle one. I'll tell you about the middle one. Went through a time, my parents were around, I was as an adult. I was involved in my church. My mom had gone through some medical problems and so she was in a rehab facility. And so I went one day to the rehab facility, was actually going to take my mom and dad. I was going to be their ride to a doctor's appointment. And so my dad is fussing over my mom, we got her in a wheelchair, and the nurse is standing behind my dad and she's pointing to my dad, and she's mouthing the words, "Something's wrong." And so I'm like, "Oh, okay." So I'm like, "Dad, you're doing all right?" "Yeah, I'm fine. Why?" I'm like, "All right."

So we're walking sort of out of the rehab, down the hallway, and I'm pushing my mom in my wheelchair and I realize my dad's not beside me. And so I look around and my dad, there's like a chair rail in the

hallway, and my dad is holding onto that chair rail with a death grip, hand over hand, kind of dragging himself behind me. He is stark white, sweating. He's having a heart attack. I mean, that's got to be it. He had already had three at this point, so why not have a fourth, right?

I literally turned around, opened the doors to the rehab wing of this facility, the nurse was standing there, I pushed my mom through the door, and she said, "Do you need me to call an ambulance?" And I said, "No, I can get there faster." So I grabbed my dad under the arm and I sort of duck walked him out the door, got him in the car. And we walked into the hospital, and I said, "This is my dad. His name is Bill Clemmer. He's had three heart attacks. He's having chest pain and shortness of breath," and they had an EKG on him in literally like 90 seconds. We went to the back of the ER and pretty soon we heard... A helicopter's landing. So they're going to take him from this hospital to the other hospital, the bigger hospital on Princeton that has the cardiac facility.

And an hour later, I am sitting in the waiting room at the hospital and the doctor has just come out and told me, "Yeah, your dad's had a pretty big heart attack. We're going to do quadruple bypass. I'll let you know how it goes." Not giving me a whole lot of hope. So I find myself sitting in the waiting room, and people start arriving that heard about it. All people from my dad's small group. They are kind of sitting around in the waiting room. They all know each other, I don't really know them, but I'm sitting there.

And then I look up, and my buddy, Dwayne, walks through the door. Now, Dwayne was not a good friend at this point. He was a buddy. He was a guy that I knew, that I had done some things with. Our wives were friends. I say most men in church make friends the old fashioned way, they are the husbands of our wives' friends. So he was the husband of one of my wife's friends, but we knew each other. And Dwayne sat in that waiting room with me for eight hours that day. Didn't say a whole lot, talked when I wanted to talk. Just sat there. But he gave me comfort, he gave me the gift of his presence, the gift of his strength, and Dwayne and I became...

For the next three, four, five years, Dwayne Jane was my best friend. And we would show up for each other. Thankfully, we never had a crisis like that again, but it was in that moment of crisis that I realized that this man was a faithful friend, that this guy was my brother in Christ. Not just like my brother in Christ but like an actual brother. An actual guy who would make sacrifices for me, who would show up for me when I needed it. And of course, I wanted to show up for him too when he needed it, and so we became really good friends.

Have you had a time in your life where you've faced a crisis where a friend has shown up for you? That's the situation as we look at this passage in 1 Timothy. We're going to talk about the faithful friend, and here's sort of our outline. We're going to talk about the rejection of a false friend, the refreshment of a faithful friend, and then the reputation of a faithful friend.

THE REJECTION OF A FALSE FRIEND

Let's start with the rejection of a false friend. So grab your Bibles and turn to 2 Timothy 1 and we're going to read verse 15 to 18. Paul says to Timothy, "You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me among them are Phygelus and Hermogenes." I'm going to call them Phil and Hermon from now on because it's easier. "May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus for he often refreshed me and was not afraid of my chains, but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me earnestly and found me. May the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day. You well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus."

So let's start with verse 15, "You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me among them, Phil and Hermon." Now, when he says all of Asia, what he's talking about is the Roman province of Asia, so we would say Turkey. It's where Ephesus was. Why does Paul list that in there? Why does he say, "Well, you're aware that everyone in Asia had turned away from me," because Paul had spent three

years there. He had deep roots in the church community there. He's actually writing Timothy. Where is Timothy at this point? Anybody remember? Ephesus, Asia. Timothy is there.

So he's like, you know everybody abandoned me. You know why you know? Because you're actually there. And you know, Timothy, you literally know all the different people that have abandoned me in this time of difficulty, and among them... And you know these two guys personally. He lists them by name. Can you imagine being listed in the Bible one time and this is what you get? "Oh, yeah. Oh, I've heard of you. You abandoned Paul. That's you, right?" Can you imagine that? You don't want to be that friend. You want to be the friend that he's about to talk about. He calls them out.

Now why would they turn away from him? Why do our friends turn away from us when we're in a crisis? Because you know what, guys in crisis are really not that fun to be around. Guys in crisis are messy. They're a pain. Sometimes they are angry. Sometimes they lash out at us. Sometimes they are just pathetic. And depending on how you're wired, when you have a friend who's going through a crisis and they are not particularly fun to be around or they are... Personally, I don't like whiners. Give me the guy who's like leg is chopped off at the knee, the blood's coming out, but he's still trying to get to work the next day. That's my guy. The guy who is like, "Oh, my life is terrible. I really hurt and I'm really sad." I'm not good with those guys. Any amens in the room?

Yeah, thank you for not leaving me out there alone. So I can be a Phil or a Hermon when the guy that needs my help is not a guy that particularly sort of appeals to my, really, judgment of his character. That's not a faithful friend. A faithful friend is faithful in spite of those things. A faithful friend is going to sit with you in your mess. He's not going to just decide that he can't be around you.

Back in this culture... Pat talked a week or two ago about the shame and honor culture, so that would feed into this, but it's no different in the Western culture. We like to run with the winners. We don't just read books about people who went through a crisis unless there is triumph on the other side. We don't like the stories about the person who faithfully served in a leper colony and then got leprosy and died, the end. We don't like stories like that. We like stories of the guy that worked in leper colony and found the cure, and now everybody's better and victory is attained. But we all know that in a fallen world victory is often not attained, and that's why you need faithful friends to walk through that with you.

This is the rejection that Paul was feeling of a false friend. I have felt rejection of false friends. I've gone through times where the guys that I most expected to show up for me didn't show up for me. And I hate to say this but sometimes they were Christian friends, and that hurts even more deeply just like it had to hurt Paul even more deeply, is when you feel rejected by a Christian friend, by a brother who just doesn't want to be around you when you're not fun to be around, when you're in your mess.

THE REFRESHMENT OF A FAITHFUL FRIEND

So then let's look at the next couple verses here then. Verse 16 the tide turns, "May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains, but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me earnestly and found me." So here's an interesting thing. Do you know what the name Onesiphorus means? It actually means help bringer. Can you imagine? His parents named him help bringer. We don't do this in English today. We don't give our kids cool names that mean things very often. You remember Jeremy teaches sometimes, he gave all his kids names that actually mean things. Things that he wants to explain to them as they are growing up. This is who you are. This is part of your identity. It's a really cool way to name your kids, and they did this back then.

Onesiphorus was a help bringer. He showed up. And Paul tells us kind of specifically what he did. He says, "May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus for he often refreshed me." He often refreshed me. He didn't just show up once, pat me on the back, say, "Go get them," and then disappear. He often refreshed me. Think about the situation that Paul's in. We know that he was in chains, it says

that in the next phrase. We know that he was in chains. So he may have been in prison, he may have been under house arrest, but it wasn't a good situation, and Onesiphorus didn't just like show up once, he kept coming back. He often refreshed me. It says, "He was not ashamed of my chains. My predicament didn't deter him."

Think about some of the chains that men face. Do those chains deter you from helping out a friend? An addict is no fun to be around. A guy who's ageing and beginning to lose track of things isn't fun to be around. A guy who's got a marriage that's falling apart or has fallen apart and he's still dealing with the emotions of that and the difficulties of that, and every time you see him you're like, "Oh man, this is going to be another 45 minutes about..." You guys know what I'm talking about, right? That's not fun to be around.

Those things are chains on those guys' lives. And sometimes they can be pretty visible and so you're like, "I don't know if I really want to be seen with that guy. He screwed up his marriage, I don't really want to be seen around that guy. I mean, everybody knows he cheated on his wife, I don't want to really want to be seen around that guy. He got caught for embezzling money, I don't really know if I want to be seen around that guy." We let our own quest for reputation and for comfort overshadow our responsibility to be a faithful friend. And, frankly, sometimes we're ashamed to be around them.

Onesiphorus wasn't ashamed. He didn't care. He just went and did what a faithful friend does. It says he knew Paul was in chains and so he went to Rome looking for him. There were probably a lot of people in jail. He didn't know what he was doing when he got there, he just searched for him. And he searched for him earnestly, he didn't give up. Faithful friends won't give up. They will search for you earnestly. They'll put out the maximum effort. And then what happened? He found me. He found me. Can you feel the progression here? Like I was in chains and Onesiphorus brought refreshment to my soul, that's what he's talking about. He brought refreshment to my soul. He didn't even know where I was but he just kept looking for me, and looking for me, and looking for me, and then he found me. Praise God, my friend showed up and sat with me in the hospital waiting room, or in the jail, or wherever I am in my misery and brought refreshment.

So can you think of some famous friends in the Bible that we have that sort of show what it means to be a faithful friend to a person in crisis? Well, you might think of Elijah and Elisha. They went through life together. Moses and Joshua went through some pretty tough times together. David and Jonathan went through some tough times together.

Turn over real quick, let's look at Job, because I think Job's friends, sometimes they get a little bit of a bad rap. Yeah. But let's look how it started. Job 2:11. Job 2:11, "Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that had come upon him, they came each from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They made an appointment together to come to show him sympathy and comfort him. And when they saw him from a distance, they did not recognize him. And they raised their voices and wept, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads toward heaven. And they sat with him on the ground for seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great."

I mean, that's a long time for a guy not to offer advice. Seven days and seven nights with a guy who's in misery. It should have been eight days and nine days and 10 days, like eventually they started talking and they started saying stupid stuff. But I just want to point out that they each came from their own place. They left their lives behind. When they saw him from a distance, they were so worried about him because he didn't... He looked so terrible that they cried over him, and they rushed to him and they just sat with him for seven days and seven nights. That's pretty good friends. And so we can learn at least that part from Job's friends.

When I think of faithful friends, when I think of this bringing refreshment, not being ashamed, searching earnestly and finding, you know what it reminds me of? It reminds me of the gospel. Because God refreshes us. God is unashamed of us. Jesus comes to us. He searches us out. The Holy Spirit, before we come to Christ and after we come to Christ. This is a great description of how God treats us. He searches us out. He brings refreshment. He's not ashamed of the things that are holding us down, that are wrapping us up in chains, but the great part is that when God comes, God brings the power to break the chains. A friend's refreshment is temporary, God's refreshment is permanent. A friend will search earnestly as long as his strength lasts, God's strength never fails.

So this actually answers the question, like why is this passage even here? You've got in the verses before this, Paul's giving sort of direct instruction and talking about sort of theological points, and then after this he goes back to giving sort of instruction and theological points, and then these four verses, 15 to 18, this little paragraph, Paul sort of sticks in at the end of the first part of the letter, and it feels sort of like personal comments. Like, by the way, while I'm writing this, hang on a second, I just want to go... Phyl and Hermon really tick me off. I mean, I'm sitting here in chains and those guys have just abandoned me after all I did for them. But Onesiphorus, you know him, Timothy? Onesiphorus, I mean, that dude came through. Okay, now let's go back to what we were talking about.

It's not an aside, it's not like that. This is part of how Paul's teaching Timothy, reminding Timothy of the things that he wants him to remember as he goes forward as a pastor, as he goes forward as a disciple maker, as he passes the torch to him. This is an example-driven lesson. Rather than just sort of a theological based, or a teaching, or a reminder, this is like, hey, here's a concrete example of what it looks like, Timothy, to be a faithful friend. So let's look at the next verse then. Oops. Let's look at the next verse then. Verse 18, he says, "May the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day, and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus."

THE REPUTATION OF A FAITHFUL FRIEND

And so what we see here now is the reputation of a faithful friend. Paul calls out Phil and Hermon but he calls out Onesiphorus too. He's speaking in a way that's going to establish the reputation of Onesiphorus.

In God's economy, the faithful, sacrificial, earnest friend is bringing God glory, because what he's doing is he is sacrificing his own comfort, he's sacrificing his own reputation to care for a brother in Christ, to care for a fellow child of God, and that brings God glory.

Again, we see this in the way that Jesus talked to the disciples. If you look in John 15... In fact go ahead and turn there, turn to John 15. This is in some ways almost like a mini gospel in six verses here. So John 15:12, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another."

So Jesus says we are friends. Do you get this? Jesus calls us friends. He calls the disciples friends. And he gives us this, we call this the great commandment, to love one another. This shapes the definition of the Christian faith. It's different than any other faith that's out there. It's different than any other religion that's out there. A love-based religion, not a performance-based religion, not an achievement-based religion, not an appeasement-based religion, but a love-based religion, where God takes the first step towards us, where God seeks us out, and then we are supposed to respond to that love by bearing fruit, but even more than that, or along with that by loving one another and out of that the fruit comes.

I want you to remember when we started, we talked about... In the very first session we had the Big Idea that discipleship happens along the way, but then we had this phrase that went with that, we said it requires presence over time, shared experiences, and Christian affection. And it forges bonds of love, friendship, and trust. And you see at the beginning Paul gives this...Do you remember what he calls Timothy? He calls him his Agapetos teknon, his beloved son, because they've spent all this time... Timothy is not a child. Timothy is an experienced guy in ministry at this point, but he still calls him his beloved son because they've spent time, they've forged these bonds of love, friendship, and trust. And this is at the core of who Onesiphorus is too. They have forged these bonds of love, friendship, and trust.

And so our **Big Idea** then for today is this, **A faithful friend is determined to be present no matter the hardship or shame.** The faithful friend is determined to be present no matter the hardship or shame. So that then that faithful friend has a reputation. Now this reputation can be public but really what is your reputation? It's what people expect from you.

Let me ask you this, what is your reputation among your friends? Are you the kind of guy that sort of shows up when things are good, is all always down for a party, loves hanging out at the cigar shop on the weekends, or go to the classic car show, or grab a game? Or are you the guy that your friends go, "I'll tell you what, when I have a problem I know who I'm going to call. When I'm struggling I know who I'm going to call because that dude's there for me." What is your reputation? Do you have the reputation of a faithful friend?

Think about this in terms of, if you are interacting with somebody, maybe you're a spiritual father, or you have a spiritual father, like if you're a spiritual father, are you teaching this to the guy that you're discipling? Are you saying, look, this is what friendship looks like. We're Christians, we're not fair weather friends. We're there when the going gets tough. We're going to be there when the chips are down. We're going to sacrifice our own comfort. We're going to sacrifice even our own reputation, because this is what Christians do. We earnestly seek out our friends when they are in trouble. We bring refreshment. We'll sit with them for hours if we have to. As spiritual fathers we need to be exemplifying this, we need to be living lives worthy of imitation and showing this, but we also need to be expressly teaching it too. You can't just show things, sometimes you have to actually have to say the words and tell people things.

And then let me flip this the other way. Do you have somebody that's been this for you? Who are the guys that have been there for you when the chips have been down, when you've been in crisis? Do they know how much you love and appreciate them? Have you told them? One of the things I'd really encourage you to do in the days ahead is think through the guys that have been there for you. Maybe it was five years ago, maybe it was 25 years ago, and you haven't said anything to them about it lately, pick up the phone. Don't text them, actually talk to them. Pick up the phone, give them a call. Maybe you can text them to ask them if you can call them, because that's what we have to do these days.

Who are those guys that have been there for you? Why not give them a call? Why not write them out a note and say, "20 years ago when my wife was in hospital with cancer and I didn't know she was going to make it, man, you were there for me. I just want to let you know how much I appreciate that. Thank you for doing that for me. When I went through that tough time, and all of my own doing, a lot of people abandoned me but you walked through that time with me. Thank you so much for being there when I really didn't deserve much. I didn't deserve much compassion but you showed me compassion anyway. When everybody else was against me, man, you were there, you were there for me, and I really appreciate that."

Be an Onesiphorus but also recognize the Onesiphoruss in your own life, and give praise to God for those guys. And remember, the most faithful friend there ever was is Jesus, who sought you out regardless of the chain of your sin and brought refreshment. Through his death and resurrection he

brings us everlasting refreshment. So here's our Big Idea; A faithful friend is determined to be present no matter the hardship or shame.

Let's pray. Father, thank you so much for the gift of faithful friends, for the lesson and scripture of all the guys that did it well and did it not so well, but the ultimate example of a faithful friend in Jesus. And Lord, your willingness to leave your status behind of equality with God for a time so that you could walk among us, experience everything we experienced, sit with us in our despair and heartache, Lord, and provide deliverance through your death and resurrection. Lord, would you help us to cling to that? And then would you help us to live like that to the guys around us. Help us to be faithful friends, Lord, in the days ahead, in Jesus' name. Amen.