

If you believe in God, how would you prove it? What does devotion to God look like? Fifteen years ago today we learned that there are some people who believe that loving God means killing others - 2,996 others to be exact. The events of 9/11/2001 provided a stark contrast between a worldview that believes loving God requires hating others and a worldview that believes loving God is demonstrated best by helping others. The highlight of the Rio Olympics, in my opinion, was the women's 1500 meter race. I don't know who won the gold medal but I know who won the hearts of millions - Nikki Hamblin of New Zealand and Abbey D'Agostino of the USA. These athletes didn't know each other and had never spoken before they stepped onto the track. 8 laps into the 12 lap race, this is what happened.

As D'Agostino helped her rival to her feet, she said, "Come on, get up. We have to finish this race." In that moment, she redefined success. There is something about reaching down and helping someone up that reminds us of the heart of God.

Last week I saw this photo of a FSU football player eating lunch with a young man in a middle school in Tallahassee. The team paid a visit to the school to build support from their fans. When Travis Rudolph entered the cafeteria he saw Bo Paske sitting all alone. It turns out that Bo has autism and other students are uncomfortable sitting with him. Travis walked right over and asked Bo if he could sit with him. Of course Bo said yes and became an instant FSU fan.

Stories like these stir something within us. We know that the world is not the way it's supposed to be but it could be a lot better if we took more of an interest in the progress of others. We know instinctively that helping people is the best part of life. Fame is fleeting but investing in the success of others reaps a return that will outlive us. I'm not sure there is a better feeling in the world than knowing I made a contribution to the success of someone else. Did you hear what rookie Cowboy quarterback, Dak Prescott, did last night? Any time someone asks a question like that about a high profile athlete you're expecting bad news right? Dak Prescott, are you ready for this, sent a text to his mother just like he does before every big game to share his feelings with her. And here's the amazing part of the story - his mother died in 2013. Dak will never forget all the sacrifices his mother made so that he could be a successful athlete. Fame is fleeting but you can leave a legacy that outlives you.

Helping people is so important that Jesus equates it with loving God. The Greatest Commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart AND your neighbor as yourself. This morning I want to challenge you to think about those people who are within your reach. Are you helping them? Are you committed to their progress?

We are beginning a series of messages from 2 Timothy today. This is a letter from an older man who is nearing the finish line written to a younger man who is still very much in the thick of things. So much so that Timothy wants out. He is young and full of self-doubt. He is plagued by frequent illness as he pastors a church in a city that eats Christians for lunch. One philosopher, commenting on the moral climate in Ephesus, wrote that the inhabitants of the city were fit only to be drowned. It was a tough gig. For this reason, among others that we will get to later in the letter, Timothy wants out. He's tired of helping people. If you are in a helping profession, you understand. So Paul writes to his "beloved child" in the faith.

The primary purpose of Paul's letter is simply to remind Timothy of the things he already knew and had become convinced of. That is why the title of this series is, "Reminded." There are very few themes in the Bible that are surprising. We know the basic plot. We get the main point, "Love God and help others." But when we are under duress, when we are feeling the pressures of life, we tend to forget. We need to be reminded. That is why Peter says to his readers, "I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me." 2 Pe. 1:13-14

It is not uncommon to question your calling. It's not uncommon to ask, "Why am I here?" It's a good question, even corporately. We have been asking the Lord to remind us why we are here. What is our unique contribution? When you are confused about why you are here on this planet, whenever the fire in your soul starts to go out, it is a good idea to remind yourself of three things.

1. Remember that you have a heritage of faith...v. 5. From what we know about Timothy, there was no father in the picture. But he did have a faithful mother (Eunice) and grandmother (Lois). They taught him the scriptures from infancy. 3:15 says, "from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

If you are a parent or a grandparent, here is your calling: expose your children to the word of God. Give them the gift of a legacy of faith. Last week my 2-yr.-old grandson was asked by his mother, "What was Sunday School about today." He said, "God." That's a good start. But when she asked, "What about God," he immediately responded, "God is in charge of everything." That is one of the first truth foundations we teach children here at Fellowship. If you can learn that at 2, you just might remember it at 22 or 42 or 82.

"But I didn't have a mother or grandmother who taught me the scriptures." Neither did I. But the God, "who is in charge of everything," set me down right in the middle of some men and women who took an interest in me and taught me the scriptures. Spiritual fathers, like Paul was to Timothy. I am forever grateful for my heritage of faith. Now it's my turn to pass on the faith.

2. Remember that you are gifted...v. 6. When we are under pressure we need to be reminded that the God who created us equips us to accomplish His purposes. When you were little and someone asked what you wanted to be when you grew up, you answered big. You said, "I want to be a great athlete or great singer or even the owner of a great Chuck E. Cheese!" You never hear a kid say, "I want to grow up to be very average." You were born to participate in God's Great Commission. Have you noticed it is not called the "Good-enough Commission." It's the Great Commission and you have a great calling on your life.

You were also born with a bent. There is no one else like you. Think of it - out of the infinite combinations of egg cells and sperm cells, one egg cell got together with one sperm cell and became you. God sovereignly chose the genetic material and brought you to life. You are fearfully and wonderfully made. You were created in His image and likeness so you could represent Him before all those who are unaware of their origins. You have a job to do, a calling upon your life. You sense it every now and then but the spark is quickly extinguished through fear and doubt and criticism and failure and confusion.

All of us need someone like Paul in our lives to say, "You are gifted. You were made for this."

3. Remember that you have the Holy Spirit...v. 7. God has given us His Spirit who is described as the source of power, love and a sound mind. Why these three things? Because these represent three antidotes to the biggest threats to accomplishing our God-given assignment - weakness, rejection and confusion.

Weakness stems from our sense of inadequacy and often leads to failure. But Paul was well-acquainted with weakness. Weakness or inadequacy is essential if we are ever going to appropriate and appreciate God's grace. The only thing necessary to receive God's grace is nothing...and most of us don't have it. We're too busy pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps.

"And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore, I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong." 2 Cor. 12:9-10. I'll take the power of Christ over human cleverness any day.

God's Spirit is also the source of love. Timothy may be immobilized by the fear of rejection. What if they don't like my teaching? What if they don't like me? The Spirit within us reminds us that we "have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!' The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God." Ro. 8:15-16.

Timothy's fear of weakness and rejection lead to the third fear - confusion. We have all gone through an experience in which we are just mentally stuck. We can't go forward and we can't go back. I once heard an author named Tim Hansel tell about a rock-climbing episode he experienced. His instructor was teaching him to climb when Hansel got into a predicament where he couldn't go back but was too frightened to go forward. His instructor patiently asked, "Tim, do you know what you are doing right now?" His response was, "Yes, I'm thinking about how I'm going to get out of this predicament." The instructor said, "No. You are preparing to fall. If you do not move forward, you are going to fall."

So let's get moving. Let's take the next step toward fulfilling the call of God in our lives. You were made for ministry. One of the best definitions of ministry I've ever read is, "Ministry is using the gifts God put inside me to do the work God set before me to bless the people God put around me through the Spirit God put within me." John Ortberg. Your calling is to help people, to call others to live out their God-given purpose in Christ every day."

Here's my invitation to you - meet with someone each week and discuss these things. Identify a Paul in your life as well as a Timothy. Small groups, women's groups, men's groups. Let's stir one another up by way of reminder.