

Copyright Geist Christian Church, September 25, 2022

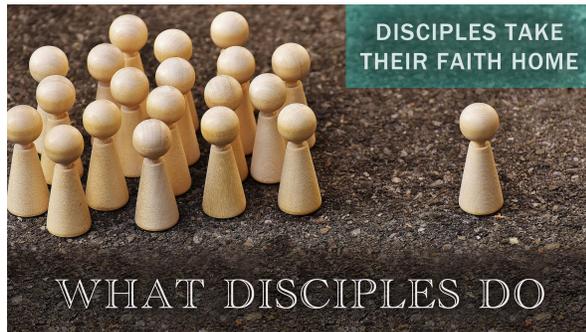
**Title:** What Disciples Do: Disciples Take Their Faith Home

**Preaching:** Samantha Copeland, Associate Minister for Youth and Young Adults

**Text:** [2 Timothy 1:1-14](#)

**Email:** [Samantha Copeland](#)

[Watch the service](#)



Today we are continuing our sermon series *What Disciples Do* with the topic of “Disciples Take Their Faith Home.” We’re going to explore this question: “What does it look like to pass our faith down while learning from the next generation as well?”

Since I am the minister for youth and young adults here at Geist, our lead pastor Danny thought I might have something to say on the topic. So I thought I would share my experience, the one of faith being passed down to me, how it has inspired me to create spaces to pass down faith to others, and what I’ve learned from those younger than me along the way.

We were driving over the Collins Street bridge, which crosses over the highway that runs straight through my town, heading west. It was early evening and the sun was setting. As we reached the top of the bridge my mother sighed as she took in the view. She smiled that knowing smile that she does, the one right before she’s about to tell you about something she loves, and she said, “How could you look at that and not believe in God?”

It was a seemingly simple moment. I’m not sure if my mom remembers this exact interaction. You see, she is known to say things like this often, but it’s the first time I remember her saying it. In that moment, my mom helped me lay my foundation for my faith, my relationship with God, and the core piece of my theology: God as Creator. This view of God is the central point of my faith.

My mom didn’t sit down with me and have a conversation about how she saw God in the sunset or create a Bible study to do together. She simply shared her faith in passing moments.

While my mom laid the foundation for my faith with her words, my dad did it in action. My mom taught me how to appreciate and connect with God’s creation through my head; my dad taught me how to

connect with creation physically. From the time I was five years old, my dad took me camping once or twice a year. On those trips, I learned to fish, ride a horse, hike, build a campfire, etc. To this day I remember some of the trails we went down, the lakes we fished in. I remember when he taught me that plastics do not go into a fire. My dad also encouraged me to be outside often. Through the way he landscaped, he created a space for me to play and dig and get to know the earth. Every year he would set out a section of our flower beds just for me. We would go to the local plant nursery together, and I would pick out plants that I wanted to plant. While I would scan the aisles looking for the prettiest and the brightest flowers, my dad would tell me about each one, what kind of sunlight they liked, how much I would need to water them. My dad taught me how to physically care for and be with God in creation. These moments with my dad didn't just prepare me to survive in the wilderness or to care for my own garden someday. They gave me an opportunity to connect with my faith in special ways.

The fingerprints of their faith can be seen on mine. A similar story can be found in our scripture for this morning. 2 Timothy 1:1-14 reads this way in the Common English Bible:

From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will, to promote the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus.

To Timothy, my dear child.

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

I'm grateful to God, whom I serve with a good conscience as my ancestors did. I constantly remember you in my prayers day and night. When I remember your tears, I long to see you so that I can be filled with happiness. I'm reminded of your authentic faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice. I'm sure that this faith is also inside you. Because of this, I'm reminding you to revive God's gift that is in you through the laying on of my hands. God didn't give us a spirit that is timid but one that is powerful, loving, and self-controlled.

So don't be ashamed of the testimony about the Lord or of me, his prisoner. Instead, share the suffering for the good news, depending on God's power. God is the one who saved and called us with a holy calling. This wasn't based on what we have done, but it was based on his own purpose and grace that he gave us in Christ Jesus before time began. Now his grace is revealed through the appearance of our savior, Christ Jesus. He destroyed death and brought life and immortality into clear focus through the good news. I was appointed a messenger, apostle, and teacher of this good news. This is also why I'm suffering the way I do, but I'm not ashamed. I know the one in whom I've placed my trust. I'm convinced that God is powerful enough to protect what he has placed in my trust until that day. Hold on to the pattern of sound teaching that you heard from me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Protect this good thing that has been placed in your trust through the Holy Spirit who lives in us. (2 Timothy 1:1-14)

In this passage, we hear about Timothy and about his faith. According to these words from Paul, Timothy's faith is a mixture of his ancestry and the teachings he has received from Paul.

My parents weren't the only people who shaped my faith. I grew up in a faith community that nurtured me in my faith journey. There was Martha, Bob, Ricki, and Laureen—all Sunday school teachers of mine from the time I was just a wee babe. There was Don Dutton, Ken Bateman, and Bill Schiad, who all guest taught the youth group Sunday School when I was in high school. There was Charlene Stockwell, Alan Flies, Diane and Scott White, and Angela and Henry Baker, all youth sponsors who participated in youth group and went on mission trips. They even took over the youth group all on their own during a period of time when we didn't have a youth minister. Because of them, I have some of my greatest friends and greatest memories growing up. My church was my safe place, the place I wanted to be all the time. They all fostered my growth because they invested their time, resources, and energies in me and my friends. They created spaces for me to explore my faith and learn from theirs.

While these people passed down their faith to me, my faith is not a carbon copy of theirs. I remember another drive I had with my mom, back when I was in college. We were listening to the song "Saltwater Gospel" by the Eli Young Band. The song starts with these lyrics:

"Every Sunday I see people filing in through those front doors  
Got a cross up on that steeple, yeah it's time to praise the Lord  
Some watch it on their TV, sitting on the couch  
Me, I get in my old Bronco and point those headlights out."

The song goes on to tell of how this particular person feels the presence of God when he is knee deep in water, that is his version of church.

When the song was over, my mom said to me, "That's nice, but I feel closer to God when I'm at church." Meanwhile, I felt so seen in these lyrics. How wonderful to meet God in God's creation. It reminded me of those camping trips with my dad and planting in the garden. That seems to me one of the most worshipful acts. My mom and I feel differently about this, and the ways we are spiritually fed are different.

While my relationship to God was formed through her example and guidance, it doesn't always look the same. That's because we aren't the same people. When you are working to pass down your faith to others, remember they were not created to be you or to have the exact faith that you do. They were created to be themselves. No one can give them a blueprint for that, but you can be there for them as they figure it out for themselves. Trust in the Spirit to move and work in them just as It has in you.

Now I don't want us to get so focused on the first half of our question this morning that we forget the second half: "What does it look like to pass our faith down, **while learning from the next generation as well?**"

Passing down faith is not about teaching and grilling things into children and youth; it is about creating relationships. Relationships aren't a one way thing. There is always a level of give and take. You learn just as much from children and youth as you share your wisdom with them. One of the ways our children and youth are good at sharing is their questions. Their curious minds have so many as they work to piece together faith and theology, to figure out who God is and how they can have a relationship with God. It is often in these curiosities that you can find an invitation to look at the world anew. You see, there is wisdom in knowing, but there is also such wisdom in asking questions. So listen to them.

One of the biggest things I learned this summer on mission trips was how in order to care so deeply for people, we have to be asking the right questions. Our youth were appalled by the way our world, our country, treats refugees and those experiencing homelessness. As an adult who has seen these injustices play out again and again, I think it is easy to get complacent to something that doesn't directly affect me, to become jaded. Hearing our youth ask questions reminded me how the Spirit is moving and taught me it's okay for your heart to break for things that are wrong, for things that are hurting our neighbors. In their questions, I was reminded that sometimes the solutions aren't as complicated as I thought. Our world is in good hands if they keep asking these questions.

So how do you take your faith home? What are some ways that you can leave this place and make an impact on the next generation? Well, I've got four suggestions:

- Teach by example.
- Create safe and loving spaces.
- Invest in children and youth through the church.
- Be teachable.

**Teach by example:** Share who you are and your faith in words and actions in everyday life. You don't need to make big plans for a Bible study or teachable moments. Just be authentic, and let your faith be an example to them in everyday life. Let go of "should," and know that who you are and how you express your faith is more than good enough.

**Create safe and loving spaces:** Our children and youth were created to be exactly the person that they are, not a clone of anyone else. Be sure you are making room for them to make their faith their own while you are passing yours on. Lead with love and beautiful things will grow.

**Invest in children and youth through the church:** Volunteer and share your resources. This space here is a perfect place to help to impact the next generation. Both of our children and youth programs could use your time, energy, and resources. You can become someone who shapes another child's life. You will find along the way that they will also shape your life.

**Be teachable:** Get ready to learn. Don't dismiss questions; lean into them. Be curious because there is always something new and exciting outside of our comfort zone. Children and youth are notoriously good at leading you to that place.

I hope you will pray on these things and find ways that work for you to influence and inspire our children and youth as they grow in faith. Your faith can do amazing things and it can help our next generation flourish and grow. So take your faith from this place. Take it home, and watch beautiful things take root and grow.

Let us pray.