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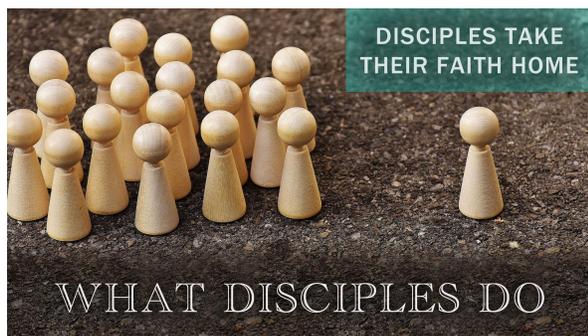
Title: What Disciples Do: Disciples Take Their Faith Home

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

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This is week three of our look at *What Disciples Do* and how we might be better, more authentic disciples of Christ. Week one was the hard passage in Luke about hating parents and family and giving away possessions, but we discovered that it wasn't a choice about hating or loving but rather making following Christ *the* priority in your life. Last week, it was a look at things that were lost and found, namely *us* and how God and the Christian community rejoices when we find new life in Christ and when we seek others.

Today, we'll look at the third characteristic of *What Disciples Do*: Disciples take their faith home. That is to say that disciples of Jesus Christ are consistent in their faith. Faith at home is the same as faith at church is the same as faith at work. Today, I also want to consider how we came to our faith and why that's important.

Just to center us this morning, I'd like for you to think about how you came to faith. Who told you stories? Who took you to church? For some, that time would have been decades ago, and those people passed long ago. For others, today might be the first time and that person might be sitting next to you. For others, someone might have suggested you watch the livestream or a recording. However it happened, those people have names.

For me, my maternal grandfather, Basil Campbell, was my caregiver when I was a kid and my mom was at work. I think I've told you before that I wanted to name our firstborn Basil, but Ruth, my wife and the mother of our first born, had other ideas. Basil, he went by B.W., had retired from the Santa Fe railroad, and when he wasn't watching me (and sometimes when he was watching me), he was taking care of his church building—painting, cleaning, fixing stuff. I watched him and knew that service was an outgrowth of a faith that was deep within him. Along the way, he told me stories. He gave me my first Bible. I witnessed a generosity from him and my grandmother that was hard for me to understand. How could someone struggle to make ends meet but yet give so much?.

Who are your names? Who instilled faith in you? I usually don't do interactive sermons, but I'd be interested in hearing the relationship and names. Mine would be "Grandfather Basil." Let's take a few moments to name them out loud. It's OK if there are multiple names said at the same time. Who are your names?

2nd Timothy is a letter written by the Apostle Paul. Some scholars believe it was written later by someone else using Paul's name as a way to honor Paul. That was common in those days. Either way, it was written to Timothy. It is a letter from an older and experienced follower of Jesus to a younger one, and it is full of wisdom and insight on what it means to treasure the gift of a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. This letter reads as a kind of last will and testament as Timothy is urged to carry on the work of living the faith and sharing the message of Jesus.

We call this kind of book a "pastoral epistle." Epistle means "letter" and it gets the name "pastoral" because it's written to an individual rather than a congregation, like other letters that we have. As we read it, we get the privilege of eavesdropping on this personal letter. We get to hear these words to Timothy, and as we do we are invited, as followers of Jesus, to pick up the message and to be encouraged in our faith as well. Even though it's addressed to Timothy, we can assume that this letter wasn't intended for Timothy alone but also for the wider Christian community—reminding them both of Timothy's calling and their calling.

It was customary in the first century for letters to begin with a standard greeting and prayer of gratitude and blessing: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. This letter's prayer of gratitude describes the faith history of Timothy's own family:

"I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you" (2 Timothy 1:5).

People of faith pass the faith from generation to generation. Like Lois passed her faith to Eunice and Eunice to Timothy and Timothy to many others. These days, because extended families are scattered and children may only see grandparents a few times each year, the church often helps fill the role of grandparent, sharing stories and examples of faith from generation to generation. This is why we make a point, during the blessing of every child, to ask the congregation to stand and commit themselves to their part in the child's faith development.

If you've forgotten, these are your words: "We receive you into the community of faith. We promise to live so that you know that we love you, God loves you, and we welcome you with open arms and hearts." When that child is older and stands in the water of baptism, the congregation again commits to their role in their continuing development. Together we say, "We promise to pray for them, to support them, and encourage them to love one another as God has loved us."

Those are not idle words inserted in a service just for the sake of liturgy. They mean something. The church, however, like a grandparent, only plays a supporting role in training up children in the way they

should go. Parents are the first and best examples of faithful living, the first and best teachers of faith in children's lives.

It's in the home that children first learn how to say prayers at bedtime or before meals. It's in those daily surprise conversations—you know, the ones that start with a deep theological question like, "Mommy, where does God sleep?" or "Why does God make mosquitoes?"—that children learn what their parents believe about God, the world God created, and their place in it. This is how we pass on faith from generation to generation. The letter to Timothy goes on to explain why this is so important, as it lays out the key truth of this passage:

"For this reason, I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you..." (2 Timothy 1:6 NRSV).

That's the translation we read this morning and I generally like the New Revised Standard Version; however the New International Version translates it this way:

"For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you..." (2 Timothy 1:6 NIV).

I like the idea of fanning a flame. It's an image I can understand. Maybe it's because I worked with scouts and scouts love fire. One of the highest honors in our local scout council is called the firecrafter.¹ One of the requirements to become a firecrafter is to pop a spark using only friction, get a fire going, and have that fire burn for at least 15 minutes. Try it. It is incredibly difficult.

But the scouts practice for this moment, and it is inspiring watching them work to get that spark and allow it to ignite first lint and leaves and then little twigs and then larger twigs and then little branches and then bigger branches. All the while they are fanning or blowing on the flame giving it the oxygen it needs to get started. Sometimes, it takes just a few puffs through the tiniest of straws. Other times, it takes a big piece of cardboard creating a windstorm around the flames.

In other words, because of the important role that Timothy's mother and grandmother played in his growing faith, Timothy is to fan into flame the gift of faith that fuels his present ministry. It is a reminder to Timothy to boldly cultivate and embrace his current calling and ministry because of his initial exposure to the faith within the context of his family.

J. Peter Holmes said, "To 'rekindle the gift'—to 'fan the flame'—means to stir up the grace and faith and love that we have received, and we stir them up by putting them into practice. Our call is to forgive as we have been forgiven, and to love as we have been loved."²

¹ Information about Firecrafter found at <https://firecrafter38.wildapricot.org/page-18126>

² J. Peter Holmes, *Feasting on the Word*, Year C, Vol. 4, 137-138

Our scripture goes on to say,

“Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord...but join me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God who saved us and called us with a holy calling...” (2 Timothy 1:8-9).

We live in a world where some are ashamed of the gospel. This is where the faith that surrounds our children in the community of the church is so important. This is a place where it is safe, where standing up for Jesus is affirmed. This is the place where children learn how to tell the story of Jesus and learn to live into their own calling as followers of Christ. This is where we learn how to keep the promises made on our behalf at a blessing and at our baptism—to live our faith each day in ways that others see the light of Christ through us.

We have each been called to a holy purpose, just as Paul and Timothy were. We have each been given a family of faith to help us remember key truths. It is this family of faith that helps us guard the good treasure of faith we have been given. Faith is caught, not just taught. It is passed on through relationship and nurture. Like a treasured gift, it is passed on from one generation to another. Each generation must come to value it and care for it, to hold it, and to then pass it on to others. Paul acknowledges both the heritage of Timothy’s faith and the fact that it was passed on to him, but then he encourages Timothy to really own it, to treasure it for himself, to fan the flame no matter the circumstance in which he finds himself.³

We each have a holy calling, not because of our works but because of God’s own purpose and grace, which God gave us in Christ Jesus. We each have been given the faith to answer that call. It is good to remember that, to reaffirm our call from time to time. Like every good relationship, our relationship with God will require rekindling and tending.

Imagine our faith, our relationship with God, as being like a fire. The fire is lit by God. It is God who saves us not according to our own works but according to God’s grace. Yet throughout this letter, we will see that Timothy is invited to respond to God’s grace in faith. He is invited to steward it, care for it, and share it.

Where are we today? Are we feeling encouraged in our faith? Full of hope and joy in the Gospel? Or are we feeling tired, discouraged, or just not so sure that the good news is all that good? Like Timothy, are we at times timid, fearful, or tentative about sharing our faith? Like Timothy, do we hear the invitation from God to rekindle the gift? Ask yourself the questions, “How can I awaken God’s gift in me?” and “Who has been a support for me in the course of my journey?”

³ Commentary help for this sermon from, “Sermon Commentary for Sunday, October 6, 2019 by Chelsey Harmon, Center for Excellence in Preaching found at <https://cepreaching.org/commentary/2019-09-30/2-timothy-11-14-2/>

Three years ago, I preached in my home congregation for their 150th anniversary celebration. Preparing for that day gave me occasion to think about the five or six generations of people that prepared the foundation of faith for me in that place. I think about the same thing in this place. Imagine for a moment when Geist Christian Church celebrates its 150th anniversary—in the year 2135. I hope they will look to this time as a time when we fanned the flames of our faith and rekindled our faith— in church, at work, and, indeed, at home. Amen.