

BaptistWay Bible Series for July 16: Invest yourself in the spiritual life of another

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Invest yourself in the spiritual life of another

- 2 Timothy 1:1-14

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A couple of months ago, I received a phone call from Rob, a friend I grew up with in our church youth group more than 20 years ago. He had been on my mind often over the years, but we had lost contact as each of us moved from place to place. I repeatedly failed in finding his contact information.

So, I was overjoyed when he called. Then I was humbled by the reason he gave for seeking me out and calling me. He is an elder in his church now, and in the days preceding his calling me, he was challenged to recall someone who had an impact on his spiritual growth. When presented with the challenge, Rob thought of me.

It was not that he had not sought me out before. But this challenge gave him new resolve to do so. Thus, he contacted John Bell, our youth minister

growing up. Somehow, he had my new phone number, even though I could not remember giving it to him after our recent move.



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Rob proceeded to express appreciation for the role I played in his life while we were teenagers. He had many friends, but he said with me alone could he share spiritual matters.

Now, I am no spiritual giant, and as I look back on my youth, even as a Christian I was immature. I mentioned how much it meant for him to say this, especially since such conversations did not dominate our friendship. It truly was humbling, because I could not remember making an overt attempt to influence him. I still was growing myself. But he assured me I had shared in shaping a life.

According to tradition, Paul's second letter to Timothy was written during Paul's second and final imprisonment. The time of Paul's death was drawing near. While this letter includes instructions to Timothy in his task as leader in Ephesus—in similar fashion to the first letter—it is much more reflective and personal in tone. The letter reads more like a farewell address than a platform for instruction.

Contained in the first chapter are Paul's words of recollection, encouragement and exhortation to Timothy. Paul reminded Timothy of the people and events that shaped his life. In light of these, Timothy was to carry out his mission.

What shaped Timothy's life? Clearly, his experiences traveling and ministering with Paul made an impact on him. Only briefly in this letter (3:10-11) did Paul mention any specific example of Timothy's travels with Paul, but these must be in the background here.

The book of Acts, however, and others of Paul's letters illustrate how closely Paul and Timothy were joined in ministry. In 2 Timothy 1:6, Paul recalled being present at the beginning of Timothy's ministry. Also, Paul exhorted Timothy to pattern his teaching after the example set by him (v. 13). Even now, as Paul was writing the letter, he could shape Timothy's life through intercessory prayer (v. 3).

Paul recognized, as well, that even before Timothy partnered with him in ministry, Timothy's grandmother, Lois, and mother, Eunice, played a key role in his spiritual development. He acknowledged that the sincerity of faith Timothy exhibited first lived in them (v. 5). We can infer from this that Timothy gleaned spiritual insights from his mother and grandmother. Beyond that, Paul offered no other insight into their impact on Timothy. But perhaps Paul made allusion to their influence on Timothy when, in 3:15, he reminded Timothy he had learned the Scriptures from his youth.

Paul's reminders to Timothy of the many factors which influenced his life served as impetus for further encouragements and exhortations. Timothy was to rekindle the gift of God imparted to him (v. 6). He did not receive a spirit of fear, but "a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline" (v. 7).

Consequently, Timothy was not to be ashamed to testify about Christ or to be ashamed of Paul, who was in prison for the gospel. Paul then exhorted Timothy to join him in his suffering for the gospel (vv. 8-9), which he further described (vv. 9-10). To this gospel, Paul was appointed "a herald and an apostle and a teacher" (v. 11).

Though his loyalty to the gospel was the reason for his present suffering,

Paul himself was not ashamed. For he knew the one he believed, and he was convinced he would guard it for “that day” (v. 12).

Paul concluded with two further admonitions to Timothy. First, he exhorted Timothy to continue in following what he heard from Paul “as the pattern of sound teaching” (v. 13). The words which shaped Timothy should continue to do so.

Second, Timothy was to “guard the good deposit” entrusted to him (v. 14). The word “guard” is the same as used in verse 12 for the Lord’s activity of protecting what Paul entrusted to him. Timothy would be able to do this “with the help of the Holy Spirit” which lived in him.

Indeed, Timothy, like my friend, Rob, could acknowledge those that shaped his life. He could draw on his upbringing by his grandmother and mother. This letter recalled the direct impact Paul had on his life. These guiding influences served as the foundation for his continued service to the Lord.

Rob’s call prompts me to recall those who shaped my life. I have some calls to make myself.

Discussion questions

- Who has shaped your life? If possible, would you consider contacting that person?
- Are you in need of hearing more encouraging words?
- Whose life are you shaping? What can you say or do to prepare them for service?
- Could you present your words as a “pattern for sound teaching?”



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