

THEME: Timothy – Letters to a Young Man

“Remember Who You Are”

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber

June 1-2, 2013 at First United Methodist Church - Durango

Scripture: 2 Timothy 1:3-7

3 Timothy, I thank God for you—the God I serve with a clear conscience, just as my ancestors did. Night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. 4 I long to see you again, for I remember your tears as we parted. And I will be filled with joy when we are together again. 5 I remember your genuine faith, for you share the faith that first filled your grandmother Lois and your mother, Eunice. And I know that same faith continues strong in you. 6 This is why I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you. 7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.

VIDEO Timothy Week 3 Sermon Starter

SLIDE Timothy – Remember Who You Are (Use Timothy background)

I decided to take a risk today. Two weeks ago I shared with you that my mother had come to visit recently and she brought with her four boxes from my childhood that she had stored in her garage. She was cleaning out and decided to bring them to me and one of the boxes contained my yearbooks from high school. Since last weekend and this weekend there were graduation ceremonies at our high schools here in Durango, I thought it would be fun to look through them. To be honest, I was reminded first of things I wish I could forget permanently, like that haircut.

SLIDE Jeff in High School (picture)

SLIDE Memories have power

My guess is that you all have experience with memories. I'll bet I could ask every one of you to tell me about the very worst meal you have ever eaten out and without much delay you could tell me about that meal and that restaurant, especially if it made you sick. Your experience with that meal and at that restaurant probably now informs how you make decisions about eating out. I had a bad experience with a particular kind of food at a particular restaurant when I

was in high school and I haven't been back to that restaurant since that experience. However, whenever I go home I have to go to Round Table Pizza because they have the best pizza and I have great memories from eating there as a child.

Memories have power and they change the way that we live going forward. Our memories shape us. They mold us and affect how we live our lives. This happens with all sorts of things in our lives. We choose our vacations based on our memories of trips in the past. We choose our routes to drive based on our past experiences of traffic patterns. I was visiting recently with someone who had an accident on a particular road here in town and they avoid that road at all costs because of the memories of that road and that accident. I have visited with people who haven't been to church since they were a child because of bad experiences they had, particularly with that sermon which hopefully won't be your story after today.

The first trip that my wife and I took together was actually a mission trip to Washington DC when I was a campus pastor and she was a freshman in college. We went over spring break to study urban homelessness and hunger in our nation's capital. We met with our politicians and we served in soup kitchens and we stayed in shelters. I'll never forget meeting with the director of one of the shelters in her office and on a shelf she had several containers with a picture by each container of a person. Each container held the ashes of that person who is pictured and no family had come forward to claim them. They had died on the streets of Washington DC and the director of the shelter wanted to be sure we remember them and have a picture of them encase family ever came looking for them. I still feel the ache of looking at those containers and knowing that some people died alone on the streets of our nation's capital.

Our memories are powerful. They mean something and they shape us. They change the way that we live. This is why the most powerful part of a funeral is the eulogy or time of remembering. This is why we often show pictures of that person's life on the video screens, so we can remember. We then can take those memories with us into the future and live knowing that we have been affected by that person and we take a part of them with us. We have been changed because of their life and we remember because of that.

Today we are going to close this sermon series by talking about Paul's second letter to Timothy. The first letter deals with Timothy trying to lead the

church. Paul deals largely with helping Timothy sort through what is true and what is false and how to help the church live out the gospel faithfully. But the second letter to Timothy takes a different tone. It is a letter of encouragement to a struggling disciple, and Paul is encouraging him throughout the letter to remember who he is and what God has called him to do. Paul is trying to equip Timothy to carry his faith in the future, knowing that Paul's time in this life is coming to a close. Paul does this by reminding them about who he is and where he came from, that he might march forward into the future unafraid.

Paul writes this letter to Timothy to encourage his struggling friend in the faith. He is trying to inspire his struggling disciple. We learned over the last few weeks that Paul knew Timothy since he was nine or 10 years old. At the age of 14 or 15 years old Paul invites Timothy to be his student and he takes Timothy with him to Ephesus, which was the second-largest town in the Roman Empire. It was a city known for its diversity of religious faith and background, and had a multitude of philosophies which ran rampant through the citizens of Ephesus. They worshiped several different gods in Ephesus. They followed Diana and Artemis and Bacchus. There were Gnostics who believed they had secret knowledge.

Ephesus was also known for idol worship. There were many people who made a healthy living crafting and carving figurines of each of the gods that they would sell. Timothy was called into this community and he preached the gospel encouraging people to follow Christ. Part of following Christ was casting away idols and other gods. The gospel that Timothy preached would change the economy in Ephesus and it was causing people to become very angry, to the point of causing riots. From a very early age Timothy recognized that this city of Ephesus with disdain him and in many ways come to hate him for the message that he was carrying and preaching. This was a heavy burden for someone who is 16 years old, especially when you remember that at age 16 or 17 we are most concerned with fitting in and being liked by our peers.

We learned last week that the church in Ephesus was filled with turmoil. There were small groups and Bible studies which were running rampant with false teachings. There were people following the Gnostic belief of separation between the body and the spirit or mind. People were clashing and this was dividing the church. There was fracturing and so Timothy was called to preach the gospel that he learned from the apostle Paul as a way of correcting the church and bringing it back into proper alignment around the gospel of Jesus Christ. This made his

church upset and angry with him as well as the people in the community of Ephesus.

This means that Timothy is not only living in a town which dislikes him but a church that doesn't like him very much either. The place that was supposed to support him was turning against him and the church itself was fracturing. As a result of this Timothy was overwhelmed and struggling. His life was twisted up and he was not sure what to do or which way to go at times. This is why Paul writes to Timothy and begins a letter with tears expressed as he tells Timothy how he wishes he could be with him.

The main thing that Paul does in this letter is to try and help Timothy remember who he is and where he comes from. We read in verse five how Paul reminds Timothy of his family.

SLIDE ***5 I remember your genuine faith, for you share the faith that first filled your grandmother Lois and your mother, Eunice. And I know that same faith continues strong in you. 6 This is why I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you. 7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.***

Paul is reminding Timothy that he comes from a family of strong and faithful pillars. He urges Timothy to remember his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. These are women which formed Timothy and shaped him and poured into his life, faith, and encouragement. Paul encourages Timothy to remember his family and remember where he came from. Even though you feel like you're alone and you feel discouraged because the world seems to be crashing down around you, remember where you came from and remember the faithfulness of the people who gave you life and made you who you are. That faithfulness and spirit and boldness lives within you Timothy, so don't forget that.

SLIDE **The power of remembering who you are**

Timothy was doing the very same thing that each of us do when life gets overwhelming. When things get dark in our lives we forget. We lose focus and we begin to feel that we are all alone, fighting a battle by ourselves. Paul knew that this is what was happening to Timothy, because Paul has lived this before in his own life. He does everything he can to remind Timothy that he is surrounded by people of faith who formed him and filled him. He is surrounded by the

faithfulness of his grandmother and mother and even though he might feel alone, Timothy is reminded that he is not alone and the Saints who have gone before him will surround him with love and encouragement. Paul tells Timothy to remember that he is surrounded by a cloud of witnesses. "Remember that you are not alone and the Saints of the past are surrounding you and filling you and living within you. Therefore, set aside your fear and run the race with perseverance that is set before you."

Memories like that are powerful which is why on this graduation weekend one of the best things we can do as parents for our children as they go off and become adults in the world, whether it's in college or working or taking a year to serve, is to remind them that we are here as their parents and the community of faith. While there are many things which are uncertain in life the one thing that is certain is that God will be faithful and we should remember to take God with us no matter where our journeys take us. We are called to live with boldness and live out loud the people that God has created us to be and if we take that assurance with us we can and will be successful in the future.

I was thinking this last week of my own cloud of witnesses and the people of faith who have made me who I am today. I think of my great-grandmother Grace Berry who I have told you about on many occasions. I think of my grandparents and my mother and others who have encouraged me in my journey of becoming a pastor. I think of my home church; they gave me a scholarship to be able to attend seminary and pursue training towards ordination. I think of all of the pastors and members of churches who have encouraged me on my journey to not give up when I have felt discouraged.

Some of you know that the first funeral I ever did was for my grandparents on my father's side of the family. I shared this story before of how my grandparents were both pretty ill while I was in seminary in the Denver area. Grandmother was actually healthier than grandpa but they both had smoked much of their life and grandma got pneumonia and went to Rose Medical Center. I went there to be with my dad and my stepmother and my brothers and sisters and I was in the room with grandma when she actually passed away. With the first time I've been with someone who died in those last moments and you could feel something leave the room.

My grandfather was too ill and on oxygen and he never came to the hospital and so we went to share with him the news that his wife had died. He

just kind of nodded and we asked him about doing a funeral and what he would like. He told us, "Just put her in the ground. I don't believe any of that God stuff."

My father was flabbergasted because he had been made to go to Catholic high schools and grade schools all of his life. My grandfather simply said, "Well, you got a good education didn't you? Stop complaining."

My aunt then blurted out without asking me, "What if Jeff does the funeral?"

I'm pretty sure my eyes popped out of my head because I was working with youth and I had never done a funeral or even attended one at that point my life. Grandpa said that would be fine but he wasn't going to come. I reluctantly agreed and I called my senior pastor that I was serving with in a panic to tell me how to do a funeral. He walked me through the process and encouraged me to meet with my family to begin to share stories of grandma and plan the service together. We agreed that we would meet at grandpa's place the next day at three o'clock.

I showed up and my aunt was standing in the doorway and proclaimed to me first thing that grandpa was coming to the funeral because he died last night. So my first funeral was a double funeral for grandma and grandpa. We sat in grandpa and grandma's apartment with my father and my aunt and we shared stories and remembered who they were for each of us. While I was not very close to those grandparents I recognized in the stories that we shared how much I was like them and how they were a part of me even though with we were very different.

When I accepted the appointment to move here to Durango to be your pastor I called my father and told him I was moving here and he told me something I didn't know which was that my grandmother was actually born at Mercy Hospital here in Durango. Her family had moved from Italy to Hesperus and they all attended St. Columba Catholic Church which was where grandma was baptized. Her father actually ran the railroad here in Durango for a while and then the highway department before they moved to the Denver area. I had no idea that when I was moving here to Durango I was moving into my past that would become my future.

What I recognized is that God doesn't call us to run the race of life by ourselves. Life is not a marathon that we are to endure on our own but it looks more like a relay race. We are running this race with the team of people and

caring the batons of the Saints of our past and that we might do the same thing going forward. Even the imperfections of our past become a part of what God uses in the future.

We don't run this race in isolation but we do it surrounded by a cloud of witnesses and that is the power of remembering. It is remembering that you are not alone. We hold onto the memories of our past so that we might live boldly into the future and this is why Paul tells Timothy to remember his grandmother and his mother. Their spirit lives in you and it shapes who you are. This brings up a question that we may have to wrestle with.

SLIDE What if we don't have a Lois or a Eunice?

There are a lot of us who don't have families that we want to remember. Some of us grow up and spend time trying to forget where we came from. The memories of our past hurt us more than they help us. They discourage us more than they encourage us. What do we do when this happens? What do we remember when there is pain as part of our past?

I have to admit that I am a fan of cheesy, a romantic comedy movies. One my favorite movies is *Hitch*. If you haven't seen it then you're about to. There is a scene in this movie which embodies this idea of trying to forget our past. Will Smith is trying to woo this young woman by taking her to the Statue of Liberty and showing her the name of her ancestor which came to the United States as an immigrant.

VIDEO Hitch

SLIDE What if we want to forget our past?

It turns out that her great great grandfather was the blemish of her family. He was known as the mass murder on Long Island and he was someone that she was trying to forget. We might not have that extreme family history, but many of us have families that don't bring us strength and that we would rather forget.

If that is your story then we can find strength in Paul's life because that was Paul's story. You can search all throughout Scripture and you won't find anything about Paul's family. We know that Paul was never married or had children and we also don't hear about his upbringing. All we know about Paul is his past and it was one that even he tried to forget. Before Paul was an apostle he was Saul the persecutor and killer of Christians. He walked around doing awful things for the

first half of his life, torturing and brutalizing those who called upon the name of Jesus Christ.

In the middle of this life of brutalizing Christians Saul was met on the road to Damascus by the living presence of Christ. The brightness of Jesus shone around him so brightly that caused him to fall to his knees. He was temporarily blinded for three days. When his eyes opened and the scales fell from his face a new life emerged in front of them. Paul experience is a transformation and he becomes the great apostle to the Gentiles, those who were not Jewish who would call in the name of Jesus Christ. God gives him the power to preach and in his life we see the power of God to transform and bring about new life. God takes the tragic past of Paul and turns it into something beautiful. Paul has a new life in Christ and a new beginning. New memories are created through Jesus Christ but those are birthed out of the pain of his past.

I want you to hear this clearly if you have had a difficult or challenging past or if you have done things that you are ashamed of or you are afraid that God could never forgive. Paul is living proof that God specializes in second chances. Our God is the God of not only the second chance but the third and fourth and fifth chances. God can take whatever brokenness you are carrying around and make something new out of it if you will place it in his hands. You are meant to remember who you truly are, regardless of your past, and that is that you were made by God to be loved by God and to share that love with the world. God took a murderer in the apostle Paul, one who tortured and killed for a living, and used his life to build the church and to bless people like Timothy who had been faithful all of his life and never had a past like Paul.

The good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that it tells people like Paul that he could become part of a bigger and better family. Paul even says this in 5 different places in his letters to churches such as in Romans 8.

SLIDE ***15 So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father." 16 For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. 17 And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory.***

By the power of Jesus Christ I am adopted into a new family. I can have ownership and belonging. I am one of God's children, one of his heirs, and I can create new memories from which to grow and build so I might change the world.

From that moment on the Damascus road, as Paul's eyes are opened and he receives this new life and becomes a member of God's family through the grace of Jesus Christ, he goes to share this gospel with everyone that he meets. He tries to find every person who is without family. He reaches out to all of those who were Gentiles or not Jewish to preach the gospel of inclusion that they might know they have the power to receive new life and they can build new memories because in Christ there is neither slave nor free, Jew or Gentile, male or female. The gospel meant that every person could leave behind anything in their path for which they carry shame or guilt. They could start new with the good news in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So after Paul talks to Timothy about his biological family he tells Timothy to remember Jesus Christ. He says to Timothy, "I want you to remember the gospel. I want you to remember the grace of Jesus Christ. Continue to remember who you are and whose you are."

Paul encourages Timothy with these words from chapter 2.

SLIDE ***8 Always remember that Jesus Christ, a descendant of King David, was raised from the dead. This is the Good News I preach. 9 And because I preach this Good News, I am suffering and have been chained like a criminal. But the word of God cannot be chained. 10 So I am willing to endure anything if it will bring salvation and eternal glory in Christ Jesus to those God has chosen.***

For those of us without family, Paul says to remember Jesus Christ. For those of us who have a history we would rather escape from, Paul encourages us to remember Jesus Christ and remember that by his grace we are adopted into his family. There isn't anything that we could or couldn't do that could ever separate us from that invitation and membership into God's family. He goes on to say this in verse 11.

SLIDE ***11 This is a trustworthy saying: If we die with him, we will also live with him. 12 If we endure hardship, we will reign with him....13 If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny who he is.***

In this we have our hope and remember Jesus Christ and remember that the worst thing in your life will never be the last thing in your life. The second round is in the final round. You are never alone because God has adopted you into his family to the grace of Jesus Christ. Paul encourages Timothy to keep remembering this truth about who he is and who he belongs to.

Paul remembered this throughout his life which is why he was able to endure multiple beatings and multiple imprisonments. Through all of that turmoil he continues to have the strength to reach out and change the world with boldness and not cowardice. It is in these moments of despair and overwhelming conditions, even as he knows his own death is coming soon, that he writes to Timothy these encouraging words to remember Jesus Christ. Through this letter he says to him, "Don't you know Timothy that you are not alone? Remember Jesus Christ and the Saints and all who have gone before."

Paul was so sure that God would never abandon him and he would never be left alone that he closes his letter with these words, a strong assurance that God will always be with him. We read these words in chapter 4 of 2 Timothy.

SLIDE ***16 The first time I was brought before the judge, no one came with me. Everyone abandoned me. May it not be counted against them. 17 But the Lord stood with me and gave me strength so that I might preach the Good News in its entirety for all the Gentiles to hear. And he rescued me from certain death. 18 Yes, and the Lord will deliver me from every evil attack and will bring me safely into his heavenly Kingdom. All glory to God forever and ever! Amen.***

Even though Paul was alone and he had no family history to rely upon, he had an unwavering belief and assurance that God was always with him. He had strength as a result of that faith. Wherever Paul went he remembered Jesus.

Paul remembered that on the night Jesus was going to give himself up for us, he didn't run away or hide. On that night he remembered his friends and companions. He invited them together in a moment like this and they shared together supper. He commanded his friends in that moment to eat and drink. But he also invited them to do something else.

SLIDE **Remember me...**

Jesus said, "Remember me. Remember all that I have given to you that you might live and have life abundantly. Remember so you might be renewed and

restored when you feel broken. Remember so that you will have the strength to go out and make disciples and be my presence in the world."

On the night that Jesus was betrayed he sat in prayer and gave himself to God and Paul remembered this, that Jesus prayed, "God, not my will but thy will be done."

Jesus never forgot, even as he hung on the cross suffering. Even in that moment he didn't forget his own family as he looked at his mother and said, "This is your son." He looked at his beloved disciple and he said, "This is now your mother."

Jesus even remembered us as he cried out from the cross, "Father, forgive them, because they don't know what they're doing." Even in his last breath Jesus remembered and Paul remembered that and carried that memory with him.

In his very last breath, remember that Jesus separated the curtain or the veil that was in the Temple which separates us from God. That curtain is what separates us from adoption into God's family. That curtain separates us from God's heart and that curtain was torn in the Temple and made available to each of us the heart of God. Jesus allowed us through his final breath to enter back into the presence of God where we could become one with God and know that we were adopted into God's family. We have total access to the heart of God through Jesus Christ.

Paul urges Timothy to remember Jesus and to know that you are never alone. There is nothing that you could ever do that would cause God to stop loving you. Paul also reminded Timothy to remember his family and their faith which lives inside of them. "Timothy, you are not alone but you are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses. Just remember and claim your inheritance."

As we close this sermon series I want us to think about the question.

SLIDE What if Paul were writing these letters to us?

What would Paul be asking us? What would Paul be encouraging us to remember? What have you been forgetting? One of the reasons that we come to worship every week is because we forget. We forget that we belong to God. We forget about God's grace and mercy. We experience judgment all around us in the world in our workplace and in our school and sometimes in our family and we just

start to think that God is that way too, but God came in the person of Jesus Christ to change all of that and to help us remember that we are adopted into his family.

Can you remember the first time that you are overwhelmed by the truth that God loves you and you wanted to receive from Jesus Christ the gift of salvation? Can you remember the excitement and the emotion and the way it felt to know that you are loved by God? Can you remember the last time that you felt so desperate that you cried out to God in prayer, "I need you? I love you. I can't do this without you."

Can you remember the first time you got your hands dirty with the business of changing the world? Can you remember that time that you served someone else selflessly and the electricity and the energy you felt because it felt great? Do you remember the people who have poured themselves into your life and given everything they have to make you the person you are today?

What would Paul write to you? What would Paul tell you to remember? What are you forgetting? What do you need to remember and rekindle so that you might live forward into the future? What do you need to remember to experience transformation and renewal and inspiration?

Maybe you are drawing a blank right now and if that's the case then this is the place for you to be. This is the place where we encounter the living God. This is the place where we meet God in the flesh—here and now. This is a place where we create new memories and is never too late to make new memories. This is where it happens, when God's people gather for worship.

I was recently visiting with a member of our church whose father has Alzheimer's and he was losing his memories. His father was actually someone that he would rather forget. He didn't have lots of great memories of his dad and dad was not faithful like a Lois or Eunice was for Timothy. His father was actually someone that he would rather forget, yet here he was caring for his father at the end of his life. For the last six months his father hasn't been able to talk to him or recall any memories at all from his life.

This man felt the need to have a school pray with his father and so we did that. We held hands even though his dad had no idea who I was or even who his son was in that moment and for those brief minutes together we had worship. As I closed the prayer I began the words to the prayer that Jesus taught us to pray whenever we gather in his name. I lead the prayer and the son joined in and after

the first four words we heard another voice join us. The father who had not spoken for six months began praying and remembering these words and began praying them out loud.

The life that his father had led was unforgettable but now he had a new memory. It wasn't too late to create this new memory of prayer or even just hours before his father's death. The lasting memory that he will have always of his father is that we shared in prayer together.

There is this new foundation and new life in Christ in the words that Christ offers us. This is why we say the Lord's Prayer in worship together and why I always say these words before we pray together, "Hear us as we pray these words together that remind us who we are and whose we are..."

When there are no words these are the words we are meant to remember. We pray this prayer and memorize it so that we can be reminded that the worst thing in our life will never be the last thing in our life. There is always hope in God and we are never alone and we remember this when we pray together the prayer that Jesus taught us to pray.

Let me ask you this question again.

SLIDE What do you need to remember?

Another way of asking this question is this, "**What are you forgetting?**"

Paul writes Timothy to remember that when he feels like he is all alone, the truth is that he is never alone. When we feel like we don't belong anywhere we are supposed to remember that we are grafted into the family of God by the grace of Jesus Christ. Remember this truth and remember that it is never too late to start acting with that faith which is in you in a way that will change the world by your boldness.

What do you need to remember? Let's pray.

SLIDE Prayer

God I pray that you would rekindle and re-center of our lives so we could focus on those stories which are foundational to who we are. Help us to be empowered, that we could live lives of transformed beauty—that we could remember that no matter where we go or whatever we are walking through, we are never alone. Help us to remember that your grace sustains us and it can fill us that we might go and be the presence of your son Jesus Christ in the world. God

help us to remember who we are and whose we are as your children. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

“Remember Who You Are”

Theme: Timothy: Letters to a Young Man

Scripture: 2 Timothy 1:3-7

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon:

Meditation Moments

MONDAY, June 3 – Read Acts 20:1-6, Romans 15:23-33, 16:21-27 – Acts 20 and Romans 15 and 16 show us Paul going to Jerusalem, with Timothy and others. He was asking God to save him from enemies there, and planning trips to Rome and Spain. It didn’t work out that way, the rest of Acts says. In Romans, Paul’s devotion to the gospel (and to Timothy) is clear. Paul writes 2 Timothy from a Roman jail and we’ll see Paul’s devotion burning brightly as we read through this letter.

- Paul was busy with demanding tasks. He was handling a large offering to take to Jerusalem, and dealing inwardly with threats he would face there (see Acts 21:10-13). Yet he ended, in 16:25-27, with a long exclamation of praise to God. What helps you remember to pause and praise God even at times of stress or intense activity?
- Of seven men in Paul’s group, Luke listed a place of origin for six (Acts 20:4). But Timothy was almost a given with Paul, so Luke just said “Timothy also.” What people or causes (kids, favorite football team, mission project, etc.) matter so much to you that your name is a given in their story? How has your loyalty to God shaped your deepest allegiances?

TUESDAY, June 4 – Read 2 Timothy 1:1-8 – Paul likely met Timothy’s mother and grandmother on his first visit to Lystra (Acts 14) and won them to Christ. Timothy must have been a child then, but he had a strong faith

heritage from those two women. Unlike many converts, he didn't have to "unlearn" pagan habits of thought and worship. That no doubt made the strong friendship Paul formed with him easier.

- How did Paul's language in verse 3 show that he saw his Christian life as a fulfillment of his Hebrew faith, not as a rejection of it? How did he connect his heritage of faith with Timothy's family heritage of trust in God? Who, whether a blood relative or not, has played a role similar to Lois and Eunice in your life?
- In Paul's day, the Roman emperor claimed to be a god. Most Romans thought any who served a different Lord (like Jesus) were enemies of the Empire and fools. Facing that, would you be able to answer verse 8's call to "not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord"? How can you be unashamed of Jesus in the world of 2013?

WEDNESDAY, June 5 – Read **2 Timothy 1:11-14, 2:8-9** – From a Roman prison cell, Paul wrote Timothy that even the mighty Empire could not restrain God's word. The Romans could put Paul in prison, and eventually end his earthly life. But he counted on Timothy and generations after him (including us) to hold to his pattern of sound teaching, to "guard the good deposit" he (and God) entrusted to them.

- Emperor Nero chained Paul like a criminal. Someone said most Romans couldn't imagine that in time people would name their sons Paul and their dogs Nero! God's word, which Nero could not chain, has reshaped our world since Paul's day. List some ways God's principles have made our (still faulty) culture morally stronger than the Roman world.
- Paul asked Timothy to "keep ... the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus" (1:13). Pastor Gary Demarest wrote, "Orthodoxy is more than merely holding the standards. It is holding them, while acting in trust and love with ... opponents—or even heretics." How are you living out love even toward those with whom you disagree?

THURSDAY, June 6 – Read **2 Timothy 2:22-26** – *The Quest Study Bible* notes that the false teachers at Ephesus thrived on debate. In several places in his letters, Paul warned Timothy not to get caught up in such practices. Paul knew it was possible to proclaim the gospel with confidence while holding fast to an attitude of love and respect for others, even those who disagree with you.

- All of us are more likely to listen to a viewpoint we disagree with if we are being treated with respect. Have you ever been in a disagreement with someone who showed that, despite the disagreement, they respected you? With someone who was rude or harshly condemning to you? How differently did these situations affect you?
- All of our actions and attitudes influence others. The way we go through the grocery store checkout line, spend time with loved ones or talk with co-workers impacts them and others. How can your relationship with God shape the effect you have on those around you? How are you cultivating the good qualities listed in verses 22 and 23?

FRIDAY, June 7 – **2 Timothy 4:6-8** – Few portions of Scripture are more personal, or more movingly confident, than these words. Paul spoke plainly of his execution by Rome, and his certainty that God's approval totally outweighed any human punishment he might face.

- Facing death, Paul could confidently write verse 7 to Timothy, who knew him very well. If, like Paul, you are nearer the end of your life, can you use those words to sum up your life? If you are more like Timothy, with years of service likely ahead of you, what does it mean for you to fight the good fight, finish the race and keep the faith?
- So often we express our hope of heaven in terms like "I hope so" or "I'm trying to live a worthy life." What was the foundation on which Paul built the confidence to say, "Now there is in store for

me the crown of righteousness” (verse 8)? How can focusing on God’s love and faithfulness help you approach God with that same confidence?

SATURDAY, June 8 – Read 2 Timothy 4:9-22 – The letter ends on a deeply personal note. We see Paul’s advancing years (“bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas”) and his lifelong love of study, particularly of God’s word (“and my scrolls, especially the parchments”). Paul had little time left (tradition says the Romans beheaded him), and he urged Timothy to come as quickly as possible. To human eyes, things were grim—“only Luke is with me.” Yet Paul never lost his trust in what lay beyond that visible horizon: “The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you all.”

- Paul’s trust that God was with him, even when nearly all human friends left him, was rock-solid: “At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me ... But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength.” How could Paul be so sure of that? When you feel abandoned or betrayed, what spiritual practices make God’s presence most real for you? What steps can you take each day to build in your heart Paul’s kind of all-conquering confidence in God?

Family Activity: Create a family dream catcher. Cut out the center of a paper plate, saving the round rim. Punch holes around the rim two inches apart. Weave yarn back and forth to form a web inside the paper ring. On the bottom of your dream catcher, tie some long pieces of yarn, letting them hang down. String beads and glue feathers on that yarn. What dreams might older family members have had for you? Discuss what dreams God has for your family now and in the future. Talk about how you can share your God-given dreams with younger and older people. Write these dreams on the rim of your dream catcher. Place the dream catcher where you’ll see it. Regularly ask God to guide you as you live into God’s dreams for you.