

Disciples Take Faith Home

2 Timothy 1:1-7

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I, Paul, am on special assignment for Christ, carrying out God's plan laid out in the Message of Life by Jesus. I write this to you, Timothy, the son I love so much. All the best from our God and Christ be yours!

Every time I say your name in prayer—which is practically all the time—I thank God for you, the God I worship with my whole life in the tradition of my ancestors. I miss you a lot, especially when I remember that last tearful good-bye, and I look forward to a joy-packed reunion.

That precious memory triggers another: your honest faith—and what a rich faith it is, handed down from your grandmother Lois to your mother Eunice, and now to you! And the special gift of ministry you received when I laid hands on you and prayed—keep that ablaze! God doesn't want us to be shy with his gifts, but bold and loving and sensible.

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

I grew up with three brothers. We used to play this one game called minifootball. On days when it was too rainy or cold to go outside we would grab a pillow from the couch and play indoor football. The two oldest would be on their knees and the two youngest would play standing up. We got terrible carpet burns but for whatever reason we loved playing that game. One day we were playing minifootball and my brother threw the pillow and it went up, up, up past the out-stretched hands of the receiver and straight into my mom's favorite lamp.

What is family? The way I see it, there are basically two types of family, the one you are born into and the one you choose.

The family you are born into is the one that will always be yours, whether you like it or not. You share a common bond of blood and genetics that can be hard to shake. Ideally these families will be like Lois and Eunice to little Timothy, raising him with strong convictions and tender care. Timothy grew up to be a great leader in the church because of his mother and grandmother, they made space for him to grow and they always let him know that God loved him. This is the hope for the families we are born into.

CRASH! I was more scared than I had ever been before. We had just broken my mom's favorite lamp. We all were really quiet, but the noise from the breaking lamp had been so loud that we began to hear footsteps. We all started blaming each other and pointing fingers. But when my mom stepped through the door, we were all quiet again. What was she going to do? Would she yell and scream and punish us? Would she kick us out of the family?

The second type of family are the ones we choose: the friends we make during our life, the person we marry if we decide to do that, and our church family. These are the people who we choose to be in relationship with. They are not connected to us in any other way than the fact that we have chosen them and they

have chosen us. Paul in our passage today has chosen Timothy and Timothy has chosen Paul. Their relationship helped shape and guide that early church. It can be a beautiful thing to have a chosen family to love and care and challenge you.

My mom was in shock. The one nice thing she kept in the house, we had just shattered and destroyed. We knew that we should not have been playing in that room. We knew we were rough housing and that things could break. She was upset, rightfully so, but she also taught me something about family there that I have never forgotten. She taught me that even when we make mistakes or cause pain for our loved ones, that we can be forgiven. My mom did not kick us out of the house. She did not leave our family for boys that played “nicer.” She sent us to our room, then she came and spoke with each of us. We hurt her but she forgave us. That action taught me all I needed to know about family and about how God sees us.

Because it is so often through our families, the ones we are born into and the ones we choose, that we experience the love of God, the forgiveness of Jesus, and the joy of the Holy Spirit. Our moms and dads, friends and spouses, churches and grandparents teach us and guide us and shape us. They show us through their actions who they believe God to be.

And so today, I am asking you to consider who your family is. It can be the one you are born into. It can be the one you have chosen. Or it can be both. Who is

your family? And once you have them in your mind, consider how you might be sharing God's love with them. Consider how you have received messages about who God is from your family. And consider sharing the loving and forgiving and joyful images with your loved ones.

Sometimes that just means saying come check out this cool fellowship event our church is doing or come play at Sunday School with me. Other times that means saying a prayer for someone you love. Sometimes it means giving someone a hug when they are hurting or sad. Other times it means throwing a big birthday party to celebrate your family and show God's love through your love.

The Christmas after the incident with the lamp, my brothers and I all pitched in, and with our dad's help, picked out the nicest lamp we could find. We bought it for my mom and surprised her. We didn't play minifootball anywhere near that new lamp and she still has it in her living room to this day. Her forgiveness and love taught us how to love back.

So, Longview Presbyterian Church, how are you going to share faith with your family this week? Write it down in your homework journals and remember, God loves you!