

“Down On The Farm”

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2 Tim 1:1-14

Bob Evans has run commercials on TV for many years. For decades they have ended with someone singing the line “Bob Evans, down on the farm.” I have to say it is a catchy little phrase that has become a ritual in my house between Qwynn and me.

Qwynn and I will be talking about some random thing and the words will fit the phrase of the jingle, and one or the other of us will add the tag to the end “down on the farm.”

So, it might be that we are cleaning counters in the kitchen and I would say “Cleaning counters down on the farm.” Or we might be shopping for t-shirts at Kohl’s and Qwynn would say “buying t-shirts down on the farm.”

After we say this of course we’ll both laugh. Lately, we’ve been trying to think back to how and when this started. Neither one of us can exactly remember. Of course we’ll then laugh some more. It’s kinda our thing.

Now, Bob Evans created that commercial jingle to communicate

a particular perspective of the restaurant that perhaps will appeal to people. They are asserting that the company is founded on down home southern values, such as trustworthiness, handshake contracts, promises that you keep, and hard work.

As a result, they use family recipes, and cook up farm-fresh and good-tasting southern food. They called it “great American food.”

Bob Evans wants people to believe that every time they go to one of their restaurants, they will get high quality home-cooked food at a reasonable price.

These values are considered to be prominent among the culture of southern farming, where family farms hold to values of hospitality where you never meet a stranger twice, because they become family, and there is accountability for goodness in relationships among family.

Now the Apostle Paul was not a farmer from the American south, but there are some similarities in the relationship between him and Timothy, the recipient of a letter we are going to read a passage from this morning. This is the opening passage from the letter we call Second Timothy.

Notice how Paul addressed Timothy like part of his family, in fact like a son, even though they were not blood related. Perhaps you could say that they are related through the blood of Jesus.

READ 2 TIMOTHY 1:1-14

Paul loved Timothy like a son and encouraged him to grow his faith in Jesus.

Like a parent, Paul knew Timothy deeply, and saw things in him that Timothy probably did not see in himself. Paul saw the potential, the gift that had been alive once but was stifled. Paul saw God's presence in Timothy.

Paul was like a father talking to a son encouraging him to follow in his own footsteps. He was saying, "I have suffered and learned because of God's call on my life to do this work. God has also called you Timothy, so you can expect some of the same things."

In many ways Paul's relationship with Timothy is an example for us about how we both raise our own kids as well as how we encourage one another as a family of faith in this congregation.

At the center of Paul's communication with Timothy is a foundation of love. Our family

relationships and relationships in community function best when love is foundational and central to how we relate.

Love undergirds all Paul's words, all of his actions, the direction of his encouragement — everything.

Paul also desired the best for Timothy, which, by the way, was not the easiest and simplest path.

We feel pain when one of our children struggle, don't we? Sometimes we simply want to remove whatever is causing the pain so that they might have a reprieve and that their life might be easier.

Paul does not do this with Timothy. Instead, he acknowledges that God has called Timothy to a difficult path. He knows it will be challenging work that will lead to much heartache, much pain. He doesn't try to prevent Timothy from being hurt, but instead works to prepare Timothy to face the challenges the future might hold for him.

Because of the challenges that Timothy would face, Paul worked hard to prepare him with what he needed in order to make it through those trials.

Paul told him that he needed to hold onto sound teaching. This was very important. We know that the full message of Jesus was not widespread and available for example in a plethora of books at the Baldwin Library or on the internet. No, there was a lot of misinformation and lack of information about Jesus in those days in the Middle East, and this could vary depending on which town he traveled to.

Probably what Paul meant was that Timothy needed to remember the stories of Jesus, and in particular the crucifixion and resurrection that Paul had taught him and was central to the hope that was found in the Jesus story.

He needed also to understand clearly how Jesus fit into the bigger picture of the scriptures (our Old Testament), and what difference that made for the world that time.

This was the message Paul preached routinely on his missionary journeys setting up congregations all around the Mediterranean Sea. Certainly this is what he taught Timothy and encouraged him to remember because they were central to his ministry and the good news that people needed to hear.

In addition to sound teaching, Timothy was going to need faith and love. These have to do with his relationship with God and the people around him. It was about holding to faith in God while being committed to love others. These would keep Timothy's heart in the right place and his actions consistent with the Spirit of God.

The life that Timothy was called to began as the faith taught him by his grandmother and his mother before he met Paul. It started in his home — down on the farm.

Then, Paul laid his hands on Timothy and he received a gift related spreading the good news of Jesus. After receiving that gift he forgot and the gift lay dormant in his life.

How many of you can remember a time when you had a profound sense of call from God. This doesn't mean that you were called to a profession of ministry, like Timothy, but maybe you were profoundly inspired by God's Spirit about doing some sort of good work in the world. You had the passion for this work, then life happened and the passion faded, the commitment, the desire to follow through waned.

This is what seems to have happened to Timothy. Paul, like

father, encouraged Timothy to rekindle that sense of purpose and focus in order to live the life God gave him to live.

Paul is sure that sound teaching, faith and love, and the gifts he had been given by God will both guide and provide for him in times of trouble.

He knows that Timothy will need these to overcome any obstacle in ministry and continue to live into the person God made him to be, and do what God had called him to do.

Paul knew it would be a challenging road ahead for Timothy, a difficult path to follow — one filled with persecution and treachery. He knew this because he himself experienced it on the very same road. It was being faithful to this path that had Paul currently in prison writing this letter to Timothy.

There is ongoing research done at the Fuller Youth Institute at Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, California. Several years back they found that it is uncommon for parents to share with their own kids about their faith journey.

This includes how they came to faith and the challenges they face

along the way and what they did to overcome them.

I find these results interesting.

Why do you think parents don't share their faith with their kids?

What might be the benefit of parents sharing their faith journey with their kids?

Now expand this to the whole church. What might be the benefit of people in the church community sharing their faith journey with the children of the congregation whether or not they are blood relatives?

As a down-home family, we provide not only our children, but each other, encouragement and a solid foundation of values on which we together can build our lives of faith in community. This will equip us for the challenges we will face in ministry in the future.