

1 Vision Area

1 Younger

The Big Picture

Today we will focus on our younger members, how we can be encouraged by them and an encouragement to them.

Biblical Text

1 Timothy 4.11-16

Materials Needed

Things for Children's Lesson, *if applicable*

Preparing for the Lesson

We are going to go one of two possible directions with this lesson, depending on how you handled last week's lesson.

The first direction will be to allow your children to teach the lesson for this week. (This was discussed in Lesson #3's For Next Week section.) Obviously, a lesson that takes this path will look very different than lessons you have done previously. Please help your children to take the lesson in the direction they feel most appropriate. You may have to guide them and my guess is that you personally may not find this lesson as deep as some other ones you have done, but please support and encourage their efforts. That is the point of the lesson—for both them and you.

The second possible direction for this lesson will highlight the importance of encouraging and affirming the gifts of those around us who are younger. Even if you are in a group that does not have children of an age to teach the lesson, or if you are a part of a group that does not have any children, let me encourage you to still spend some time reflecting on the ways younger individuals can be blessed through your group. This may not happen within the actual group time, but plan for ways to go about this some other times.

Some background items about this week's text.

First, if you were to look at the books of 1 and 2 Timothy together, you would find a very pastoral, almost fatherly, tone. Paul obviously has a great love for Timothy that come out throughout these two letters. Paul also reminds Timothy not only of his love for Timothy, but the life of faith he has received from his mother and grandmother. Note, for instance, the following:

1 Tim 1.2 "...my true son in the faith..."

1 Tim 1.18 "...my son..."

(Continued on page 2)

Preparing for the Lesson (cont.)

2 Tim 1.2 "...my dear son..."

2 Tim 1.5 "...reminded of your sincere faith that first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice..."

2 Tim 2.1 "...my son..."

2 Tim 3.15 "...how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures..."

Timothy got where he is in his faith journey with a lot of help.

The second thing is a comment about the "laying on of hands" that Timothy receives. It is entirely possible that Timothy had little to no interest in the Gospel prior to his receiving his gift through this moment of prophecy Paul describes in 4.14. Timothy may have just been hanging out and suddenly, the elders unexpectedly disrupt his entire life with prophecy and gift, resulting in a life very different than he originally planned. Based on the passages listed above, however, I have my doubts.

I think more likely is that this passage indicates that Timothy's gift was present to some degree, but affirmed and brought to his attention through a prophetic word from the elders. (A prophetic word is simply a word for/from God. It does not necessarily have to be some supernatural revelation of the unknown or future.) Much like a teacher might tell her student: "I see you love to write and I think you are going to be a great author some day" and that student does so, the elders and Paul (and I would guess many around Timothy) saw a gift that Timothy may not have been fully cognizant of. In effect, the prophecy and laying on of hands gives not so much the gift itself, but gives life to a present gift.

If this interpretation is accurate—I believe it is—then we do not have to throw up our hands and say: "The gift of prophecy and laying on of hands have past and so there is really no practical application for us today from this event." Instead, we are able to take this example to heart and look for ways we as mature or maturing believers can instill confidence in others for the gifts they have. Our job is to recognize the ways God has gifted individuals, especially younger individuals, and help those gifts grow into fruition.

Possible Lesson Outline

If your children are teaching the lesson, they will dictate the lesson outline for today.

If you are not having children teach, I would begin your group time with an ice-breaker question getting people to think about their youth. Some possible questions:

What was your favorite activity growing up as a child?

What is something you did as a child that you continue to do as an adult or you never do as an adult but wish you did?

Who is someone from your childhood that influenced you to become what you are today? Describe their impact on your life.

If you could go back to your childhood and tell someone "Hey, look at me now!" who would it be and what would you want to show/tell them?

If you would like, you could further focus your group on the idea of young people in Scripture by asking the following:

When you think about children in the Bible, what stories come to mind?

(Continued on page 3)

Possible Lesson Outline (cont.)

How about stories that have to do with the interaction of older individuals with younger ones? (My guess is Jesus bringing the children to him may be one of the only ones people come up with.)

Let your group know that the text selected is to help highlight an older individual encouraging a younger one, even as the younger one was ministering to older individuals.

Read 1 Timothy 4.11-16.

Ask the discussion questions.

Close your discussion time by working as a group to determine ways to encourage younger individuals in your group and at South Plains. Encourage everyone in your group to do something specific this week to encourage and affirm someone younger than them.

Close with a prayer.

For the Kids

The kid's role in today's lesson is the teaching of the lesson.

Spiritual Formation / Worship

The idea of mentoring a younger person is not something that occurs in a few moments over a single cup of coffee. True discipleship happens over a long period of time. If you are going to be serious about being someone who encourages and helps younger individuals grow in their faith, you must be prepared to visit and share with individuals on a consistent basis. I was impressed with Jim Brewer's comment in the latest newsletter about having a breakfast meeting with men from the congregation for the past 17 years. That's the kind of ongoing consistency that helps not only the younger person grow in his or her faith, but also helps you grow in yours.

As a part of your faith formation, who is someone you can spend consistent, regularly time with sharing life together? Do you have someone in your life like that already? If not, let me encourage you to find someone and begin to meet on a regular basis, just to talk and encourage one another. Some days it will be just a meal, other days will be life changing.

For Next Week

One of the best parts about this past week for me has been hearing—and seeing—the stories of people who have taken to heart the need to encourage one another in the name of Jesus (see Lesson #2). What has been most touching is seeing young children come up to older individuals to thank them for a note the older individual had written the younger or seeing a child heading off to find an older individual because she had a note for him.

This week, in keeping with the idea of Paul's efforts to encourage Timothy, you need to encourage the younger people in your life. Obviously, the children of your group are a great place to start. (If the children of your group led the lesson, please do not miss the opportunity to affirm them in this. And as a parent of an 11 year-old and a 5 year-old, children love getting cards in the mail!) Children at South Plains are also great examples. More important than who you are encouraging is the simple fact that you *are* encouraging someone who is younger.

(Continued on page 4)

For Next Week (cont.)

Who are the younger individuals you are encouraging and affirming? This week, what specific action can you do to encourage them?

Prayer Ideas

If you have any children in your group, have them lead the prayer. Give the child a piece of paper and a pen, then ask the group for requests that they have. If needed, help the child record those names/requests, including some instruction as to what they might pray for.

Discussion Questions

1. Why would Timothy's youth be a cause for people to look down on him? In what ways does this continue to be the case today?
2. Describe a time when a "young person" set an example for you "in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity" (v. 12).
3. What are ways we as a church and we as a group can create more opportunities for our children to teach and set examples for us?
4. How can we do a better job learning from our children?
5. Imagine for a moment you are Timothy at the event Paul describes when the elders laid their hands on him and affirmed the gift they saw in him. How do you think that event affected Timothy's outlook on his life of ministry? Has there ever been a time in your life when this has happened to you? In what ways can we do similar kinds of things for our children?
6. If we were to look at 1 & 2 Timothy as a whole, we would discover several examples of Paul reminding young Timothy of the influence of spiritual mentors both within his biological family and his family of faith. How have spiritual mentors helped your faith formation? What examples can you share of this happening?
7. What happens if our children do not have faithful mentors affirming the gifts those older individuals see in our children?

What's Next

Next week we will focus on ways to develop relationships with older individuals. We will be looking at Titus 2.1-5 for our text.