

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday , May 31, 2023 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



Saved to Serve
2 Timothy 1:6-7

“¹Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, ²To Timothy, a beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. ³I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, ⁴greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, ⁵when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also. ⁶Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. ⁷For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” -2 Timothy 1:1-7 (NKJV)

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

*Jesus is
crucified, rises
from the dead
and returns
to heaven*

AD 33

*Paul is put
under house
arrest in Rome*

AD 62

*Paul arrested
again, writes
2 Timothy
from prison*

AD 63-64

*AD 52-57
Paul takes his
third mission
trip and spends
three years in
Ephesus*

*AD 62-63
Paul released
from arrest,
writes
1 Timothy*

*AD 64-67
Paul is killed
for his faith
in Jesus*



Some Key Date in Paul's Challenging Life:

- [c. A.D. 52-57]- Paul takes his third mission trip and spends three years in Ephesus
- [c. A.D. 58]—Paul was apparently arrested in Jerusalem
- [c. A.D. 61]—This is the approximate time that Paul arrived in Rome. He had spent these three years in prison, going from one trial to another before different Roman rulers
- [c. A.D. 61–62]—Paul underwent his first Roman imprisonment. We do not have this recorded in the Book of Acts, which breaks off at the very beginning of Paul's first Roman imprisonment
- [c. A.D. 62–63]—Paul was released from prison, and during this period he covered a great deal of territory. It was during this time that he wrote 1 Timothy and Titus from Macedonia
- [c. A.D. 63-64]—Paul was arrested again. Before his death he wrote 2 Timothy
- [c. A.D. 64-67]—Paul was beheaded in Rome.

For some 2 Timothy may nothing more than a continuation where 1 Timothy leaves off. But as you can see, it is so much more. The book is the Apostle Paul's "Swan Song," his warning shot, his encouragement in the face of great opposition and obstacle. It is so practical and relevant for 21st century Christians and the church... a needed word for what we face in our day.

With that let's give the very basic background information for 2 Timothy... we'll lay the background through a few question we ask of the book...

Background Questions for 2 Timothy:

- (1) **Who wrote the book?** = **The Apostle Paul** - By the time Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy, the young pastor had been ministering to the church at Ephesus for four years, and it had been almost that long since he had received his first letter from Paul. Timothy had been a faithful servant to Paul since he had left home with the apostle more than a decade earlier. Since then, Timothy had ministered alongside Paul for the duration of both the second and third missionary journeys, in places such as Troas, Philippi, and Corinth. Timothy was not unfamiliar to the Ephesians when he settled in Ephesus to minister, having served there alongside Paul for a period of close to three years on Paul's third missionary journey. Paul wrote again to this young leader in the church at Ephesus to provide him encouragement and fortitude in the face of difficulties and trials.
- (2) **Where are we?** = **A prison cell Rome** - Paul wrote 2 Timothy from a dark and damp Roman prison cell, just before his death in AD 67. The Roman emperor Nero had been slowly descending into madness since his ascent to the throne in AD 54, a process exacerbated by the great fire of Rome in AD 64 that burned half the city. With the residents of Rome in an uproar, Christians became a convenient target for Nero, who used believers as scapegoats for his city's own lack of preparedness. Paul was one of

those caught up in this persecution and was beheaded by Roman officials soon after writing this letter.

- (3) **Why is 2 Timothy so important? = Paul's last letter (his last words)** - The second letter to Timothy offers a picture of Paul at the end of his ministry, just before his death. Certain personal details in the letter reveal a man settling his accounts and preparing for the inevitable. At the close of the letter, Paul mentioned a significant number of people—some who had wronged him and others who had served faithfully alongside him (2 Timothy 4:9–21). It is as if Paul were giving Timothy a “state of the church” address, updating Timothy on the current state of their acquaintances and friends so that the young pastor could carry on after Paul’s departure.
- (4) **What's the big idea? = Stay faithful to fight the good fight** - Paul understood that the ministry would only become more difficult for Timothy with the apostle’s impending death. (Indeed, at some point after this letter from Paul, Timothy was imprisoned for his faith [Hebrews 13:23]). Paul knew that Timothy’s task of keeping the church within the bounds of sound doctrine while encouraging believers to live their lives well for the sake of Christ would be an often thankless and difficult task. Though hardship would come, Paul wanted Timothy to continue in those things he had learned, drawing on the rich heritage of faith that had been passed down to the young pastor, not just from Paul but also from his mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5–6; 3:14–15). The most striking feature of Paul’s encouragement comes when the aging apostle used a phrase that showed up prominently in his letter to Timothy four years prior. In that earlier letter, Paul exhorted Timothy to “fight the good fight” (1 Timothy 1:18; 6:12). But in this letter, Paul turned that phrase on himself, writing that he had “fought the good fight . . . finished the course . . . [and] kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7). What a great encouragement it must have been to the young pastor of the church at Ephesus to know that his mentor boldly modeled his perseverance in the faith, even to the point of death.
- (5) **How do I apply this? = What kind of legacy of faith will you leave?** - Second Timothy brings us to the brink of death, forcing us to consider its reality and how we might react when faced with it. Paul’s response instructs us still today. His mind was not on himself, dwelling on the injustice that had befallen him. Instead, trusting that God had him right where He wanted him, the aging apostle turned his attention to others, specifically to the church and to his young protégé, Timothy. Where do you hope your thoughts linger as you come to the end of your days?

Some Key Characteristics of 2 Timothy:

- (1) **2 Timothy is Paul’s last will and testimony** – In our study we are referring to it as Paul’s “Swan Song.” The deathbed statement of any individual has an importance which is not attached to other remarks. This is what lends significance to 2 Timothy. It is the final communication of Paul. It has a note of sadness which is not detected in his other epistles. Nevertheless, there is the overtone of triumph... *“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith,”* written by Paul as his own epitaph (2

Tim. 4:7). Also, because this was his last letter, Paul was very personal. In these four short chapters, there are approximately twenty–five references to individuals.

- (2) **2 Timothy is Paul’s warning of coming times of apostasy** - In this little book of 2 Timothy an ominous dark cloud is seen on the horizon. It is the coming apostasy. Today apostasy has broken like a storm, like a Texas tornado, on the world and in the church. What do we mean by apostasy? Webster defines apostasy as “total desertion of the principles of faith.” So apostasy is not due to ignorance; it is a heresy. Apostasy is deliberate error. It is intentional departure from the faith. An apostate is one who knows the truths of the gospel and the doctrines of the faith, but has repudiated them.
- (3) **2 Timothy speaks of the ultimate outcome of gospel preaching** - The final fruition will not be the total conversion of mankind, nor will it usher in the Millennium. On the contrary, some will believe and for some there will come about a great turning away, not unlike what we are seeing today... even a watering down, compromise, and total perversion of the gospel. Don’t think that what we see going on today has caught God off guard. God wrote about it and warned us about in 2 Timothy.
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A farmer had a team of horses in which one horse consistently worked harder than any of the others. The farmer said, “They’re all willin’ horses. The one’s willin’ to pull and the rest are willin’ to let him.”

Sadly, that is often an accurate description of the local church. In fact, pastors often refer to what they call the 80-20 rule, which states that 20% of the church members do 80% of the work. But God never intended it to be that way. He intended that all whom He saved should serve His cause in some capacity.

There are many reasons that Christians do not serve the Lord. What are some of the reasons you might think of that Christians don’t serve? _____

Some Common Reasons Christians Often Don’t Serve:

- (1) **Half-hearted commitment** - Some don’t serve because their commitment to Christ and His church is half-hearted. They attend church occasionally, but their real interests are in the world. Serving in the church would be an inconvenience for them.
- (2) **Lack of training and equipping** - Some have tried serving, but they lacked training and grew frustrated and quit. Let’s face it... churches have a bad track record of filling position with bodies rather than filling positions with position people are gifted for, called to and equipped (trained) for. When we do this things are always going to turn out badly, and we are likely to get frustrated volunteers/servers who won’t want to return to serving anytime soon. It is always a mistake to fill a position just to be filling a position.

- (3) **Criticism** - Some quit because other church members criticized them. If you are not willing to do a job, certainly don't criticize someone who is. Another reality in this vein is that often we ask people to do a job (serve), and when they don't do it "like we would," differently than we would, or not to our liking we criticize them. Let me say it, if you ask someone to serve and do a job, let them do it.
- (4) **Burn out** – Sometimes Christians won't serve because quite frankly they are burned out from trying to do too much. In my nearly 40 years of ministry, I've observed that if someone is willing to serve and is good at we will give them every possible job in the church and then some. Soon they will be serving in every capacity possible in the church, and by nature some are more than willing to do it all and always looking for something else to get involved with. This is a disastrous recipe for "burn-out" and disillusionment ultimately. Not only that, when we have those in the church who want to "do it all" they are not only doing themselves a great disservice by spreading themselves to thin (and destined to burn-out), they are also robbing other of opportunities to serve. Generally speaking, when we spread ourselves to thin trying to do too much we do a mediocre job at a lot of things rather than a Holy Spirit empowered job at a few things God has truly called us too. The Spirit's guidance is key to us discerning what few things we need to fully commit ourselves too.
- (5) **Wrong motives** - Some quit serving because they were serving out of the wrong motivation. They were looking for commendation from people, not from God. When we serve for a "pat-on-the-back," or an "atta-boy" we are likely to never get enough "atta-boys" to motivate us to keep going. At some point we will become hurt, feel unappreciated, or neglected because not enough recognition came our way and we weren't thanked and praised enough. Check your motive. Why do you do what you do in the church? Is it for the praise of men or for the praise and honor and glory God alone? If it is the latter you won't mind flying under the radar. Another wrong motive that can surely back fire is when our motive for service is power, position and control. When our motive is for position and power (control), we may feel satisfied to serve in certain position for a time, but I can promise you that in Christ's Church the only Head is Christ and He will not share His glory or position for long. Eventually, the kingdom you are trying to build for yourself will fall and it will be damaging to both you and others, and you'll be looking for someone to blame... and serving will take on a bad taste... "I tried to make a difference, and others rejected me!" No, it's not about you! That was the problem.

But for whatever reason, many Christians grow weary of the hassle of serving the Lord and retreat to a more comfortable seat on the sidelines.

It seems that Timothy had a tendency to retreat from the front lines of serving Christ.

- *He was rather shy and timid*
- *And not in the best of health (1 Tim. 5:23)*
- *His relative youthfulness caused him problems*

- *Perhaps he had a tendency to be a bit unsure of himself when difficult issues required confident leadership (1 Tim. 4:12).*

Once Paul had to write to the Corinthians he had to say in 1 Corinthians 16:10... listen to this, ¹⁰ *And if Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear; for he does the work of the Lord, as I also do.* Paul knew that the rowdy Corinthians might run roughshod over this insecure man.

As Paul sat chained in a Roman dungeon, awaiting execution, he knew that he had to hand off the torch to Timothy. So he wrote this final letter (Paul's Swan Song) to encourage Timothy to keep running the race in spite of difficulties and opposition. His words should encourage any of us who may be tempted to draw back from actively serving the Lord to persevere. And this book exhorts all who know Christ, but are not serving, to get into the race.

In 2 Timothy 1:6-11, Paul is encouraging Timothy to continue serving the Lord with all of his strength, in spite of opposition. His flow of thought goes like this...

Paul's Flow of Thought in 2 Timothy 1:6-18:

- (1) 2 Timothy 1:6-7 = Because you are saved, you must serve
- (2) 2 Timothy 1:8 = But when you serve, be prepared to suffer
- (3) 2 Timothy 1:9-11 = When you suffer, remember your salvation and God's call to preach the gospel
- (4) 2 Timothy 1:12-15 = Then Paul points to his own example of serving in spite of suffering (*Remember Paul was writing from prison cell, where he was about to give his life for... serving*)
- (5) 2 Timothy 1:16-18 = Paul also points to the example of Onesiphorus (and others) who served in spite of suffering
- (6) 2 Timothy 1:6-18 = Overall theme... the theme here is, even if you suffer for serving Christ, do not be ashamed of the gospel or of those who preach the gospel (1:8, 12, 16).

This evening we are going to be look at just the first section (1:6-7):

Because you are saved you must serve Christ.

Notice it in our passage in 2 Timothy 1:6-7... here is what Paul writes, ⁶ *Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. ⁷ For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.* -2 Timothy 1:6-7 (NKJV)

Notice the “*therefore*” right there at the beginning of verse 6... “What is the rule we now about this?” What’s it “therefore?” Right? The “*therefore*” at the beginning of verse 6 points back to verse 5, to Timothy’s salvation.

★ Get this! Paul is saying, “Because I know that you have a sincere faith in Jesus Christ, you must kindle afresh (or, keep in full flame) your spiritual gift by actively using it in serving the Lord.” I consider this a key thought for our text this evening (2 Timothy 1:6-7).

I can hear God through His Word, the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul saying the same to you and I as believers. “*Because you are genuinely saved by faith in Jesus Christ, kindle afresh the fire of the Holy Spirit in your and your spiritual gifts given by God and find a place to serve and served to the glory of God!*”

With that said let me give you 3 important basics for serving Christ and His church...

3 Important Basics for Serving Christ and His Church:

- (1) **Make sure that you are saved before you try to serve –**
- (2) **Know that God gifts every saved person for service –**
- (3) **Remember God sovereignly gifts us, but we are responsible to discover, develop, kindle, and exercise our gifts -**

MAKE SURE THAT YOU ARE SAVED BEFORE YOU TRY TO SERVE

Salvation is the foundation for any genuine service that we can offer to the Lord. It is a huge mistake to think that you can offer God anything before you first receive His gift of salvation. For example, people fall into this error by thinking that if they give financially to a church or a Christian organization, they are doing something that will commend them to God on judgment day, or if they are highly religious and vigorous in religious duty and service they will inherit the favor and blessing of God on their life, no bad will befall them and they get to go to heaven. **(READ: Matthew 19:16-22)**

“¹⁶ Now behold, one came and said to Him, ‘Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?’ ¹⁷ So He said to him, ‘Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.’ ¹⁸ He said to him, ‘Which ones?’ Jesus said, ‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ ¹⁹ ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ²⁰ The young man said to Him, ‘All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?’ ²¹ Jesus said to him, ‘If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.’ ²² But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.”

You recognize this as the story of the “Rich, Young Ruler.” Jesus encountered this young man who seemed to have it all...

Some question to ponder from the story of the Rich Young Ruler:

[1] *What was the rich young ruler’s question to Jesus and what might be behind this question? **Perhaps, he had served, but found it empty!***

[2] *How did Jesus respond? What is curious about Jesus’ response to the young man and his question? What might be Jesus’ purpose in his response answer?*

[3] *What does the rich young ruler say about his service before God? What does this tell us about service to God and the possibilities of those who serve God? **It is possible to serve God and do so very devoutly and not be saved.***

[4] *What in your reaction to this story? What is sad about this story?*

[5] *What does this story tell us about the problem with trying to serve, but not being saved?*

Some Points to Remember:

(1) God will not be indebted to anyone -

(2) God will not let you into heaven as a payment for anything that you do for Him -

(3) Salvation is a free gift - If you can do anything to earn it or deserve it, then it is no longer a gift of God’s grace, but a wage or a reward that is due

(4) Good works follow salvation, but they cannot in any way earn it - Remember Paul’s words in Ephesians 2:8-10, *“⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”*

(5) So, before you get involved in any way serving the Lord, make sure that you are saved -

Remember, salvation is the foundation for any genuine service that we can offer to the Lord. It is a huge mistake to think that you can offer God anything before you first receive His gift of salvation.

GOD GIFTS EVERY SAVED PERSON FOR SERVICE

Maybe you’re thinking, “I already know this.” Timothy knew it, too, but Paul reminded him of it again in verse 6, *“⁶ Therefore [for this reason/because you are saved] I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.”* There are two ways in which God gifts every saved person...

2 Ways God Gifts Every Saved Person:

(1) God’s main gift is the Holy Spirit Himself - Every Christian receives the Holy Spirit to indwell him or her at the moment of salvation. In Romans 8:9, Paul asserts, *“But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.”* In the context of spiritual gifts,

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:13, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.”

Notice in our passage, Paul’s words in 1 Timothy 1:7, “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”

- Some scholars argue that when Paul says our passage in 2 Timothy 1:7, “God has not given us a spirit of fear (or timidity...)” “Spirit” refers to the Holy Spirit and should be capitalized (Gordon Fee, *New International Biblical Commentary, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus* [Hendrickson Publishers], pp. 226-227).
- Others understand it to refer to the inner spirit or demeanor that should characterize every believer.
- Whichever view is correct, it is clear that power, love, and discipline are qualities that come from the Holy Spirit.

But God’s main gift to every believer is the indwelling Holy Spirit, who empowers us to serve Him. We need to walk daily in dependence on the Holy Spirit, for Paul says it in Galatians 5:16, “I say then: walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” Let me say it again, the main gift to every believer is the Holy Spirit Himself... we are lost without the Spirit (literally), and we can do nothing without the Holy Spirit.

- (2) **The Holy Spirit imparts spiritual gifts to every believer** - It is significant that in each of the four main biblical references to spiritual gifts, it specifies that *every* Christian has a gift. Notice it, let’s look at these...

4 Scriptures that Confirm Every Christian Has Been Given a Spiritual Gift(s):

- (1) **Romans 12:3** - “³ For I say, through the grace (gift) given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.” Paul goes on to discuss spiritual gifts.
- (2) **1 Corinthians 12:7** - “⁷ But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.” Again, Paul goes on to discuss spiritual gifts.
- (3) **Ephesians 4:7** - “But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift.” On down in verse 16, he mentions “From whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every join supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”
- (4) **1 Peter 4:10** - “As each one has received a gift, minister to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

Some Key Thoughts:

- God doesn't want us to miss the point! If you are a Christian, you have been given a spiritual gift that you are to use in service (or, ministry) for the Lord.
- The term, "inactive church member" is a contradiction in terms.
- If you're a believer, you're in the ministry and you will someday give an account to the Lord of how you fulfilled the ministry that He entrusted to you.
- If you're thinking, "But I lack the gifts to serve the Lord," remember, God never calls you to a ministry where He doesn't also give you the gifts to fulfill.
- This is not to say that it will be effortless or easy. Even Paul, when considering the responsibility of preaching the gospel, exclaimed (2 Cor. 2:16), "And who is adequate for these things?" He answered that question (2 Cor. 3:5), "Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God."

So if you're saved, God has graciously imparted at least one spiritual gift to you to use in serving Him.

GOD SOVEREIGNLY GIFTS US, BUT WE ARE RESPONSIBLE TO DISCOVER, DEVELOP, KINDLE, AND EXERCISE OUR GIFT

In 1 Corinthians 12:11, Paul says, "*But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.*" God is sovereign in how He bestows spiritual gifts. We need to remember that whether it is a natural ability or a spiritual gift, everything that we have is a gift of God's grace (Rom. 12:3; 1 Cor. 4:7; Eph. 4:7). **Thus none of us can boast in our gifts.** All we can do is use them to glorify God. We would be nothing without Him!

A common question is, how can I discover my spiritual gift?

There is debate as to whether each person has only one gift or several. It seems to me that the apostle Paul had many spiritual gifts. So I don't find any reason to limit it to one only. **Peter Wagner** refers to it as your "*gift mix,*" and maybe he is correct.

I don't put much stock in taking a spiritual gift inventory or test to try to figure out what your gift is... why?

2 Reasons Spiritual Gift Inventories May Not be Helpful:

- (1) **Non-comprehensive spiritual gifts lists in the Bible** - For one thing, the lists of spiritual gifts in the Bible are probably not comprehensive, so the tests may not even include your gift.
- (2) **Difficulty in defining various gifts in the Bible** - Also, there is widespread disagreement on the definitions of the various gifts. Any inventory must speculate on the precise definition of each gift. So I don't find these tests very helpful.

So the big question seems to be, if we all have a spiritual gift or gifts, how can may I discover what my spiritual gift(s) is? Let me give you these things that may be helpful to you in discovering your gift as a Christian...

4 Ways We May Discover Our Spiritual Gift(s):

- (1) **We discover our gifts by our desires and abilities** - Ask yourself, *what are my desires and abilities?* What do you like to do and are reasonably good at doing? If you like to sing, but can't carry a tune in a bucket, that is clearly not your gift! There are other things that I can do, but I dislike doing them. If God wanted me to focus on them, I think He would give me satisfaction in doing them. **Some things, by the way, we all need to do, even if they are not our specific gift.** There are commands for just about every spiritual gift in the Bible. Knowing your gift shows you where to focus your time and effort.
- (2) **We discover our gifts by servicing** – Some sit around trying to discover their gift before they get involved in serving. That's backwards. You will discover your gifts as you try various ministries. Get as much experience in different areas as you can, and in the course of serving, you will discover your niche, what God has uniquely gifted you to do.
- (3) **We discover our gifts by recognition from others** - Other Christians, especially mature church leaders, will recognize and affirm your gift. Paul mentions that Timothy's gift was *"in you through the laying on of my hands."* In 1 Timothy 4:14, he mentions that Timothy's gift was bestowed *"through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery [elders]."* Paul may have had special apostolic authority to impart spiritual gifts, or this may have been a public recognition of Timothy's gifts, affirmed by Paul and the elders laying hands on him in an ordination service. The modern application would be that others will recognize and affirm your gifts as they see you serve.
- (4) **We discover our gifts by effectiveness** - Do you see results when you exercise your gift? I remember being surprised when I preached my first revival [very scary] during my seminary days. People would come up to me, sometimes weeks later, and tell me that what I had said had helped them. I seemed to be effective in preaching/teaching. But when it came to evangelism, I saw very little positive response. Others would report how they talked to five people and all five accepted Christ. I would talk to five and see none respond. I'm still responsible to witness, but evangelism isn't really my gift... not that doesn't excuse me from sharing my faith, but I recognize that some are more gifted at it than I am. So I concentrate on presching/teaching, not on evangelism.

The next big question for me, concerning spiritual gifts, is how do we develop our gifts? It is one thing to have and perhaps even know our gift, but it is quite something else to develop that gift to the glory of God and for Him to use us as He desires to through that gift. **God graciously imparts spiritual gifts, but we are responsible to develop them.** No gift comes fully developed, and the process of developing them is not automatic or effortless. So let me give these to you... 2 helpful ways we may develop our spiritual gift...

2 Helpful Ways to Develop Your Spiritual Gift:

- (1) **You develop your gifts by training and learning** - Obviously, if God has gifted you to teach, you must spend time studying and learning the Bible, plus learning how to teach well. If you are gifted in evangelism, you still need training in various methods. You need to learn the content of the gospel. **By the way, we all can benefit from the training offered by others in areas like evangelism, even if it isn't our gift.**
- (2) **We develop your gifts by the experience of serving with evaluation** - This is a lifelong process. You should not only get involved in serving, but also, search the Bible to make sure that you are serving in accordance with biblical methods, evaluate your methods, and refine your approach as needed. **Sometimes it is helpful to ask a mature believer to give you honest feedback on how you are doing.** But, be open to what he (or she) tells you!

Paul writes to Timothy in our passage, in the first part **2 Timothy 1:6, “*Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God...*”** You get it? We must “stir up” or kindle afresh our gifts by exercising them, especially when it is difficult and costly to do so. The picture is of a fire and as you know, most fires will begin to die down and will die out unless you tend them, you may stir up the burning coals and embers to get them going again, or add more fuel (wood, brush, etc). There are several applications that may help us know how we may keep the gifts God has given us “stirred up,” “kindled up,” and burning hot for the Lord...

How to stir up the gift God has given you?

- (1) **We may need to stir up our first love for the Lord Jesus** - It's easy to drift into spiritual apathy or distance from Christ. The world crowds in, pressures keep us from spending time alone with Christ, and before we know it, we are in the spiritual doldrums. **Don't let your love for Jesus Christ grow cold!**
- (2) **We may need to stir up our gifts because of disuse** - Maybe you burned out by doing too much or you got burned in serving through criticism, so you quit. Maybe you've been on the sidelines so long that you feel rusty. **Get back in the game!**
- (3) **We may need to stir up our gifts especially when it is difficult and costly to do so** - Paul was in prison, with people attacking him. False teachers were perverting the gospel. If Timothy got involved, he would undoubtedly catch flak. Because of his timid nature, it was easier not to use his gifts. But if you only serve when it is convenient or when you feel like it or when you think it's safe, you really aren't serving God at all. We are bond-slaves of Christ, and slaves serve when their master calls them to serve, not when it's convenient.

A Key Thought: **By the way, while conversion is a radical change in which God imparts a new nature to us, He doesn't change our basic temperaments** (don't misinterpret temperament for bad behavior or sinful actions and attitudes... harsh anger, judgementalism, busybody, aggressive critical spirit [I'm outspoken, I say what I'm thinking... it's just my personality]). Paul was basically the same personality after conversion as he was before. The

same was true of Peter and of Timothy. As we grow, God develops the fruit of the Spirit in us, but He puts that fruit into our various personalities. You've got to know and accept who you are as God made you, and be aware of your strengths and weaknesses. Often your greatest strengths are at the same time the areas of your greatest weaknesses. Timothy was a sensitive man, which is a strength. But if you're easily hurt, it's a weakness.

Quite often, to serve God effectively, you've got to step out of your natural comfort zone and trust God to do something that is difficult. It often is difficult in terms of time pressures, but also it often is something that you just could not do in your own strength. I could not preach every week without trusting God. More often than not, each week I think, "I don't have a clue what to say about this text," even after I've spent quite a while studying it. Sermons usually don't come easily to me. I have to spend hours working at them, usually with a lot of stress. I'm always citing Paul, "Who is adequate for these things?" Not I!

CONCLUSION

God's gifts must be exercised in God's way. Paul mentions four qualities, one negative and three positive, which were specifically geared to Timothy's disposition. But, of course, they apply to us all. These may be helpful for us in the exercise of the gifts God has given us for serve. Remember, you (Christian) are saved to serve.

Some Concluding Thoughts on How to Exercise your Gifts in Serving:

- (1) **Exercise your gifts without timidity** - I used to enjoy the old Bob Newhart show, where he played an insecure psychologist. One of his clients was even worse than Bob, always apologizing for everything he did. When Bob would try to make him more assertive by telling him, "You don't have to apologize for everything," the man's response was, "I'm sorry!" Timothy wasn't that bad, but he was not naturally bold. He shied away from conflict or confrontation. But the fact is, we're engaged in spiritual warfare and you don't win wars by being passive or cowardly. People will not grow in Christ and the church will not stand against the forces of evil if we do not overcome the fear of opposition and conflict.
- (2) **Exercise your gifts with power** - This is not the power of the flesh as seen in worldly assertiveness training. This is the power of the Holy Spirit, resting on the truth of God's authoritative Word. The aim of this power is not so that you can control others, but so that you can help them come under God's control, to conquer sin and heal broken relationships.
- (3) **Exercise your gifts in love** - Love balances power. It also is opposed to fear, because fear stems from self-love or self-concern or self-protection. Biblical love is concerned for the spiritual well being of others. Love for others will give you the boldness to overcome your fears so that you can speak to them about their need for Christ or their need to obey His Word. Love for God and others should be your motivation whenever you exercise your spiritual gifts.

- (4) **Exercise your gifts with discipline** - This word occurs only here in the New Testament, but a similar concept, self-control, is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23). The nuance of the word used here is of a sound mind controlling your life so that you don't react in a sinful emotional outburst and so that you do not yield to impulses of the flesh. It means that you use the gifts that God has given you in a sensible, controlled manner, in line with God's purposes in each situation.

So Paul is telling Timothy, "Because you are saved, you must serve Jesus Christ." He has gifted you to serve Him, but you've got to discover, develop, kindle, and exercise your gifts. This does not mean volunteering to do some job in the local church, although it may certainly include that. Rather, it is an attitude or mindset, where you realize that because God rescued you from a life of sin and selfishness, you are not your own. You belong to Him and He has you on this planet to serve Him in some capacity. So you don't just dabble at serving when it's convenient. You're committed to serve Christ because He gave His life on the cross for you.

A pastor was trying to persuade a woman to teach a Sunday school class, but she kept giving him the same excuse, "I don't want to be tied down." Finally, the pastor responded, "The Savior was *nailed down* on the cross for you. Shouldn't you be willing to be *tied down* for Him for a few hours each week?"

But that pastor's words may convey the wrong idea, that you fulfill your ministry by serving a few hours each week. Rather, if Christ saved you, then you are His slave. You serve Him out of love, not out of guilt. But, you serve Him 24-7, always being aware of His great gift of salvation and that He has gifted you to help fulfill His purpose in His church and in the world.