

Pass It On!
2 Tim. 2:1-2

INTRODUCTION...

(Hold up the baton)...You know, it's only 12 inches long and an ounce and $\frac{3}{4}$. It seems rather insignificant doesn't it?! But for the men's and women's relay teams in the 2008 Olympic Games, it meant the difference between winning and losing! Two gold medal contenders didn't even advance to the finals because they dropped the baton! Darvis Patton and Tyson Gay misconnected on their final pass. Then, Torri Edwards and Lauryn Williams did the same thing for the women's team! Here's how one reporter described the event...

"In the men's race, things were going smoothly for the United States through the first two legs. But when Patton closed in on Gay and Gay reached backward, they couldn't connect. Patton made a final lunge to get the stick to Gay before he ran out of the passing zone, but as Gay's hand closed, the stick wasn't in it. It bounced off the rain-slickened track, and the crowd gasped. ... The women were also in good shape heading into the final exchange, but Williams didn't receive the baton from Edwards. It fell to the ground as Edwards yelled and covered her face with her hands. Williams went back to retrieve it and finished the race - but the Americans were dead last."

In the 4x100 relay, it doesn't really matter how fast you are, if you don't pass the baton! And it can be so disappointing to watch - the reporter said, 'the crowd gasped...ahhh' - you can just hear it can't you? But isn't it thrilling to watch a successful pass and see the baton carried swiftly to the finish line?

You know, although it's thrilling to watch that - there is something that thrills my soul even more! It thrills my soul to look out at this auditorium and see moms and dads who are swiftly running with the baton of the gospel and passing it along to their kids! It thrills my soul to see men and women swiftly running with the baton of faith and passing it along to younger men and younger women!

BIG IDEA: The mission of every Christ-follower is to pass along the gospel to the next generation! Coaching is how this is done! Simply put, 'coaching' is passing along to another what has been passed along to us. Great coaches pass on to their players what they received from their coaches. Our mission is to simply give away what we have been given. God has called each of us to pass on the faith from one generation to the next!

So, the question I want to ask and answer today is HOW... 'How do we do this?' How do we successfully pass along the faith to other people?

Over the past several weeks, Gary has been talking about the greatest life-giver and life-coach that ever lived – Jesus Christ. Today, we're going to continue and look at another great coach in the Bible – the apostle Paul!

If you have your Bibles, turn with me to 2 Timothy 2:1-2. Paul wrote this letter to Timothy while in a dark, damp Roman prison. He was waiting to be executed. Timothy was one of several missionary companions to Paul. They had known each other close to 15 years! And now, with the reality of his life and mission soon to be over, it was time for Timothy to be intent on passing along to others what had been passed along to him! It was time for him to get serious about 'coaching'. So, let's see what Paul has to say – we're reading verses 1 and 2...

V1 "You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

V2 The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

So, how do we successfully pass along the faith?

Well, according to verse 1, we must ...

...Be Strengthened by Grace! (v. 1) ...

Paul tells Timothy to 'be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus'. The verb 'be strong' is an imperative...so he's being commanded to be strong. But, it's also passive...so, it has to be done for him - on his behalf! In other words, Timothy is to 'keep on being made strong by the grace of Christ'. Now, why is this necessary? Because in 1:15, we read that all in Asia have turned away from Paul...and he names two in particular... Phygelus and Hermogenes. You see the gospel was under attack and believers were bailing on the mission! Paul himself was sitting in a Roman prison waiting to be killed because of the gospel. He knew all too well Timothy's need to be strengthened. The minute you and I step to the line and sign up to pass on the faith to others, we come into direct opposition with the enemy of God. And now His enemy, fiercely becomes our enemy. It's almost as if we put a bulls-eye on our back the size of Texas! You and I can expect to feel discouraged, distracted, defeated, depressed, and disillusioned. I can guarantee that we'll feel beat down, burnt out, and blistered. However, it is only by the grace of Christ that we are strengthened to stay on mission and pass along the faith! Without it, we bail, just like those in Asia. Grace was necessary for Paul to fulfill his mission and it was necessary for Timothy to fulfill his! And our ability to pass along the faith successfully will require no less grace. It doesn't matter whether you're a parent coaching up your kids in the faith or you are passing it along to a coworker or neighbor, the mission requires grace, because the mission is strongly opposed.

Everything in me wants to tell you that coaching people up in the faith is easy! It's not easy...however, it can be extremely fulfilling and rewarding at times. But, it is far from easy. More times than not we'll be tempted to just give it up.

Illustrate: I think I would have given it all up if I were Elizabeth Elliot or Steve Saint. Elizabeth Elliot was the wife of missionary, Jim Elliot. Steve Saint was the son of the missionary pilot, Nate Saint. Both Jim Elliot and Nate Saint were speared to death on the beach of the Curaray River in Ecuador as they attempted to engage the unreached Auca Indian tribe in 1956. Some years following their death both

Elizabeth Elliot and Steve Saint reengaged the mission to bring the gospel of Christ to the very people that killed their loved ones. And you know what, God gave them success. They were able to pass along the gospel and coach up in the faith the very men that killed Elizabeth's husband and Steve's father.

I have to ask myself...how were they able to do that? The answer is 'only by the strength that comes from the grace of Christ'. Listen to Elizabeth Elliott's thoughts on this very subject..."It is not the level of our spirituality that we can depend on. It is God and nothing less than God, for the work is God's and the call is God's and everything is summoned by Him and to His purposes, the whole scene, the whole mess, the whole package - our bravery and our cowardice, our love and our selfishness, our strengths and our weaknesses. The God who can take a murderer like Moses and an adulterer like David and a traitor like Peter and make of them strong servants of His is a God who can also redeem savage Indians." Wow, I think she understands grace. To understand grace is to understand that God does for us what we can never do for ourselves. It is His work in us that grants the strength we need to pass along the gospel to the next generation.

Next, if we're going to successfully pass along the faith, we must simply...

Give what's been Given! (Look at the first part of v. 2 with me) 'The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men...'

Paul's strategy for coaching up Timothy was exactly the same strategy that Jesus used for coaching up the 12 - life was the lab and the kingdom was the curriculum! During the span of 15 years Timothy learned from Paul as they traveled together and lived the mission of God. He learned things like the supremacy of Christ and the power of the gospel ... the priority of prayer and the sufficiency of the Scriptures. He learned suffering and loss, joy and contentment because he was in the game with Paul. Life was the lab of his learning.

But Timothy wasn't the only one learning from Paul, nor was Paul the only one coaching Timothy along. Notice that Paul said, it was 'in the presence of many witnesses' that Timothy was given the faith. There were other people like Luke and Titus, Silas and Epaphroditus, Onesiphorus and even John Mark that were all a part of Paul's missionary entourage that he was coaching up. And there were other people like Barnabas, his grandmother and mother – these were all a part of the process of coaching him up. It takes more than one person in order to coach someone else up in the faith! It is a community endeavor. And we must work together.

Paul makes very clear that he expects Timothy to simply pass along to others what's been passed along to him! He tells him to 'entrust these things' to faithful men. In other words, 'give away what's been given to you'! Jesus said the exact same thing to his disciples before sending them out on a missionary assignment ... 'freely you have received, freely give'.

Illustrate: Last week one of our partners, Brian Bond, shared in the iBless Booth about an opportunity he had to give away something that Christ had given to him. Take a look...
(Show Video – 2 minutes)

Isn't that a great story! Brian leaned into coaching, didn't he?! He simply gave to someone else what Christ had given to him! And as a result, a life-long friendship is emerging! I pray God will continue to use Brian to coach that person up in the faith.

Well, so far, we've discovered that in order to successfully pass along the faith to others we must Be Strengthened by Grace and Give what's been Given. But there is another aspect to this that we need to see. Coaching is not complete until we ... Reproduce what's being Produced (Let's read the second part of v.2)! Paul says to Timothy... "entrust these (in other words, the things of the kingdom he learned from

Paul and others)...entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

It is interesting to me that the last words of both Christ and Paul to those they were coaching was this...‘go and reproduce what has been produced in you’! Paul is simply restating Jesus’ Great Commission within his own context! Paul’s entire strategy for passing the gospel to the next generation depended upon Timothy’s faithfulness to pass it along to other people who would be faithful to pass it along as well. We successfully pass along the faith, not so much by adding converts, but rather by reproducing coaches!

Illustrate: I’ll never forget when I learned a lesson in faithfulness and reproduction. I was planting churches in the Appalachian mountains of NC. I would spend countless hours in communities, knocking on doors and spending time with people. It is a very difficult area to reach and sometimes it seemed like I was going nowhere fast! And I was becoming discouraged rather quickly. But, the guy coaching me up at the time reminded me that God cares more about my faithfulness, than he does about my fruitfulness. He reminded me that, Jesus will build his church, the fruit will come...that’s not our role! Our role is to be faithful to pass along what has been passed to us. So, I started spending time with one of the only guys that seemed to be interested in what God was doing. His name was David LaPlante – he worked at the apt. complex where we held one of our church services. He was married and had four kids, a typical big, burly mountain man, I don’t even think he had a high school degree. We started meeting every week – he and I would get our families together occasionally. Eventually, he grew in his faith to the point where I thought he was ready to preach. He came in my office the Thursday before his first sermon and said, ‘Thad, I gotta tell you something bad’! I said, well, OK, sit down and let’s talk about it – what’s going on? “I can’t preach Sunday”...”I had an affair 5 years ago. Tina told me that if I ever cheated on her, she’d leave me. So, I thought I could bury it until I died, but I can’t now because I’m preaching, you’re the first person I’ve told.’ He started sobbing right there. After a couple of minutes, we looked at each other and I said, ‘David, I think you know what you’ve got to

do. Call me tomorrow after you and Tina have talked...let me know how things are at home. I'll be praying for you." He called the next day. "Thad, Tina's devastated, but amazingly she forgave me. I don't guess I should preach, should I?" I thought about it for a minute and said, 'You know what David, you actually may be in the perfect place to preach...because God delights in a broken and contrite heart - I think you'll be just fine'. He preached that Sunday and it was absolutely amazing. God was doing something special with a very simple man. Without title and college education, much less even a Seminary degree, David became a pastor to the families in the apartment complex where he worked. He started a men's group in the community. They studied the Bible every week and helped single moms move in and out of the complex; they would put together bunk beds and fix bikes. They even counseled couples during domestic disputes. He's still up there today, not getting a check from a church, but he is a pastor - he's reproducing in other people the life that God produced in him. It's people like David LaPlante who are successfully passing along the gospel to the next generation and it absolutely thrills my soul.

We are called to reproduce whatever God is producing in us. This is the strategy of God! There is no plan B.

Conclusion: (5 minutes ... Leslie Rortvedt walks on stage)

I want to conclude today by introducing you to someone who is involved in the mission of passing the baton of the gospel to the next generation, right here at Fellowship. She is one of my coaching heros. Her name is Leslie Rortvedt. Leslie is a full-time step-mother of five boys and is currently leading a small group of 9th grade girls!

Leslie, I'm so glad you're with us today...usually, you're with the Student Ministry, so thanks for spending time with us and sharing your story!

Questions:

1. Leslie, tell us about your 'coaching' opportunity.
2. Now, Leslie...did you need Seminary to be able to do this?

3. So, how do you know how to 'coach' these girls along?
4. I'm sure in the course of 8 years that you've been a part of significant life-change in these girls' lives – tell us how God has used you to lead them toward greater faith in Christ.
5. What are some of your biggest challenges in developing these girls?
6. What are some of your greatest joys in working with them?
7. (reproduction story...)
8. Leslie, you have close to 900 people in this auditorium...I'm going to give you a minute to share something with them regarding 'coaching' people up in their own lives – so, what would you like to say?

Leslie, thank you so much for your service and I pray God will give you strength and grace to continue to prepare these girls to pass along the faith themselves!

There are many of you dedicated to this mission. You've been coaching people up for years! My encouragement to you today is 'don't lose your focus on the pass'. Be strengthened by the grace of Christ. Give what's been given. Reproduce!

Let me pray...