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Oak Grove UMC
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Connect: Family

2 Timothy 1:3-14

³I am grateful to God—whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did—when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. ⁴Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. ⁵I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you.

⁶For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; ⁷for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline. ⁸Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God, ⁹who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, ¹⁰but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. ¹¹For this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher, ¹²and for this reason I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what I have entrusted to him. ¹³Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.

(Slide 1: Connect: Family)

Many years ago, when I was a youth, one of the adult leaders shared her testimony. She had grown up in a neglectful family and become a drug addict. One day, while she was high she had a dream about God. God told her she was loved and that her life had a purpose, and asked her if she was willing to live and follow Jesus. She said yes, and then she woke up and discovered that she was in the hospital and had almost died. God and the church supported her through the hard work of recovery and sobriety. And now, years later, here she was, alive, clean and sober and had found her purpose working in addiction counseling and volunteering with the youth ministry. Then she went around the room and washed our feet.

My 17 year old self loved the drama of her story. The miraculous power of the redemption of a life that was so nearly ended. The evidence of a God who saves, kneeling before me, washing my smelly feet: showing me that serving others is how we follow Jesus and find our purpose.

But it was a different story, a much less dramatic story, that changed my life. A story more like Timothy's.

Timothy was raised by his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois (2 Tim 1:5), in the churches of Lystra and Iconium, a couple of small Greek towns in Galatia (Acts 16:2), where he was a part of the first generation of Christians to be born into the Church. Acts 16 records, that the apostle Paul visited the Church in Lystra and was so impressed with young Timothy that Paul recruited Timothy to become an evangelist.

We don't know a lot about Timothy other than that he was a person of sincere faith, whom after serving with Paul on several missionary journeys, came into a position of leadership in a local church during a challenging time. So his mentor wrote him a couple of letters, that we now call, 1st and 2nd Timothy, with some encouragement and advice.

In today's reading Timothy is being reminded that the sincere faith that lived first in his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice and now lives in him, is a gift from God. And this gift from God is the "spirit of power, and of love, and of self-discipline," (2Tim 1:7) which empowered Timothy to become an evangelist with Paul and will continue to empower him to lead his church through this challenging season.

It was people like Timothy who really changed my life.

People who grew up in the church and don't have a dramatic story to share because, they've always known that God loves them and has a purpose for their lives.

(Slide 2: The gift of Knowing that God loves you and has a purpose for your life)

If you are one of those people who grew up in a church that was even halfway decent at teaching you something about Jesus and loving your neighbor, I want you to know that is a great story!

Your amazing testimony is that:

Because of the sincere faith that lived first in your parents and grandparents and now lives in you:

You know how to love and be loved.

You have, rooted deep within you, the power and self-discipline that allows you to weather difficult times and do hard things.

Essentially, you have a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline in a world where a lot of people:

- Don't know how to love or be loved -- so they have unhealthy relationships
- Many people feel pretty disempowered -- so they make poor choices
- And self-control seems to be in pretty short supply -- so a lot of people don't deal with their emotions very well.

Because of the faith that lived first in your grandparents and parents, that lived in your church community, your Sunday School teachers, youth group, and the grandmothers of the church, a spirit of power, and of love and of self-discipline now lives in you. This is a gift of God. A good treasure of sound teaching that has been entrusted to you for the benefit of the world.

Being redeemed from drug addiction and death into a life of love and purpose is a great story!

It's miraculous and inspiring! And shows that there is no dark place that God cannot save us from.

But never having to be redeemed in the first place is an even better story.

The people who taught me this better story didn't stand up in front of the church and give their testimony.

They befriended me.

They asked me to join their bible study and sat in the car talking with me afterwards for hours.

They browbeat me into joining the choir and gave me a ride there and sat next to me.

They prayed with me and for me and asked how the things they were praying for were going.

They invited me over for dinner and out to the movies.

They let me into their lives so that I could see what a Christian life of love and purpose looks and feels like. So I could see how the decision making processes of a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline differ from the ways of the world.

(slide 3:)

Don't be ashamed of this wonderful testimony about the gift of God that is a simple, well lived life. **“For God has not given us a spirit of timidness, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.” (2Tim 1:7)**