

***Making Room Two:
Making Room in Our Lives for Children and Youth
2 Timothy 3:14-17***

If possible, please watch an overview of Making Room phase two here: <http://www.makingroom.info/index.html>

As we mentioned in the video, the idea behind “Making Room” is that we are making room in our facilities and in our lives for things that are dear to God. This second phase of Making Room is focused on children and youth. In coming weeks you’ll hear more about making room in our facilities. But today I want to talk about making room in our lives for children and youth.

A Scripture that articulates what we want to see happen in the lives of our children and youth is 2 Timothy 3:14-17. In this passage Paul challenges Timothy to think back to his childhood and remember the primary influences in his life: the Scriptures and specific people. Here at Faith we want to provide the context in which our children and youth can also experience these same two influences in a healthy, life-giving way.

In 2 Timothy 3 Paul is helping Timothy anticipate how difficult and challenging it will be to remain faithful to God and faithful to his calling as a pastor in Ephesus. In verse 13 Paul summarizes his point by saying that “evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.” Timothy lived in a world in which some would increasingly live in ways that are opposed to God. By contrast, Paul writes this in verse 14:

14 You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*,

Paul is able to appeal both to the spiritual truth that Timothy had learned AND to the influential people from whom he had learned them. Let’s consider each of these influences.

The Foundation of Scripture. Timothy was probably around 40 years old when Paul wrote him this letter. Over the years Timothy had not only “learned” spiritual truth; he had also “become convinced of” certain things. In other words, Timothy had developed rock-solid theological and spiritual convictions.

Timothy’s experience was in stark contrast with those Paul described earlier in the chapter who were “always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (3:7). Timothy had come to the place where he had a settled knowledge of the truth; the truth wasn’t merely something that his mother believed or that the people at the synagogue believed. He had come to the place where he had become convinced of the truth. He now needed to stay/continue/remain in that place.

This is the place we want our children and youth to end up, isn't it? We eventually want them to come to the place of spiritual maturity in which they "own" their faith. It's not merely their parents' faith or their church's faith. They need to become convinced of the truth of Scripture so that they can thrive spiritually in a world in which people are going "from bad to worse."

In verses 15 through 17 Paul mentions that the foundation of truth had been laid in Timothy's childhood.

15 and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Ever since Timothy was a child he had known "the sacred writings" (which was a way that Greek-speaking Jews commonly referred to the OT - Knight, *NIGCT Pastoral Epistles*, p. 443). Since childhood Timothy had heard about God creating the heavens and the earth, Abraham being called to settle in Canaan, Moses leading the people out of Egypt, kings such as David and Solomon, prophets such as Isaiah and Jeremiah. Timothy understood the sacrificial system of the old covenant. Paul's conviction was that such Scriptures give you a type of wisdom that prepares you for salvation. That was certainly Timothy's experience. When Paul arrived in Lystra and explained that Jesus' death was the once-and-for-all sacrifice for sin, Timothy believed. The Scriptures had prepared him to experience salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

In verse 16 Paul broadens his focus to talk about the profitability of Scripture in general:

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

The term translated "inspired" means (literally) God-breathed. The imagery suggests that the Scriptures have come from the mouth of God. This is consistent with the imagery of the Scriptures being the "word of God." Being God-breathed, the Scriptures are true and authoritative. "All Scripture" referred to the Hebrew bible in Paul's day. Since the New Testament writings now have the same status as "Scripture" (see 2 Peter 3:16), we understand that both the Old and New Testaments are "God breathed."

As well, all Scripture is "profitable" in several different ways. Scripture is profitable for **teaching** - it instructs us in what is good and true. Scripture is profitable for **reproof** - it confronts things that need to change in our lives. Scripture is profitable for **correction** - showing us the correct way to think and act. Finally, Scripture is profitable for **training in righteousness** - equipping us to live out our righteousness in everyday behavior.

There's obviously overlap in these four terms, but the net result is clear in verse 17: *so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work*. That's the picture of a person who is prepared to live his/her life in a way that honors God. You're not continually caught off guard and clueless in terms of how you should live and what

you should do. Based on the foundation of Scripture, you're equipped to live your life to the glory of God.

Just like Timothy, we want the children and youth at Faith to be formed and equipped through the Scriptures as Paul described. This is one of our "core values" at Faith:

We value biblical truth. We recognize Scripture as our authority for salvation and life. We seek to be formed by the Scriptures both corporately and individually.

It's not enough for us to be a church that teaches the facts of the Bible or even the theology found in the Bible. The Pharisees in Jesus' day taught the Scriptures accurately. But Jesus told the crowds (Matthew 23:3), ". . . all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds. . ." Every church has its inconsistencies, but there shouldn't be a Grand-Canyon-sized chasm between what we teach our children and youth and how we live our lives. We avoid such hypocrisy by accepting the Scriptures as our authority and by being formed by the Scriptures ourselves.

For example, one of the basic truths that is communicated to our kids is that *we should treat others the way we want others to treat us*. It's rather easy to tell children how **they** should live out the "Golden Rule": share with your brother, be patient, etc. The concept is really simple. But we also need to be people whose lives have been formed by this same Scripture (Mt 7:12). We need to be people who bless those who curse us, who are patient when wronged, who are eager to forgive. If we as parents and teachers have been formed by the Scripture in this way, there's integrity and power when we teach our children to "treat others the way you want to be treated."

One more comment before we look at the second influence in Timothy's life. . . Some children and youth will whole-heartedly accept the Scriptures and the truth about Jesus Christ. Others won't accept it during their growing-up years. But even then, the Scriptures have the potential of bearing fruit years later. As parents and as a church we are sowing "good seed" in their lives that can germinate and take root years later. I remember hearing one young man describe how when he was living a very rebellious lifestyle and when he was running from God that Scriptures he had learned kept coming to mind. Those Scriptures went with him wherever he went and eventually brought him back to God.

Notice in verse 14 how Paul also reminds Timothy of ***The Influence of Others***. After appealing to Timothy to remember the truth he had learned and become convinced of, Paul tells Timothy to recall the people who had influenced him spiritually: *knowing from whom you have learned them [the things he'd become convinced of]*. The implication is that Timothy would find strength in remembering that the truth had come through specific people whom he respected. Who were these people? We know of at least three people. Back in chapter 1 Paul mentioned the influence of Timothy's mother and grandmother:

5 For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that *it is* in you as well.

Timothy's father was a Gentile (Acts 16:1), but his mother and grandmother were Jewish. They both had "a sincere/unhypocritical faith" that they had passed along to Timothy. Timothy was blessed to have a believing mother and grandmother who lived out the type of faith that Timothy would eventually own for himself.

Paul was another person from whom Timothy had learned spiritual truth. Paul had brought the message of Jesus to Timothy's hometown of Lystra. Timothy ended up traveling with Paul for many years (maybe 15?). Timothy learned spiritual truth from Paul in a very comprehensive way. Look at 2 Timothy 3:10–11. Paul mentions nine ways that Timothy had "followed" His example and life. Timothy followed Paul in the sense that he imitated his life.

10 Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, 11 persecutions, *and* sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium *and* at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me!

Having travelled around Asia Minor with Paul, Timothy had the benefit of seeing him in all sorts of real-life situations. Timothy was probably a teenager when he first started traveling with Paul. He not only heard Paul's teaching; Timothy saw Paul's life. Paul mentions, for example, that Timothy had seen him endure persecutions and sufferings. He got to see how Paul prayed when his life was threatened; he got to see Paul recover physically and emotionally from the things he suffered. Twenty years later Paul was able to remind Timothy of these experiences.

We want the children and youth here at Faith to be able someday to remember both the spiritual truth they have learned and become convinced of **AND** the specific people who have invested deeply in their lives. This should happen in the home, but it should also happen in the larger body of Christ.

As we make room in our facilities for children and youth, we also need to make room in our lives to invest deeply in children and youth. This investment can take place through the formal ministries of the church, but also through relationships that develop naturally.

Ways to "make room in our lives" for children and youth.

The **first** involves our **attitude**. This point is somewhat intangible, but it is vital. Children and youth are NOT a distraction from the mission of the church. Making disciples of all the nations begins by making disciples of our own children and youth. We would be very short-sighted not to recognize that our deepest expression of "making disciples" is with our own children.

Of course parents have the primary responsibility to teach their children the Scriptures and to show them the beauty and power of walking with Christ. We want our kids to grow up thinking, "I couldn't imagine adopting a faith and a life different from my mom. . . my dad." The home is the primary influence.

But the church also has a vital role to play. In 1 Timothy 3:15 Paul referred to the church as "the household of God." The implication is that we should view the local church as an extended family. In a healthy family the adults care deeply about their children and youth - all of their children and youth, the ones that are eager to learn and grow and the ones that are resistant and rebellious. As a church, we need to value children and youth as **integral** to our mission of making disciples.

I think about it this way. . . Brenda and I love our own kids more than other people's kids. If we ever have grandkids, we will love them more than our own kids (that was a joke, sort of). But that doesn't mean we ONLY care about our kids. We should also care about your kids and your grandkids because the church is the household of God. What kind of a church family would we be if we don't care about the two or three hundred children and youth in our midst?!?! This is one of our common commitments as the household of God.

This doesn't mean that every single one of us works directly with children and youth. Some of you don't have the time or the temperament to work directly with children and youth. That's completely fine. But our attitude of valuing them will come out in all sorts of ways: in the way we talk about children and youth, the way we talk with children and youth, and the way we resource our children and youth ministries.

We're trusting that this attitude of valuing children and youth will be reflected in your giving to this Making Room effort. We realize that if you don't have children and youth in the church you might be thinking, "I don't really have a vested interest in this phase of Making Room. . ." We'll talk about giving next week; we really trust that God will lead your giving as you seek Him. But on a heart-level, we want everybody in the church to have an attitude that welcomes children and youth as part of the church family.

The **second** involves **relationships**. We desire for each of our children and youth have healthy relationships with adults in the church (besides their parents). Some of these relationships will be limited to interaction here on Sunday mornings, especially those with children. But some of our youth would benefit greatly from a deeper spiritual friendship with an adult.

The older I get the more I think about my childhood. I grew up in a fairly normal family. From the outside we probably looked like we were close to perfect. I had a mom and a dad and 3 brothers. We were involved in sports and scouts and church. We've got a whole catalog of family lore - stories that we tell over and over. For example, there was the time when three of us boys "ran away from home." I was about 6 years old, my two older brothers would have been 7 and 9. One afternoon we decided to "run away from home." Our younger brother (a.k.a. "the chosen one") probably wasn't invited. Mike, Jeff, and I packed some of our most cherished possession in a cardboard box and

walked out the front door. As we walked across the front lawn, mom asked, “Have you thought about what you’ll do for supper?” And so we asked her to make us some sandwiches. I think we lived on the mean streets of Newport, Tennessee for about half an hour that day. . . And so I’ve got lots of good memories from childhood.

But I also remember that even though I had lots of friends, I was a pretty lonely kid. I really didn’t talk to anybody about the hurts I experienced, the temptations I faced, and the questions I had. My dad was largely absent from my childhood. My mom was amazing, but she was my mom. I went to church, but I didn’t have any spiritual friendships there. I basically grew up living my life by trial and error - which is a pretty rough way to learn. It’s far superior to grow up like Timothy did, having the foundation of Scripture and the influence of parents and spiritual friends.

Brenda and I are so thankful that our kids DID have these relationships throughout their childhood. I’ll talk about our girls since they’ve moved away now. . . They would each tell you that their Bible study leaders kept them tethered to the church and to the Lord more than anything else during their high school years. I don’t think they even liked Brenda and me during those years. But Amy Barker and Anna Gfeller were a different story; they could hear things from them that they couldn’t hear from us. We’re so thankful for those relationships.

Our philosophy of ministry for children and youth involves partnering with parents to see this very thing happen. Even the spaces that have been designed for Making Room phase two reflect this commitment to teaching our children and youth the Word of God and developing healthy, nourishing relationships with those that are older. Both the Kids’ Ministry and the Youth Ministry will have large-group rooms that are good for teaching the Word as well as areas where smaller groups can talk and develop relationships.

If you sense God might want you to invest in the lives of our children and youth, check one of the boxes on the back of the connection card: “Information about serving in Kids’/ Youth ministry.” Someone will be in touch with you about possibilities.

The **third** involves **prayer**. Prayer is the great “wildcard” in the life of the church. As I mentioned at the end of last year, I’m reading through the Bible this year, noticing examples of prayer and what it teaches about prayer. One of the most striking things in the Pentateuch is that God is a God who listens/hears what we pray.

In Deuteronomy 4:7, as Moses calls the nation to obedience, he mentions, “For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the Lord our God whenever we call on Him?” Moses recognized that one of their greatest blessings was the reality that the Lord was “near,” eager to hear when they called on Him. If that was true in the old covenant, how much more true is this in the new covenant in Jesus’ blood. We have confidence to draw near to the throne of grace because of Jesus’ death and resurrection.

Some of you are prayer warriors. You have been praying for years (some of you decades) for the cause of Christ around the world and for the mission of the church. I

wonder if some/many of you would purpose in your hearts to pray for our children and youth. . . that they would grow up like Timothy did - being convinced of the truth and being able to recall specific people who had invested deeply in them. Perhaps you would pray daily or weekly that what we do in Kids' Ministry and Youth Ministry would be used by the Spirit of God in deep, abiding ways. We don't merely want to be a church with good facilities and good ministry structures. We want to be a church whose children and youth love God with everything they've got. That type of impact comes only when people pray fervently in faith and in Jesus' name.