

2 Timothy 1:1-7

Instructions to Timothy
Guiding, Growing, Guarding!



The Flame



~God has given every one of us something we can do well. Childhood is a time of self-discovery. Without even thinking about it, in our childish obliviousness, we gravitate toward something to do. It could be that we are drawn to the artistic, or we like to take things apart to see what is inside, and then try to put them back together. One child loves stories and words, and another child thrives on numbers. One child does well with others, and another child does better by themselves. One child is full of boundless energy and can't sit still for 10 minutes, while another is sedate and can sit quietly for hours! One child thinks deeply about things like death, or morality, or God, and another thinks of when he or she (usually he) can get back to playing their favorite video game! One applies themselves to strength, speed, agility, because they are interested primarily in physical sports. Another applies themselves to music, or achievement through learning/good grades, or competing in chess. A few show a natural ability to lead, while most others are better at following. It is almost always one or the other for most of these opposites I've mentioned, but not both.



~By the time we get to adulthood, many people have discovered and know where their primary interests lie, and what they are better at, and what they are NOT better at. But when we encounter Jesus and give our heart to Him - then the Spirit of God makes His home in us, and enables and powers the transformation and beautification of our heart and soul, with a corresponding change of our value system, a profound change to our priorities, judgments, tastes, impulses, emotions, motives, and ultimately our choices. Then,.. often, that process of knowing our own capabilities opens up new avenues to us to discover that, what we can be good at is more than we thought. When we are dedicated to the purposes of God in and through the church, we do what is needed. That means we are probably on a learning curve. There might be avenues of service in the church that you might be acquainted with, but sometimes it is just what needs to be done and being asked to do it. Then you step in, get a few pointers (if you're lucky), and then you figure it out as you go, to the best of your ability! The longer you are in some capacity of service, the better you get at it! Before too long, you are the veteran – you own that responsibility – you have discovered and developed a talent and a gift you never knew you had before!

Paul had laid hands on Timothy, probably close to his becoming a pastoral leader in the church at Ephesus. There is mention of this unnamed gift through the laying on of hands in Paul's first letter to Timothy *also*. Like I said the first time, we can only speculate what that gift might be. Paul seems to have an inkling that whatever gift it is may be being under-utilized. Otherwise, why would he stress to Timothy to use what he had been given. I have to say that spiritual gifts are not often given by the laying on of hands these days. Not many, *if any*, have a trustworthy and authoritative word of prophecy – individuals that can lay hands on someone and make a declaration from the Holy Spirit that can be relied on every time! A more trustworthy path to self-discovery is to simply serve, to stretch yourself to do things that you have never done and never thought you could do! So we serve, and sometimes our misses are more important than our hits, our failures better and more revealing in the long run than our successes! Sometimes we get insight divinely shown from the Holy Spirit, and sometimes our insight is gained by experience, and the word of the scriptures, and prayer, and dependence/reliance!



It takes a lifetime to learn, so start **now**! And when you finally are starting to get the hang of it, you are surprised that you are struggling to do what you have always done! Your body and mind have worn out, and if you live long enough, what you've gained is drained from you over a rather brief time – in fact, just about as quickly as one grows **up** and gains their powers, gifts, and talents, and skills, and knowledge, and experience – about that fast, one grows **down** and loses those powers a bit at a time - lost at about the same rate as they were gained! By age 60, almost everything is becoming less than it was, and continues to erode with each passing year! Everything is becoming harder and harder to do, but you continue to do it until you can't any longer, because the longer you can do it, the better you are at pushing total debilitation down the road to await another day, month or year!

That is why we keep at serving the Lord – even when we age – maybe especially when we age! Who wants to become a husk, a shell. Who wants to become irrelevant? Let me tell you a secret - we are **never** irrelevant when we serve Jesus. I've known women who were so ancient and worn out that they couldn't hear, see, or walk. They were completely isolated, but they remained cheerful. They continued to pray, because it was all they could do, **and found great satisfaction in it!** They served in the simplest, most beautiful way, known only to God! Even when their mind was going, their existence remained a profound, worthwhile, and satisfying existence until their dying day!

I think of nursing homes. If we live long enough, we are all headed there. For those outside of Christ it can be a very hard existence, because they are just there being warehoused, their physical needs being taken care of, while they wait to die. But for the Christ-follower, the facility becomes their purpose, their ministry, their service and sacrifice to God! For the Christ-follower, life never loses its luster! It may lose just about everything else, but not that!



Paul had lived a life of purpose. It began with love. He loved people with the love of God. Look at his greeting to young Timothy. The depth of feeling it has to it - it is truly a thing to behold! ***"I pray for you constantly" – CONSTANTLY!*** He remembers the sincere and transparent faith that first lived in Timothy's grandmother and mother! He is certain that Timothy has a similar faith. For ***that*** reason - ***"I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy!"***

Why do you come to church? Do you ***"long"*** to see anyone at church? Have you cultivated relationships here? We have some phenomenal people here! I am proud as I've ever been to call many here "friend"! I would suggest that ***if*** it is *not* a problem at all for you to skip worship on Sundays, it is not the church's problem, but yours! These are people that share a like-faith – and a like-faith with you - if you are genuine! The Spirit of God in them calls out to Himself in you! You can ***feel*** that! You should be connected in a way that runs even deeper than blood ties! When someone loves Christ, you are tied to them in the love of God. His "agape" love in you is stronger than any familial love (love of family members)! If it is not, it is not worthy of Christ! That may sound harsh but I promise you that it is only meant for you know what Christ Himself said on the matter

[Luke 14:26; Matt. 10:37]. In putting the love of Christ first in your life – like ***WAY out in front*** of all other loves – so that *those* loves seem like hate in comparison, you have actually done all your other loves a great benefit! When you ***"seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, all these things shall be added unto you as well!"***

He **returns** our love for Him with interest, channeling it, and increasing a great depth of feeling for others, starting with our family! Wives rekindling and expanding love for their husbands! Husbands rekindling and expanding love for their wives! It is what Jesus does! He also causes parent's hearts to be turned to the love of their children, instead of being selfish. turns the hearts of children to their parents instead of being sullen rebellious. Brothers learn the nuances of how brothers can be friends. Sisters - often rivals in childhood - learn to be best friends for a lifetime! He alters family relationships and friendships in a way that is far richer and in depth than they ever could have otherwise been without Him.



**WHAT MAKES YOUR
HEART BEAT FAST
AND PUTS A SMILE
ON YOUR FACE?**

*My brother, Jan David, and I have shared a bond of love for the entirety of our lives – but it is a love that is completely intertwined in the love of Christ! I idolized him as a young boy, because he was kind to me, and he was so strong and talented ... and I wanted to be like Him. But when I was around 13, (which put him around 23 and 24), we began a new chapter in our love for each other. He started initiating in-depth conversations about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the church, love, sin, truth, wisdom, the deception of this world, and on and on it went. I was mesmerized! I thought new thoughts and actually contributed to the discussion. I loved it! No one else my age got to talk with someone on such a level – not even close! And I loved and admired my brother all the more for it! Our conversations weren't limited to the weather, the Packers, or our favorite song on the radio or favorite movie on TV, or girls, or the latest neighborhood gossip! We covered those too, but my eyes were opening to the beauty and truth of life in Christ! My love for my brother grew because he was not ashamed to put his love of Jesus first! His fervent love of Christ and his great desire to use his life to serve the purposes of Christ inspired me to want the same for myself! / I knew as a teen that there were gifts in my personality and in the fact that I had Christ in me, and that there were gifts as yet undiscovered in me! I planned on discovering and utilizing those gifts in the services of Christ! What could be more exciting than using my life to bring people to Christ, and to disciple them so that they too might bring people to Christ?! And then to have those people discipling the people they brought to Christ so that **they** might bring people to Christ, who then bring people to the point of faith in Christ! Is this your hope?! Is this what makes your heart beat faster, to light on fire?!