

Passing the Baton

A Lesson on the Cooperative Program - 2 Timothy 1:3-7

Teacher's Edition

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BEFORE THE LESSON

Read 2 Timothy 1:1-14

Build a runner's baton out of a cardboard paper towel roll. Wrap the baton in colorful paper or your choice of material. Write the word "Legacy" on the baton or perhaps the name of your church. This baton will serve as an object lesson as we study the Cooperative Program and what it means to pass on a legacy. Smaller groups may choose to create a baton for each member to further reinforce the lesson. Note: You can also purchase inexpensive batons at most major online websites.

1 INTRODUCTION

ASK: Who has participated in a relay race? What do you remember about how the race worked?

Enlist a volunteer to help you demonstrate passing the baton. Emphasize the importance of runners being committed to the same goals, moving in the same direction, and a proper handoff of the baton so that the race can continue towards the finish line.

The relay race, which is now an Olympic event, first began with Aboriginals carrying messages between tribes. Legends were passed from generation to generation and from tribe to tribe.

The relay method of racing was started in the United States about 1883. Relay races consist of a runner that must hand off a baton, usually a hollow cylinder of wood or plastic, from one runner to the next that is waiting to continue the race. The second runner opens their hand behind them after a few strides, by which time the first runner should be caught up and able to hand off the baton. Usually a runner will give an auditory signal, such as "Stick!" repeated several times, for the recipient of the baton to put out his hand.

Say: Today, we are going to study the importance of passing on a legacy of faith in order to reach the generations with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

2 HONOR THOSE THAT HAVE GONE BEFORE

³ I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day.⁴ As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy.⁵ I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.⁶ For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands,⁷ for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.” 2 Tim. 1:3-7

Paul begins this section, as he often does, by giving thanks to God. This is especially remarkable since he was facing martyrdom.

ASK: What is your normal state of mind when you face hardships and difficulties? Is it prayer and thanksgiving to God? (see also 1 Thess. 5:18). Is it easy to show concern for others when you are facing hard times?

Paul pays tribute to his ancestors [literally, “those born before”] who also served God. Warren Wiersbe notes that, “He reminds Timothy that there is much to be thankful for, in spite of the problems he was facing. He reminds him of his godly heritage and of the faith that God has given him, not only for salvation, but also for daily living and Christian service.”

ASK: Who did Paul have in mind when he remembered his ancestors? (parents, grandparents, Old Testament saints)

OPTIONAL: Who in your life shared the Gospel with you and, in so doing, passed on the faith to you?

ASK: Godly ancestors are a real blessing but what options do we have if we have not been blessed by such lineage? (possible answers: we can begin to create a faith legacy by following God; we can give thanks for other Christians in the faith community and learn from them)

ASK: Define the word “legacy.” Write responses on the board.

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the word legacy has two primary definitions. One definition is, “Something that happened in the past or that comes from someone in the past.” The other definition is, “Something (such as property or money) that is received from someone who has died.” So, if we were to put these two definitions of legacy together, we could say, “Resources have been passed on to us from previous generations, and now we have an incredible opportunity to invest these same resources into the next generation that ideally will continue the process after we’re gone.”

We have been given a precious gift, called a legacy. Everyone one of us will leave a legacy to those that come after us. The only question is whether it will be a Godly legacy.

2.1 PASS THE BATON

Paul recalls his ancestors but also reminds Timothy of the faith that had been passed on to him from his mother Eunice and grandmother Lois. It has been observed that three generations of

faith is extremely rare yet Paul states that he is “persuaded” or “sure” of young Timothy’s faith. He has been given the baton of faith from his ancestors and is now admonished to continue running the race.

ASK: Do you think that is common or an exception to have three generations of faith in most families? Discuss reasons for either answer.

ASK: Why is it important to live a legacy of faith and pass it on to future generations?

ASK: Why are there multiple runners in a relay race? In what ways do multiple runners help cover longer distances?

2.2 RUN THE RACE WITH ENTHUSIASM

*“³ I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day.⁴ As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy.⁵ I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.⁶ **For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands,**⁷ for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.” 2 Tim. 1:3-7*

NOTE: Wiersbe comments, “Through Paul, God had imparted to Timothy the spiritual gift he needed for his ministry. The laying on of hands was a common practice in apostolic days (Acts 6:6; 13:3), but no believer today has the same authority and privileges that the Apostles did. Today, when we lay hands on people for the ministry, it is a symbolic act and does not necessarily impart any special spiritual gifts to them.”

Paul instructs Timothy to have “spiritual enthusiasm” in his ministry. That is, to rely on God’s power to reach as many people as possible with the Gospel. Paul knew that, although Timothy may have lost some of his zeal for the ministry, that the Holy Spirit had already provided everything needed – power, love, and self-control. He just needed to fan the flame.

Today, Christians have the same mission to “fan into flame the gift of God” and reach people everywhere by sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ. We engage in our mission by:

1. Living obedient lives and personally investing in people where we live, learn, work, and play.
2. Corporately cooperating with others to reach more people and take the Gospel further than we ever could on our own.

2.3 BETTER TOGETHER - COOPERATIVE PROGRAM (CP)

It can be overwhelming to consider reaching the world's population of over 7 billion people. The most generous estimates state that approximately twenty percent of that population knows Jesus as their Savior. That means there is over 5 billion people in the world who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. We may never meet many of these people that live in other countries. However, it is safe to assume that we meet people every day that need to know God's love for them. How can we make a difference both at home and around the world? By running the race together. The way we do that as Southern Baptists is through the Cooperative Program. We "cooperate" with other SBC churches, of all sizes, across the country in an effort to reach more people for Jesus.

In what ways does the CP help us to run together and reach further than if we run the race alone?

- Southern Baptists make up nearly 16 million members in more than 45,000 churches (the whole is greater than the sum of its parts).
- Individuals provide tithes and offerings to their local church, and the participating churches forward a portion of their undesignated funds to their state Baptist convention.
- Funds for the CP are used to finance these agencies:
 - North American Mission Board (namb.net)
 - International Mission Board (imb.org)
 - Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC)
 - Six Southern Baptist Seminaries (Southern, Southeastern, Midwestern, Southwestern, Golden Gate, and New Orleans).
- Cooperating Southern Baptist churches contributed over \$478,000,000 in Cooperative Program contributions through their respective state Baptist conventions in 2013-2014.
- The International Missions Board CP supports almost 5,000 missionaries and supervision for 3500 foreign mission volunteers.
- CP supports new church starts and ministries through the North American Mission Board.
- CP helps fund the Texas Disaster Relief team. Where there is a disaster...Southern Baptists are there.

3 JOIN THE RACE

³ I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day.⁴ As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. ⁵ I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as

well. ⁶ For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, ⁷ for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control." 2 Tim. 1:3-7

Paul's instruction to Timothy is the same for us today. Join the race to spread the Gospel to all people. We are thankful for those that have gone before us but, just like a relay race, we must accept the baton and carry it on towards the finish line. One day, we too, will hand off the baton to the next generation. **[use baton here for a visual representation]** Until then, let us prove faithful with that which has been entrusted to us. Together, we can strengthen each other, provide relief to those who are tired, and fan the flame until it burns brightly in each generation.

It Begins with YOU!

The Cooperative Program is an incredible plan for any church but it begins with you! You become the recipient of God's love and mercy because of the faith of someone else (II Cor. 8:5). The gratitude you develop expresses itself in obedience to God for what He has done for you (1 John 4:19). You commit to give back to Him, through your local church, a portion of what He provides. This is commonly called a tithe and represents ten percent of your income (Lev. 27:30, Mal. 3:10).

Do you know Jesus as your Lord and Savior? He paid a debt He did not owe because we you owed a debt you could not pay. If so, how are you expressing your gratitude to Him for paying the penalty for your sins. If not, what would stop you from professing Him as your personal Lord and Savior today? Join the race and make a difference from generation to generation.

Resources for Further Study

- What is the Cooperative Program?
(<http://whatisCP.com>)
- How Does the Cooperative Program Work?
(<http://www.sbc.net/cp>)
- 5 Facts About the Cooperative Program
(<http://erlc.com/article/5-facts-about-the-cooperative-program>)
- Cooperative Program Statistics
(<http://www.sbc.net/cp/statistics.asp>)
- Additional Cooperative Program Resources
(<http://www.sbc.net/cp/resources/>)