

(picture of passing the baton) Many events in track and field are displays of individual skill and athleticism, but the relay race combines the speed and skill of four separate runners whether it's the 4 x 100 or 4 x 400. Not only does each runner have to run their leg of the race, but the most crucial part is the passing of the baton from one runner to the next.

I've asked Nikki Ostrowski to come and help me with this.

- You ran relay events in high school, right? What did you run?
- Did you have a particular leg that was your best?
- How important is the passing of the baton?
- What sorts of thing can go wrong in passing the baton?
- Can you show us the proper way to pass the baton? And what is the proper way to receive it?

We want to talk about passing the baton this morning, not in track and field, but in life. And most importantly passing the baton of faith.

(Next Slide) Think of the most important things you know. You didn't just learn them from a book. You didn't just learn them sitting at a desk in a classroom. You know them because someone passed them on to you. The most important lessons learned in life are caught, not taught.

I learned to love my wife, by watching my dad love my mom. I learned how to love my girls by how my parents loved me. Some of you learned how to do these things by the opposite—watching your parents and knowing however you do it, it's not like that.

Think of how we learn to cook. You don't learn from a Betty Croker cook book. You spend time in the kitchen with someone who knows how to cook. It's how you learn to work on your car, fix the plumbing or rewire an outlet in your home.

How many have learned to play the guitar or drums by listening to their favorite songs over and over again, learning to mimic every riff, every ghost note, every lick, every fill. It's how we learn to fish, to dance, to field dress a deer, how to paint, how to do woodworking, how to knit, and how to sew.

One of the common mentors these days is YouTube. Yes, you can use YouTube for more watching cat videos, epic fails, and wasting time when you should be working or doing homework. Almost any skill or discipline you could ever want to learn you can find videos on YouTube to show you how to do it. Amidst all the crud and clutter on YouTube are some very gifted, talented teachers who are passionate about passing on their knowledge and skills.

I was thinking of some of the things that I learned by watching YouTube videos. Build an AR-15 rifle from the ground up. Check. Replace the driver's side door handle on a 2000 Toyota Corolla.

Check. Replace the felt gasket in a clothes dryer that is eating your clothes. Check. How to pronounce ancient, Koine Greek. Check

You've probably learned some pretty cool things too, because someone took the time to pass the baton on to us.

The word we use today for this is mentoring. Mentoring is not a biblical word. It comes to us from Greek mythology. Mentor was a friend of Odysseus to whom he entrusted the education of his son. A mentor is part instructor, part guide, part counselor, and part teacher. Mentoring is a relationship where the knowledge, wisdom, and skill of one person is poured into the life of another. That's my definition of mentoring— to pour your life into another.

You can get out your Bible concordance and search all you want, but you will not find the word mentor anywhere in the Bible, but if you open your Bible, you will find mentoring all over the place. Our core verse this morning is all about mentoring. In 2 Timothy 2:2 Paul tells this young minister,

What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.

You have 4 generations of mentoring in one verse— Paul to Timothy, Timothy to faithful men, and from these faithful men on to others.

The Bible is filled with mentoring relationships. Jethro mentored Moses, and then Moses mentored Joshua.

Eli mentored Samuel, and Samuel mentored Saul and David. David mentored his son, Solomon, who in turn mentored the Queen of Sheba.

Elijah mentored Elisha

Mordecai mentored his niece Queen Esther.

Paul, not only mentored guys such as Timothy and Titus, but he also mentored the husband and wife team of Aquila and Priscilla who in turn mentored Apollos, who became a great leader himself.

This morning I want to add your name to this list.

The Pastoral Epistles

But first, since we are moving through the Bible from beginning to end, I want to talk a little about the part of the Bible in which we find this week's Core Verse. 2 Timothy is one of three letters of Paul that are called the Pastoral Epistles. Epistle is a word that might make you snicker if you're a middle school boy, but it simply means letter. These are letters, not to churches, but to individuals who lead churches. These are guys who pastor churches, that's why they are

pastoral epistles or letters. The three pastoral epistles are 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus. They are full of practical teaching for those who lead and love churches.

The other thing these three pastoral letters have in common is that Timothy and Titus are both young men that Paul mentored. Paul's preaching was formative in their faith, he led them to Christ, and he took them under his wing and mentored them as young leaders. As Paul continued with his mission work as an apostle, the time came to hand over the leadership of these new churches to other leaders that Paul had trained.

Paul leaves Titus on the island of Crete to lead the church there. These church was so new they didn't even have elders yet. That was a task Paul was leaving to Titus. Yet the culture on the island of Crete was very ungodly. If someone was to make of a list of the top 5 hardest places to plant a church in the 1st Century, Crete may have been at the top of the list.

Paul leaves Timothy in Ephesus, one of the biggest, most influential cities of the 1st Century, second only to Rome. Not only was Ephesus a leader in politics, economic, arts, and trade, she was a world class leader in wickedness, immorality, and idol worship. Filled with dozens of temples and houses of prostitution and godless theaters where the most immoral productions were acted out. So Timothy had his work cut out for him.

Paul had mentored both of these young men. They were ready to take the baton Paul handed it to them not only to run with it, but to pass it on to others. They were to become mentors themselves. The student becomes the teacher. That is what Timothy is called to do in our Core Verse. *"What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also"*. Don't just take the baton and run with it, but pass it on to the next person.

Mentoring isn't Just For Leaders

The first thing you need to understand is that mentoring isn't just for leaders. This isn't just for apostles and pastors and leaders. Anyone can mentor. Moms and dads mentor their children. Friends mentor friends when they show them how to do something new. Several years ago when a friend took me hunting for the first time, and I got my first deer, he showed me how to field dress it. My second deer, he let me field dress it while he watched and gave me instruction. That's mentoring. When your work hires a new person and you're showing them the ropes and teaching them the job, that's mentoring.

We are all mentors, but the question is— are we good mentors. Paul points the way to being a good mentor.

Mentors give their hearts away

A good mentor is someone who gives their heart away. You are passing on more than knowledge or skills. You are giving your heart away. You're passing on a passion. Think of the

best teacher you've ever had, the teachers who had the most positive impact on you. They didn't just teach a subject, but they gave you a love for that subject. But it isn't just about their love of what they are teaching. It's about their love for you. A good mentor cares for their student.

I want you to listen to what Paul calls Timothy and Titus. 1 Tim. 1:2, he calls Timothy "*my true child in the faith.*" In 2 Tim. 1:2 he writes, "*To Timothy, my beloved child.*" Similarly, to Titus he says, "*To Titus, my true child in a common faith.*" These aren't just professional relationships. These are personal relationships.

As Paul prays for Timothy in 2 Timothy 1, he remembers his tears, and longs to see him so that he may be filled with joy. There is intimacy and love in these words. Mentoring is more than on the job training. It requires care for the soul.

Mentoring Must Be Deliberate

Secondly, mentoring must be deliberate. Sure, you can just pass on some things just through time and chance, but good mentoring happens by design. It's deliberate. You purposefully create opportunities to pour your life into someone else, and you give consideration into what you are pouring into their life.

In our Core Verse, Paul is calling Timothy to mentor on purpose. You go out and find faithful men. Not just anyone, but faithful men. Faithful here is used in the sense of trustworthy or reliable. Once you find these faithful men pass on to them what I passed on to you. Do it deliberately.

Mentor in Things that Matter

Thirdly, mentor in things that matter. There's all kinds of passions and knowledge and skills we can pass on to someone else. Some things we pass on are more valuable than others. You can pass on how to save and invest and buy stocks and bonds, mutual funds and ETFs. You can pass on your ancient family cinnamon roll recipe. You can pass on your love for your favorite team. You can pass on your political persuasions. You can pass on your love for jazz, for Garth Brooks, BTS or for Pink Floyd.

You can pass on your love for frog jumping. We've been watching this series on Netflix called "We Are the Champions" which features some of the most unusual competitions around the globe. One of them was frog jumping, and there was one family who's been jumping frogs for 70 years. It's like five generations now.

When Paul tells Timothy things like "*Follow the pattern of sound words that you have heard from me,*" or "*This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child,*" or "*O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you.*" He's talking about something very specific.

Paul's not mentoring Timothy in the art of tentmaking, which is what Paul was by trade, but he is passing on the great timeless truths that we have in Scripture. He's passing on the saving faith of Jesus Christ. He's passing on the morals and ideals that will anchor Timothy in any storm.

You can be a fantastic mentor, but if what you're passing on isn't of great value then what's the point? I'm not saying that you can't pass on your love for woodworking, or mentor someone in ceramics, or buy the newest baby in the family a #1 Chief's fan onesie, but I do want you to ask this question. "Am I passing on what matters most? Am I passing on what matters ultimately?"

If we pass the baton for our favorite music, or for our favorite team, or our favorite hobby, but we don't pass the baton of Jesus, something is wrong. When you have a family with four generations of Steeler fans just like their grandfather, but none of them know Jesus like their grandfather, the baton has been dropped. The race has been lost, and it's tragic.

Mentoring Requires Time

Number Five— mentoring requires time. Good mentoring is not a once or twice sort of thing. It takes repeated exposure over a period of time. Repeated exposure over time to a toxin in your environment can kill you. Repeated exposure to a certain kind of music over time at the right age establishes patterns that stick with you for the rest of your life. Repeated exercise over time makes you stronger. Repeated practice over time makes you prolific. Mentoring over time shapes a life.

This is evident in what Paul tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:13, "*Follow the pattern of sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.*" Timothy hasn't just heard these things once or twice from Paul. He's heard them over and over again until there is a pattern.

Mentoring Requires Someone Willing to Learn

I also want to address the other side of the relationship. The student. The term is actually mentee, but that just sounds so goofy. It makes me think of Mentos candy. The Biblical word is disciple. A disciple is a student or a follower of a teacher. Mentoring requires not only a good teacher, but a willing student. Passing the baton requires not only someone to hand off the baton, but someone to receive it and run with it.

Paul gives every indication that Timothy was a willing and eager student. He says of Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:10, "*You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings.*" You didn't just listen to my words, but you followed my example. You learned from my life. Mentoring goes so much further, not just with a good teacher, but with a good student. Ask any teacher, it's a lot more fun to teach an eager student. The student has a responsibility in the mentor-mentee relationship.

Good leadership and good followership go hand in hand. There is one area where this applies to all of us in the church. Hebrews 13:7 talking about our relationship with church leaders and church elders says this, *“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.”*

There is no such thing as the spiritual gift of being a royal pain in the butt to your church leadership, but apparently, there are many in the church who think they have this gift. No, God’s word says submit to their leadership, let them mentor you in such a way that their work is a joy, not a burden, but a joy.

Application

So, what does all this mean for you this morning? Two points of application: 1. Find a mentor. 2. Be a mentor. Find a mentor. As long as you are a follower of Jesus, you will never stop being a disciple. You continue to learn. You continue to grow. You are never too old or too mature that you don’t need someone to mentor you. Find a lesson to learn. Find an example to follow. Find a skill to grow. Find someone who can pour into you, someone who can increase your fullness.

Secondly, be a mentor. Find someone that you can pass the baton to, someone you can pour your life into. Find someone to mentor.. There is always someone not as far along in the journey as you. There is someone who can benefit from your experience and wisdom, even if its limited. You can be a mentor even as a young person. Someone in highschool can mentor someone in middle school. A mom of teenagers, can mentor a brand new mom. A middle aged couple can take a younger couple under their wing. Seniors can adopt some grandkids whose own grandparents live far away. The possibilities are endless.

Maybe you already have someone you share a favorite hobby with or you watch your favorite team together. Think of how can infuse those relationships with a deeper meaning. As you fish, as you cook, as cheer for the game, how can you layer in sharing life and faith?

Make sure streams of living water are always flowing into your life, and make sure those same life-giving streams are flowing out. Back in the 90s when Promise Keepers was this huge deal in men’s ministry, one of the most important lessons I learned was that every person needs a Barnabas, someone who can pour their life into them. Every person needs a Silas– someone they can partner with. Every person needs a Timothy– someone they can pour their life into.