

LIFEGROUP LESSON



"Family Life 2013"
(Part 2 of 4)

Leaving a Lasting Legacy 2 Timothy 1:3-7



TIPS FOR DISCUSSION FACILITATOR

Ensure that the aim is first to understand the text and then to make it meaningful and relevant. The discussion questions provided are intended to bring out the relevance for today.

Begin with a prayer for the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Encourage everyone to participate in the discussion.

Begin the discussion by reading the sermon passage (where applicable), and discuss about its overall meaning by asking what could be the key focuses/emphases in that particular passage.

Spend appropriate amount of time on each question with as many members as possible making a contribution. At the end of each discussion the leader should summarise the main points that have arisen and direct the group towards making them applicable in their individual lives.

A balance must be kept between ascertaining what the Bible teaches and what are the opinions of participants. So the facilitator should make sure that there is an understanding of the passage before questions are raised.

MESSAGE OUTLINE

1. Remember Them in My Prayers (v3-4)
2. Recognize the Impact of My Example (v5)
3. Remind Them of God's Call in Their Lives (v6-7)

Understanding the Background of the Passage

Among all creation, mankind is the only one that is aware of the future by nature. At times, we may take this to extremes by becoming *future-obsessed*, such that we work and strive for the sake of a better future without at the same time living our lives in the present. We may become so fixated with our imagination of what our future *might* become, instead of enjoying the journey while we are getting there. Being conscious of the future is not wrong, and neither is desiring to leave behind a legacy. In fact, this is how our Creator has made us (Ecclesiastes 3:15), so that we may be able to live moral lives and so that we may be able to live in hope despite present circumstances.

As a church, we must remember that the work of the harvest *starts*, and not *ends*, with what we are currently doing. The work of the harvest only truly ends when Christ returns. While working for the harvest, we must simultaneously cast our glance into the future, so that the harvest will indeed mature to become a legacy of our church and of our lives. Either our physical legacy through our children or our spiritual legacy through our disciples, the truth is we need to be intentional in what we do with them so that they may mature to take over from us and to lead the work of the harvest to greater heights.

Other than Philemon, the letter of 2 Timothy is the most personal of Paul's letters collected within the Bible. This letter was written while Paul was in a Roman prison for the second time (ca. AD 66-67). The only difference is that this time, he was quite certain the work of his ministry is completed and it is time for him to depart to Christ. He also recognized that it is time for him to pass the mandate of the ministry to people after him. This letter is thus written to encourage Timothy that despite what might happen to Paul, he is to continue the work of the ministry and to discharge his calling faithfully.

Discussion for Point 1: Remember Them in My Prayers (v3-4)

- What are some of the things we can commit to pray for our children (or spiritual disciples) about? Why do you think it is important that we pray regularly for them? The preacher mentioned that when we pray for our children (or our disciples), it "reminds us that they belong to God and that God is sovereignly in control over their lives." Do you agree with this assertion? Give reasons for your answer. How would remembering these affect the way you parent (or disciple) them and the way you relate to them? What do you think it means to love our children (or disciples) in the way Christ loves us? How would this change the way we "love" them? What are some practical things we can do to build our home and our church to be one of love and encouragement so that we can call out the best in our physical and spiritual descendants? Spend some time in the LG to pray together for the physically and spiritually young people in your community.

Discussion for Point 2: Recognize the Impact of My Example (v5)

- The preacher mentioned that "true spiritual transference is not just transference of spiritual knowledge, but the transference of faith to our children and disciples." Do you agree with this statement? Give reasons to illustrate your answer. Why is it important that our transference of faith includes **both** instructions of spiritual knowledge, as well as impartations through our life examples? What can happen if your spiritual transference to your children (or disciples) only has either one but without the other? Read 1 Timothy 4:16. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being very good examples), how would you evaluate your life examples before your children (or disciples)? Give reasons for your evaluation. In what way do you think you can improve to be a godlier example to your children (or your disciples)? How can the LG work together to be a community that sets godly examples for the physically or spiritually young people in your community?

Discussion for Point 3: Remind Them of God's Call in Their Lives (v6-7)

- What are some desires you have for your children's (or disciples') future, i.e. what do you hope they will become in the future? Why do you desire these for them? On the other hand, what do you think is God's call for them in their lives? Do you agree that God knows our children (or disciples) better than us? Hence what should you do if God's call for their lives differs from what you desire for their future? Explain your answer. Why is it important that we should be preparing our children (or disciples) towards *God's call* in their lives, and not just seeking God's help to prepare them towards *our desires* for their lives? What are some practical things we can do to start preparing them towards God's call in their lives? As a LG community, pray for one another that we will have the wisdom to prepare our children (or disciples) well and that we will be able to release them into God's calling for their lives at the proper time.

*'The glory of this present house
will be greater than the glory of the former house,'
says the Lord Almighty.*

~ **Haggai 2:9a** ~

Appendix A (Reflection for Parents on Our Legacy)

A Father's Legacy

What can you leave to your children that will last?

By NavPress,

(Adapted from Discipleship Journal: <http://www.navpress.com/magazines/archives/article.aspx?id=13486>)

We'd been robbed! Returning home from a three-week vacation, we found cupboards opened, appliances moved, the basement door ajar. The usual sense of welcome and rest in our house was swept away by the uneasy, sinking feeling of loss as we cataloged the missing belongings.

A call to the insurance agent revealed our coverage would replace the clock radio, telephone, and jewelry boxes the burglars carried away in a pillowcase. Unfortunately, no kind of coverage could replace the personal items that were gone. My high school and college rings—I hadn't worn them for more than a decade, but had saved them faithfully for my children, Ben and Betsy. A collection of bicentennial silver dollars, halves, and quarters. A medicine bottle filled with Ben's baby teeth, every one except the one he swallowed—we'd systematically collected them to present as a gift when his own children began teething.

As I reflected on those priceless losses, my thoughts turned to my children's remaining time at home. In eight years Ben will pack his things for college; a year later Betsy will follow. Soon after that they may marry or move to another part of the country. I asked myself, *What legacy do I really want to leave my children?*

More than rings or coins or baby teeth, my honest desire is to leave them a greater part of myself. I want their legacy to include some examples, characteristics, and experiences that will last them a lifetime. I want them to have:

A DAD OF PRAYER

I remember as a child seeing my mother sitting on the edge of her bed, reading her Bible. Similarly etched on my mind is the image of my father kneeling beside his bed in prayer before retiring each evening. Prayer has been a rich part of my heritage.

As Ben and Betsy get older, they will also benefit from a dad whose prayer life is visible. I'm not advocating a pharisaical practice to impress some spectator, but I am becoming more intent upon providing opportunities for my children to see me, other adults, and even older teens in prayer. Our family gives thanks together before meals, and we pray faithfully each night before the children retire. But recently I also drew them close at appropriate moments to pray for Auntie Bonnie in the hospital, Mom at her meeting, and a crisis on the news.

A DAD OF PURPOSE

Last week I changed brake pads, fixed a toilet, sealed the driveway, and hung wallpaper. There's nothing wrong with getting the most out of each day. In fact, the Bible tells us that there is a time for everything under the sun. Housework is important, recreation is beneficial, but in the midst of all my worthwhile activities, I must remember the words: "Beware of the barrenness of a busy life."

My children need the legacy of a dad whose life is directed by a clear purpose. They must see more than just an effective executive managing daily demands. While a treat at the Dairy Queen is a good investment, they also need to see my check written for hunger relief overseas. While playing catch in the backyard is enjoyable, they must also sense the joy I feel when praising God in a spontaneous song.

I want Ben and Betsy to recognize the overarching purpose in my life, the primary goal that gives meaning to daily particulars. Whether we're playing trumpets, painting a widow's house, or helping at the church work day, I hope they discover my main purpose in life is to honor God through praise and service.

A DAD OF PATIENCE

We have all heard the terms introvert and extrovert. I have another way of categorizing people: the dictators and the wimps. I tend to err toward the dictator extreme.

Every one of my tools has a proper place on the workbench, and I'm ready to court-martial any kid who misplaces them. I expect impeccable manners, courteous speech, clean bedrooms, and acts of kindness showered between my nine-year-old and eleven-year-old. In other words, I expect perfect kids.

But that's obviously unrealistic. No child will ever be perfect. A parent cannot ignore problems, nor should we avoid corrective discipline. However, we can guard our reactions. My children need to experience peace with God, peace with each other, peace with their friends, and peace with me. There have been times when I've been upset with the kids because they've "disturbed the peace." Yet honest reflection leads me to admit that too frequently my reaction was more disturbing than their initial infraction.

Recently, Ben and Betsy were an hour-and-a-half late returning home from school. Barb and I were worried and drove around the neighborhood looking for them. We eventually found them playing in the schoolyard. My normal reaction would have included reading them the riot act, with a voice elevated in pitch and decibels. But on this occasion I quietly asked them to go home and then discussed with them the consequences of disobedience.

For Betsy it meant missing her basketball game that evening, for she still had homework, piano lessons, and errands to run. For Ben it meant we would not work on his model airplane, for he too had responsibilities. Surprisingly, their attitude during the two-day grounding that followed was peaceful. I believe they reflected the patience I had shown.

The legacy I desire for my children includes a father who accepts them, empathizes, and responds with patience.

A DAD OF PLAY

All too soon our children will begin to drive, date, attend college, and eventually set up their own homes. For now, as children, they enjoy a stage of life that can never be recaptured. While each of our kids has school and household responsibilities, we went to guard for them in their childhood years the freedom for creative play.

Ben may not get his baby teeth in a bottle, but he will remember launching his rockets and playing Frisbee in the cul-de-sac. Betsy won't receive our rings, but she may recall the bike rides around Lake Johanna, the games of "Pig" on the driveway basketball court, and the times in the front yard when she'd say: "Dad, warm me up for soccer." I want to leave my children the memories of a dad who was fun.

A DAD OF PRAISE

I'm amazed at how often people complain. I'm amazed at how often Christians complain. I'm amazed at how often I complain! I cannot think of a greater insult to God than to gripe with the mouth He has created for praise. The punishment of Israel's wilderness wanderings reminds us of God's hatred of complaining.

As a parent, I frequently complain about things in my children's lives. My motivation is sincere. I want them to grow up with good attitudes and habits. I am embarrassed, however, by how often I use negative, corrective speech, compared to the amount of praise I give them.

Some days it's hard to find something worth commending. Nevertheless, if I want my children to praise rather than complain, they need a dad who leaves them a legacy of praise. Ben and Betsy will live up to my view of them. Therefore I must notice and commend their actions that are wholesome, good, and praiseworthy.

Since our burglary, I've set to work to build a legacy for my children that can never be taken away. The purpose isn't to raise perfect kids; for I want to focus on what I give them, not on how they respond. More than being a role model, I want to leave them with a legacy of love.

There are still times when I falter that legacy. But I have determined by God's enabling to leave my children more than jewelry or coins. My prayer is to leave them the legacy of a godly father, one who, above all else, reflects their Father above.

Appendix B (Reflection on Spiritual Legacy)

What My Discipled Did Right

How an older believer helped my faith blossom

By Cathy Miller,

(Adapted from Discipleship Journal: <http://www.navpress.com/magazines/archives/article.aspx?id=11287>)

The month I met Jesus I also finished graduate school, discovered I was pregnant with our first child, and moved with my husband to South America, where he was starting a new job. I was thrilled to be a Christian. But because of the crush of changes in my life, I didn't know that discipling was an option for new believers. I was too busy dealing with moving and morning sickness to do anything else.

When we arrived overseas, my longing for the familiar touches of American life drew me to a church in our neighborhood that held worship services in English.

The expatriate community I met there was warm and welcoming, and it helped me adjust to life on foreign soil. Still, the idea of a discipling relationship never came up. The church focused on winning people to Christ, helping newcomers cope with culture shock, and serving others. While all of these things were important, my need was a bit more immediate: some good Christian friends to help me grow spiritually as I began to walk with Christ.

Three years and three countries later, a mature Christian woman approached me after a Bible study meeting. I had just expressed my opinion that Queen Esther was a manipulative woman, not to be admired at all. Looks of shock and disapproval flashed around the room. The women in the group avoided me as we filed out the door. All except Lorene. She walked beside me and gently touched my arm. "Would you like to come to my house sometime to talk?" she asked.

When we got together, I discovered that Lorene and her husband had moved to Latin America as missionaries after their children had grown and married. In the months that followed our first meeting, Lorene taught me the basics of the Christian faith. I don't think she used a specific *method* of discipleship. Rather, it was simply Lorene *being herself* that impacted me as she led me into a closer walk with Jesus. I was drawn to her unpretentious personal style and a life steeped in faith—a far cry from our self-conscious corporate lifestyle.

Not only did I grow in knowledge during our time together, but I found in Lorene's life a pattern to follow. Looking back, I can see that she exemplified several key traits that made her an effective discipler.

Availability

Lorene generously opened her schedule and home to me. Each time we met, I came away with books to read and Bible passages to ponder. It was then up to me to digest it all and call Lorene to set up a time to talk. We spent an afternoon together every week or two, relaxing on rattan chairs in her little upstairs apartment, frosty glasses of lemonade in hand.

"Jesus is always available for you," she taught me. "He's a gentleman. Spend time sitting with Him just like this, getting to know Him." The ceiling fan swirled overhead while we talked and prayed. I never felt like I was Lorene's discipleship project or a task to be completed. Her hospitality and willingness to meet made me feel valued and showed me that Jesus valued me, too.

Flexibility

Like Jesus graciously feeding 5,000 unexpected lunch guests, Lorene always offered me a spiritual banquet. I don't ever remember a prepared lesson or an agenda for the day. Instead, our discussions were based on my questions, which were endless and pressing. I wanted to know about everything, and God blessed me with a friend who shared openly and freely. Lorene was remarkably "ready in season and out of season [to] convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Tim. 4:2, NKJV). Her ability to teach in an unstructured way was especially helpful because we lived in a country where Bible study materials in English were difficult to get.

An Unflappable Spirit

On an intensity scale of 1 to 10, I was a 9 and Lorene was a 2. I zeroed in on every sticky theological question that came to mind. "Can you lose your salvation?" "What about the rapture?" "Why does God allow pain and suffering?" Lorene had dealt with these questions before, but she didn't respond with pat answers or memorized phrases. She let me wrestle with God's Word. Lorene encouraged me to search and struggle and come to terms with the questions of my heart. I could argue and probe and ask for 10 more verses to answer questions about each topic, but Lorene was never defensive or argumentative in return. She was steady, unhurried, unthreatened, and even seemed to enjoy watching God at work in me.

Careful Attention to God's Word

Every discussion we had was sprinkled with Lorene's favorite phrase, "The Bible teaches . . . ," followed by a truth or principle that would settle the point. She'd only let me go so far in my questioning; then she'd draw me back to the Word of God and have me underline and date a pertinent passage in my Bible. More than being mere words on a page, the Scriptures revealed a living God who was personally involved in my life.

I remember the day we looked at Col. 1:27: "God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Lorene challenged me, "Meditate on this verse. It's the key to the Christian life." I stuck little pieces of paper with "Christ in you, the hope of glory" on my bathroom mirror, the refrigerator, and the dashboard of my car. For weeks, our discussions centered around the mystery of grace and the indwelling Christ. I discovered life-changing truths in that passage as Lorene spurred me to think deeply about it. But she was always careful to give the Holy Spirit room to guide and teach me.

Creative Communication

Lorene filled our time together with creative illustrations and object lessons. Once I told her that my biggest fear was that God would make me move to some remote jungle as a missionary. She paused for a long time and then asked me to step over to her living-room window, which looked out on the Caribbean landscape.

"What do you see?"

"Nothing," I mused. "Just jungle."

"Now tell me how you've been spending your time here on the island." I could see that this was going somewhere, so I ran through my list of Christian activities. Teaching Sunday school. Hosting a women's Bible study. Providing housing for stranded Americans. Taking gifts to the leper colony.

"You *are* a missionary in the jungle," Lorene said, watching me. "So tell me, now that your worst fears have been realized, what else is keeping you from giving God complete control of your life?"

Lorene often used these kinds of concrete examples to help me understand and experience God in new ways. Another day, she placed a glass on the dining-room table and said, "When you first believed the good news of Jesus Christ and invited Him into your life, He came into your heart." She dropped a tea bag into the empty glass. Then she slipped away for a moment and came back with a steaming teakettle. The boiling water splashed into the glass and turned a golden color as the tea permeated it. "Being filled with the Holy Spirit releases the power of Christ in your life, making you more like Jesus." These were simple visual illustrations, but I still use them today as I teach others.

Encouragement

One time, I had an opportunity to take a turn teaching the women's Bible study Lorene and I attended. This was a first for me, and I prepared carefully, writing out everything I wanted to say. As I arrived at the study, I realized I had forgotten my notes! There wasn't time to drive back to my house to get them. So I took a deep breath, opened my Bible, and plunged into teaching. After the study, Lorene called and said, "God used you today to bless the women in our group." It was an encouragement I'll never forget.

Prayer

When Lorene and I met together, we always started and ended our sessions with prayer and frequently stopped during discussions to pray. "Pour out your heart to God," she urged me. "Learn to be real in prayer. God understands your emotions, your life. Come boldly, and be yourself. He can handle it, and you'll learn to trust Him along the way."

We prayed many different kinds of prayers: praising God without asking for anything; praying through lists of people who needed God's touch; asking for specific needs with deadlines; reading prayers from the Bible; even singing our prayers to God, making up the tunes and the words along the way. Prayer ushered me into God's presence, where I found that He Himself was the answer to my requests.

The Touch of Grace

What did my discipler do right? She noticed, cared, reached out, and pointed me toward the love of Christ as it is revealed in His Word and through His grace. Now, years later, I have opportunities of my own to pass on Lorene's legacy by quietly saying to someone else, "Would you like to come over to my house sometime to talk?"