

# “Living Bread”

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## 2 Timothy 1:1-14 New Revised Standard Version

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, for the sake of the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus, To Timothy, my beloved child:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

I am grateful to God—whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did—when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you. For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands, for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.

Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, in the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace, and this grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. For this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher, and for this reason I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard the deposit I have entrusted to him. Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.

Do you remember how everyone was getting into bread making during the pandemic? I even made a few loaves. I remember how hard it was to find yeast on the shelves in the grocery store. And partly for that reason people started getting into sour dough breads.

For thousands of years people had a sourdough starter that was used to make the bread rise. Starters are a culture of yeast and bacteria that converts starch into sugars. During this process, the yeast also produces carbon dioxide, which in turn helps the bread rise. These starters are living things. If you want to keep making bread you have to keep the starter alive — and that means you have to feed it. You can keep a starter alive for a very long time, maybe even perpetually, as long as you tend it.

There is a sourdough starter in Canada that is known to be over 120 years old, and it might be much older. Lone Christensen who is the owner (maybe keeper is a better word) says it's like the family pet.



Every so often she has to feed it flour and water, and in return every week she takes a little of it to make waffles and bread. Christensen who is 85 knows that her great-grandfather brought it north to Whitehorse in 1897. Prospectors and people who were coming north for the gold rush always had a sourdough. (They were often nicknamed “Sourdoughs”!) Not only did they have to feed it, but they had to keep it warm— so they would sleep with the sourdough at night. If it froze and they lost the starter, their bread would look and feel more like a hockey puck than bread. Part of Christensen’s sourdough has been placed in a “library” of sourdough starters from around the world in Belgium. Almost certainly the sourdough will outlive lone ... I wonder who will become its new keeper?

To encourage the early church and keep the faith alive, the apostle Paul wrote letters to the churches, the Corinthian church or the church in Ephesus (Ephesians). He also wrote pastoral letters to individual church leaders. First and Second Timothy are among the pastoral letters. At this point, Paul is nearing the end of his life and ministry.

The early church has grown and expanded, but it’s still young and it’s definitely still fragile. The church of Jesus and the faith that the people in the church have is alive — it has been passed down through the generations. Timothy is a third generation Christian. Paul taught Timothy’s grandmother, Lois about Jesus and then her daughter Eunice too. Timothy in turn receives the faith and is entrusted to keep it and to share it with others.

Paul knows his time on earth is coming to an end, and he is anxious to ensure that the faith would not die with him. He is anxious to know that others will carry on this living faith, for without nurturing, the faith might die. This was a fragile time for the early church. Persecutions were increasing, and there were no guarantees it would outlast Paul’s generation.

The church for us today is in a fragile state. Not this church exactly, but the church of Jesus in world, and more specifically in North America and Europe. The church in Africa, and parts of Asia and South America is very much alive, but in Canada there is a solid chance that the church won’t survive long into the next generation.

How can we keep it alive? It starts with you as an individual recognizing that you have something alive in you, and you can’t just take for granted that it will always be there. Having faith is less like going to the gas station to fill up on gas and more like building a small fire with twigs and paper and

blowing on it and then adding dry wood to it and then constantly tending it. You have to feed it. How do you feed it? Feeding your faith is simple but not sexy. Feeding it looks like coming to church, or joining us for church online. It looks like reading the Bible, maybe using a daily devotional — we have some on the back rack. It is spending time in prayer and meditation. It is time serving the church and serving others. I invite you think of one Spiritual practice that you think you would like to pick up. Just one. Commit for this month, this October to exercising that practise. Whatever it is, take the choice out of it. It shouldn't just happen when you "feel like doing it" or when you have some "extra time" to do it. I want you decide you will make it a commitment for this month.

I remember when my husband and I took the kids and moved to Calgary, somewhere around 2005. For the first year I intentionally didn't take a church job. Anna and Stanley were young and Petra came along during that time too. So the kids were little, we were new to town, and didn't have a church. And it's not always easy to get kids up and ready for church, so our church attendance became patchy. Every Sunday morning was a bit of a fight! When we did go, we usually arrived at church late and were grumpy from all the effort. It was Alex who had the idea that *we should just take the choice out of it*. That instead of waking up Sunday morning and asking "Do we feel like church? Do we have the energy for church?" No! Instead, rain or shine, sleep or no sleep, *we were going to church!* And you know what? It became so much easier on the whole family. It was weird how much of a blessing Sunday morning became!

My guess you have something in your life that maybe is a bit like that. People in Recovery get that if you are going get the healing from the program you have to commit to showing up – and keep coming back. What one spiritual practice do you need to commit to this month? Make it specific, what and when, and stick to it.

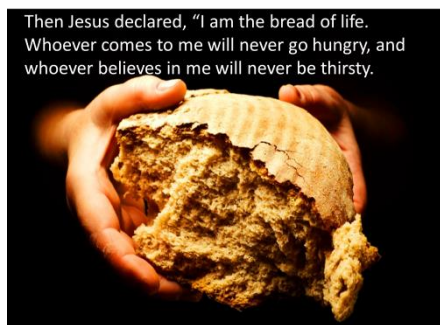
*For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you. Friends, this gift is inside us. Our task is to rekindle it. To feed it. For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and love and of self-discipline. (2 Tim 1:7) ... Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us. (2 Tim 1:13-14)*

*Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit*

*living in us.* That's the key. There is this incredible and beyond understanding alchemy of our tending and keeping the faith, alongside the power of the Holy Spirit in us and in the church. Paul and Timothy were pretty impressive followers of Jesus, but they weren't supermen. They had limitations. The time and the place they lived in often worked against their faith. Christians were a weird minority who were increasingly being persecuted for their faith. And yet here we are 2022, reading and being encouraged by that letter that was written 2000 years ago. Here we are — keepers of that same faith. It is amazing to me that this thing we call faith has been passed down for generation after generation and that you and I are part of the keepers of that faith.

There have been times and places where the Christian faith has struggled to stay living, but in each case, there have been keepers who have quietly tended that fire, quietly fed that starter, quietly prayed for the next generation, quietly read the wisdom from the Scriptures and stood up for justice and peace in our time. That is all we can do. That is all we are called to do.

The amazing thing is that *it is not just a duty.* When you give your life to keeping the faith, it becomes a labour of love. Every Saturday night, Ione prepares the dough to make waffles the next day. From that dough she will feed the starter. And in return she makes the most amazing waffles that feed her and her family and friends. It's pretty cool actually, because if you tend it and feed it and keep it alive, it will in turn feed you and keep you alive. And not just you, but others too.



Jesus said: *“For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. They said to him, ‘Sir, give us this bread always.’ Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”* (John 6:33-35)

Friends, we are in a weary world, and it seems an increasingly angry world. But we have this gift, this treasure, this life that will carry you through whatever is so very hard in your life right now. A gift that will feed you in a way that nothing on earth can. Come, taste and see that the Lord is good.

Thanks be to God. Amen.