

Timothy's Story

A sketch of Timothy's life, taken from insights from the Bible

I'd like to tell you about a man called Timothy. He's living and working in Turkey and he's about 35 years old¹. I'm going to tell you the story of his life and as I do, think about which parts of his life were similar to your own. If you want to respond as we go through the story you could shake your head if Timothy's life is very different to yours and nod your head where his life is similar to yours.

So, Timothy grew up in Turkey living in a town that got very hot in the summer and pretty cold in the winter.² It didn't snow very often though. His Dad was Greek and his Mum was a Jewish Christian.³ His Mum and Grandma had talked to him about God as he was a child and they'd read the Bible to him and they'd prayed with him.⁴

Then one day when he was a teenager some missionaries came to visit his town, a bit like we have some missionaries from YWAM here today. They've come to England and to Bristol from America to help people here discover Jesus. Timothy had a group of people a bit like a YWAM team visit his town. So he'd grown up seeing his Mum and his Grandma follow God and pray and he also believed that God was real. He was quite shy though about his faith and didn't talk about it much outside his home⁵. Most of the people around him weren't Christians. When he was with his Dad's family they spent lots of time arguing about ideas and philosophy. They were very superstitious and a bit rude about Christians.⁶ But when these missionaries came to his town, they came with real confidence and energy. One of the team was really clever and he loved arguing with all the Greek philosophers in town. He always won the arguments too and the philosophers got cross with him for that and wanted him to leave.

Timothy was inspired by this team of visiting missionaries. They talked about Jesus and the world in a way that made sense and added to what he knew already through his own experience of God and what he'd heard from his mum and grandma. Timothy went and listened to these missionaries speak whenever he could, keen to absorb all they were saying and keen to know Jesus like they did.

When they were leaving Timothy's town to go and visit others, Paul, one of the team (the clever one) asked Timothy if he'd come along with him.⁷ Timothy was delighted to go and had an amazing time across Turkey and Greece⁸ seeing miracles as people were prayed for and healed. He saw evil spirits being cast out of people⁹ and helped setup new churches where people decided to become Christians

¹ The letter of 1 Timothy was written around 64AD. Paul had met Timothy when he went to Lystra on a missionary trip around 50AD. Timothy was probably a teen or in his 20s then when he responded to Paul's gospel message.

² Lystra, which was in south east Turkey – Acts 16.1

³ Acts 16.1

⁴ 2 Timothy 1.5

⁵ It appears that Timothy might have been timid and nervous because Paul often encourages him to be bold and not afraid – e.g. 1 Corinthians 16.10, 1 Timothy 6.12, 1 Timothy 1.18.

⁶ This is made up rather than from the Bible. We presume that Timothy's father wasn't a Christian though (because it explicitly says his mother and grandmother were). As he was Greek he was most likely to have followed the Greek religions and philosophies (though perhaps not as passionately as the Greek philosophers in the big city Athens in Acts 17.16-34).

⁷ Acts 16.3

⁸ Acts 18.5

⁹ Acts 16.18

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in response to their message.¹⁰ Timothy had an amazing time himself as he travelled with this team. They prayed for and encouraged each other. There was one particular day when the team prayed for Timothy and God spoke through them some powerful words of Original Design for Timothy.¹¹ That prayer time had a big impact on him and he often looked back to remember what God said to him then.

After a lot of travelling Timothy settled for a while in a town on the west coast of Turkey, a long way from home. He was staying there to help the new church get established. He was conscious that he was young. Many people in the community were older than him and more experienced in life and he found some of these relationships difficult to navigate.¹² He would tend to be more of an ostrich than a rhino – preferring to avoid a difficult conversation if he could.¹³ He found over time that this often didn't work out well and it was better to, with gentleness and respect, have the difficult conversation as soon as he could.

Life when Timothy had been travelling with the mission team had been really exciting. They'd been constantly moving from town to town. They were often welcomed and saw some wonderful miracles. Sometimes people got angry with them and they had to leave fast. Even when that happened there was quite a buzz from being part of a team. Now that he was settled in a town and just working in that one place there wasn't as much adventure and there were a lot of details that needed to be sorted out. The rest of the mission team were travelling still and it could be quite lonely working through these challenges every day.¹⁴ At the same time it was exciting to see the life and growth within the church as people were discovering Jesus and growing in their faith.

During this time Timothy was so encouraged when he got letters from Paul.¹⁵ Letters were rare in those days. They were expensive to write and there was no postal service to deliver them. Someone had to carry them by hand and they could take weeks or months to be delivered. Paul had become like a father to Timothy¹⁶ and his words carried a lot of weight. Paul had lots of experience in the work that Timothy was doing now so he gave good advice which Timothy respected and found really helpful. Timothy also felt the love and kindness that Paul showed towards him. Timothy had struggled for a long time with stomach problems and frequent illness.¹⁷ Paul gave him advice for how to help that. He also encouraged Timothy to remember those words of Original Design¹⁸ that had been spoken over him during that powerful prophetic time when he was first travelling with Paul and the missionary team. Paul knew and understood who Timothy was and how God had made him. He reminded Timothy of this, calling him to be bold and courageous and wholehearted¹⁹ in the work God had given him. Even though Timothy knew he was young and often ill he also knew that God had called him and had a plan and purpose for him. It made such a difference to Timothy that someone else understood that too.

¹⁰ Acts 16.40 – Timothy isn't mentioned in this passage but began travelling with Paul at the start of the last chapter and is mentioned as one of the group in Acts 17.14 so was presumably with the group here too. Paul and Silas were doing most of the up-front talking so they were the ones mentioned most in the passage.

¹¹ 1 Timothy 1.18

¹² 1 Timothy 4.12

¹³ 1 Timothy 5.1-2

¹⁴ This idea of Timothy being lonely isn't in the Bible and may be a bad guess.

¹⁵ 1 Timothy was probably written at least 8 years after Paul had been with Timothy in Ephesus. 2 Timothy was written later whilst Paul was in prison.

¹⁶ 1 Timothy 1.1

¹⁷ 1 Timothy 5.23

¹⁸ 1 Timothy 1.18, 1 Timothy 4.14

¹⁹ 1 Timothy 4.15

Questions

Do you relate to any of these parts of Timothy's faith journey?

- **Discovering God through others.**

Timothy heard about Jesus through his mum and grandmother.

- **Having a powerful time of God speaking to you.**

Timothy had some significant prophecy spoken over him. God speaks to us through others and also to us directly. What are the words God has said over you about who you are? Ask for an Original Design Prayer session if you haven't had one before.

- **Taking a step of faith in how you live your life.**

Timothy left his home town and went travelling on mission with Paul and the team.

- **Experiencing ongoing challenge such as illness.**

Timothy had stomach problems and frequent illness.

- **Living in your Original Design in the work God has prepared for you.**

If you're not sure about your work, 'Garden City' by John Mark Comer is a great book to read. There's a copy on the Hope Bookshelf.

Are you part of anyone else's faith journey?

- **Helping others discover God.**

Like Timothy's mum and grandmother helping Timothy discover God.

- **Speaking God's words into someone's life.**

Just as people spoke prophecy over Timothy.

- **Inviting others to join you in your steps of faith.**

Just as Paul invited Timothy to join him on his missionary journey.

- **Supporting and encouraging someone in long term illness or challenge.**

Just as Paul encouraged Timothy with his stomach problems and frequent illness.

- **Reminding others of their Original Design and the work God has called them to.**

Just as Paul knew Timothy's Original Design and reminded him of it.

Is there an action for you to take away from here? Is it something to do or something to pray about?