



## **Bible Study—Episode 2: “Nurture” with Bradley English**

*This accompaniment Bible study was created to be used after listening to each podcast episode. Each episode has a Bible story and questions that can be used with any age group.*

### **Bible Text: 1 Timothy 4:12–16 (NRSV)**

Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

Until I arrive, give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhorting, to teaching.

Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders.

Put these things into practice, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress.

Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; continue in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers.

### **Framing the Story for the Group**

In this letter, the apostle Paul writes to Timothy, a young leader in the early church. Timothy likely felt the pressure of being young in a community that may not have immediately trusted his leadership. Paul does two important things:

He affirms Timothy’s youth as no barrier to leadership.

He reminds him not to neglect the gift already within him.

This is not a story about “someday.” It is a story about right now. Timothy is not told to wait until he is older. He is called to lead, teach, grow, and practice his gifts in the present.

As we listen to this story, we’re invited to think about how the church recognizes, nurtures, and celebrates the gifts of young people—not as future potential only, but as present-day leadership.

## **Why This Story Matters for Listening to Youth**

Too often the church talks about young people as “the future of the church.” While that’s true, it can unintentionally silence their present voice.

This passage reminds us:

- Young people already have spiritual gifts.
- Gifts can be neglected—or nurtured.
- Community affirmation matters (notice the laying on of hands).
- Growth is visible when people are given room to practice.

Listening to youth means trusting that the Spirit is speaking through them now—not just preparing them for later.

## **Discussion Questions**

### **Noticing the Story**

1. What words or phrases stand out to you in this passage?
2. What does Paul assume about Timothy’s abilities?
3. What does this passage say about spiritual gifts?
4. What role does the community play in Timothy’s growth?
5. What do you notice about the balance between encouragement and responsibility?

### **Youth-Focused Reflection**

1. Have you ever felt like someone dismissed you because of your age? What was that like?
2. What gifts do you think God has placed in you right now?
3. Where do you feel encouraged in church? Where do you feel overlooked?
4. What would it look like for adults in the church to “not despise your youth”?
5. What kind of support helps you grow in your gifts?

6. Optional Activity: invite youth to name one gift they see in another young person in the room.

## Adult-Focused Reflection

1. In what ways might we unintentionally “despise youth” (even subtly)?
2. Where do we protect young people instead of empowering them?
3. How can we create space for youth to practice leadership publicly?
4. What would it mean to treat youth as partners in ministry instead of projects?
5. How can we be better at naming and affirming gifts we see?
6. Optional activity: Write notes to the young people active in your congregation naming the gifts you see in them.

## Shared Reflection

1. What would change in our congregation if we truly believed young people are leaders now?
2. What systems or traditions might need to shift?
3. How do we balance guidance with freedom?
4. Where is the Spirit already at work among our youth?
5. What is one concrete step we can take this month to nurture gifts in young people?
6. Optional Action Step: end by identifying one specific opportunity (preaching, teaching, planning worship, leading prayer, serving on council, podcast segment, etc.) where youth leadership can be expanded.

## Prayer

Gracious God,

You are the giver of every good gift. You call prophets who are young, leaders who are learning, and disciples who are still growing. Forgive us when we overlook the voices you are already raising up. Forgive us when fear keeps us from sharing leadership. Pour out your Spirit on our young people. Strengthen their courage.

Deepen their faith. Help them see the gifts you have placed within them.

And teach all of us—young and old—to listen well, to bless boldly, and to nurture what you are growing among us.

We pray this in the name of Jesus, who welcomed children and trusted disciples, Amen.