

Leadership in Biblical Perspective
“Identifying Three Essentials of an Effective Gospel Ministry”
II Timothy 3:10–17
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II Timothy is really the burden of the Apostle Paul’s heart to lay into the life of Timothy. Paul is a prolific writer of 13 New Testament epistles of which he authored by the Spirit of God. Nine of them he wrote to churches that are to be passed among churches and four of them he wrote to individuals but interestingly one of these four received two. It is not surprising when you realize the extraordinary blessed relationship that Paul enjoyed with Timothy. Paul called him ‘the man of God,’ ‘his son’ and ‘his child in the faith.’ You can tell they had an official relationship because we know Paul laid his hands on Timothy and through that was Paul’s acknowledgement of Timothy’s gift of ministry. We can also see that they had an intimate and personal relationship, one that was extraordinarily reciprocal in each other’s lives.

When Paul would send Timothy to places he would identify him to the church as his child and ‘a man of proven worth.’ What a significant accolade! So I’m always attracted to II Timothy because out of Paul’s epistles this is the last one he writes before he dies for Christ. It contains those ringing words of his testimony and his assurance. He says ‘I suffer these things...’ and he’s not talking about being mocked or marginalized but that he is going to be put to death as a spectacle. We don’t know how for sure Paul was put to death but we do know it was in Rome under Nero and that it was designed to both humiliate and deter this growth of Christianity. So there is this sense of urgency in this epistle.

II Timothy 1:8–9, 12 says [8] *Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, [9] who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began. [12]...which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.*

It is my guess that the Apostle Paul, not only wants Timothy to carry on the Gospel ministry with effectiveness, but he wants Timothy, who will likely face persecution as well for Paul says all who desire to live Godly for Christ Jesus will suffer persecution, to stay the course, even as Paul has said of himself – I’m poured out as a drink offering fighting the good fight, I have kept the faith, I have finished the race. I know that Paul wants this for Timothy so when I go to an epistle like II Timothy I dig in for the nuggets of what this mentor is saying to this minister of the Gospel. Paul knows he only has so much space, time and these words are precious so he is not going to waste words about incidentals or trivial things. So everything in this epistle is going to be important but as we dig you will begin to see some things that are repetitive and clearly crucial to the one who is writing for the love to the one he is writing to.

I feel this way also for those who are being ordained in our church. I love them dearly and have come to depend upon them as a man, a friend and as a minister and because of the way they do their ministry I’m able to do ministry that I would never be able to do. I want their tribe to increase. I want them to grow and to be more effective, even in the days of difficulty so they can stay the course and in the days of prosperity they can give praise to God. Throughout their days I want them to be known as effective, faithful and Godly ministers of the Gospel. I long to see that develop and grow in their life.

These men have come this point in a unique way to a certain degree. It's a unique way in our era of church history but the way they have come up until about 150 to 200 years ago, would have actually been the way of most ministers. Today someone may go to a Christian school, then off to a Christian college, then off to seminary, they graduate, get ordained and then show up at the church. Our standard line is that it took them four years to get through seminary but it will take them five years to get over it, because it's not the same.

I remember my first pastorate as I stepped into the ministry. I had five elders and three of them did not know the Lord. Conveniently all three of them were named John so I had first, second and third John but they just didn't know the Lord. I had not been prepared for that in seminary. What do you do, send them up for church discipline? Call in the Presbytery? In my first pastorate there were only 14 men in it to begin with. What do you do when a previous pastor calls you and says 'you should have prayed about coming to this church because I think this church has the mark of Satan on it'? I wasn't prepared for that in seminary either.

We used to have a little bit better approach to this, I think. I think these men have actually gone about the Biblical way, the right way and historically the way that we used to do it, until for various reasons that I won't go into, where we pour knowledge into them but they are isolated from ministry during all of that time. Then when they get out we really find out whether they are called to the ministry or not or can they just pass theological tests. This is not true of these men. They have gone what I think is the right route – apprenticeship and the academy united. I'm grateful for our own seminary – Briarwood Theological Seminary – that is set up to encourage that. I'm grateful that Westminster Seminary has started this apprenticeship and academy united just this past year. The apprenticeship is done under ministers and the academy at the same time. Some of these men have been at it for years.

As these men rise from this ordination in terms of what I have seen through the test of time, ministry, life in family, marriage and cares for the flock, I know where their heart is. I have heard them say 'I do' to the ordination vows but I have also seen them do it. I have also seen them grow in learning how to do it. I am grateful they have done it this way and that we as a church have been able to help them as they have been on this journey. I am also grateful for Benny Youngblood who has shepherded these six men very carefully, intentionally and have helped them through this process. And there is no way they would have ever done this without the love and support of their wives. I praise the Lord for each of you who are suitable for ministry helping and as you have come along side of them.

In the midst of this apprenticeship I have had the opportunity to have input in their life. We have a group of about 14 young men in the ministry that have been where some of these men have been and I meet with them once a month. We have a time of questions, answers, Bible study and reading other books as we discuss how this impacts ministry. In this study I wanted to give you a peek into this for there is quite a bit of Biblical wisdom in terms of how we ought to educate and prepare men for the ministry. I wanted to give something to these men that you could hear that hopefully would be a benefit to you by the way that Paul's heart was revealed for Timothy. So let's look at the text for this study in II Timothy 3.

II Timothy 3:10–13 says *[10] You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, [11] my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. [12] Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, [13] while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.*

Here is a word for all of us in that in our overall progress in the Gospel as a believer we have with a spiritual gift to serve the Lord. I'm going to assume you are committed to the exaltation of Christ and that you determined to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified. As a minister of the Gospel I'm going to assume that you will and want to pour your life out as a drink offering for the Lord. Paul uses this description of a drink offering in his ministry for the Lord and not a burnt offering. In a burnt offering there are ashes left but in a drink offering there is nothing left. That is the way Paul saw life and ministry.

Paul also likes to speak of ministry and the Christian life like running a race but it's not a sprint. It's a marathon. I had the privilege to watch my two daughters do that all the way up through college and a little bit beyond. I used to love to watch them run. I knew that one of the things that a distance runner had to learn was to start out well and you don't want to get caught in the back but you also want to start out so that every mile will be faster than the previous mile. When you finish you want your best mile to be your last mile, and not only is this your last mile but there is no way you would ever consider running another mile for everything has been poured out. It's all gone.

So I'm going to assume that that is the Christian life and ministry that you want – one that is devoted to Christ, care for His people, wants the Great Commission to flourish and wanting to embrace the Great Commandment of loving the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind and your neighbor as yourself. And that by God's grace that is beating within your heart.

The one thing from this that I believe is absolutely crucial is when Paul says to Timothy, *You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me...* It is very likely that Timothy's conversion had to do with how Paul had endured that persecution that he saw Paul go through even in his own hometown. Then he goes on to tell him that if he wants to live a Godly life he will suffer persecution. That is not a theoretical thing that Timothy can pack away in his mind. Timothy has seen Paul stoned, thrown over city walls, in prison, beaten, abused and isolated. How did Timothy deal with all that he saw Paul go through? Those things were endured.

So what do we need to realize here? Paul had been both a model and a mentor of Timothy. I don't believe he was the only mentor of Timothy but he was clearly a primary mentor to Timothy. Paul not only taught Timothy verbally but he taught him visually. Timothy learned by watching Paul and listening to Paul. Paul was simply repeating what Jesus did in the training of the 12. Jesus said 'The things that you have seen and heard in Me. All the things that Jesus began to do and teach (Acts 1:1). Set the example and then teach. Set the model and then mentor.

I just wrote a book about how you need models and mentors in your life titled 3D Leadership. So after we see how Paul says you watched me and then followed me, he then ends it this way in II Timothy 3:14–17 which says [14] *But as for you, **continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed**, knowing from whom you learned it [15] and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. [16] All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, [17] that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*

Timothy didn't just have a mentor but he was learner. He learned from the model. He learned from the mentor. I am grateful for the process men go through in our denomination to be

ordained and all that it represents. I'm grateful for how you with observation of models in ministry have learned and from listening you have been taught and have learned. You firmly believe it and have grasped it by the grace of God so that you now want to implement it in your life.

So my simple word to you is to keep on. Continue...in your learning knowing from whom you have learned them. Timothy also learned a lot from Eunice and Lois, his mother and grandmother. II Timothy 1:5-6 says [5] *I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.* [6] *For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.* I wish Timothy had had a father to learn from for it seems as if he did not, but I praise God he had a mother and grandmother to learn from and others that had surrounded him.

I want to give you three exhortations but before I do, in the kind providence of God when I was student pastor in Chattanooga, Tennessee, I was ushered into a meeting for I was told that the Reformed Evangelical Senate is having their General Assembly. I had asked them why I needed to come and they said that there was this man who the Lord was blessing in Birmingham, Alabama and his name is Frank Barker. They knew I was going to try to start small group Bible studies at my church and Frank was going to be doing a seminar of small group discipleship. I received a double blessing by going to this Assembly.

The first blessing I received was the learning about small group discipleship and I have read a lot books since then but haven't learned much more than what I learned at that those initial three seminars. It was extremely profitable for me. My second blessing was the opportunity to meet Dr. Barker. I have been grateful that over the years he has allowed me to buy his lunch and ask him any questions I would come up with. I have learned a great deal from him throughout the years. But you have no idea how much I and others have learned just by watching him.

It got to be a little bit of a joke for after that every time we went to the General Assembly someone would say to me "Harry, how do you think I should vote on these issues?" I said 'Watch me and when I stand then you stand but I'll go ahead and tell you that I'll be standing when Frank is standing so you can just cut out the middle man and watch Frank.' Then Frank and I would sit and talk about issues in January to prepare for the General Assembly in June.

There are also four other men who I am extremely grateful for and two of those men are now with the Lord which I miss greatly. I'm grateful for those ministers of the Lord who are models and to be able to watch them from a distance then come up close, ask them questions and to learn from them. That didn't end when I was ordained. In fact, it really intensified after I was ordained. So that is my challenge to you that this would continue in your life after you are ordained.

I want to encourage each of you to adopt these three exhortations for your Christian life. The first one is to be an intentional learner and this is essential. When you quit learning you will start losing ground. I'm going to use Dr. Barker here as an example. I can't tell you the number of times he asks me 'Harry, what are you reading that will help me?' We have known each other a long time and this is a question I get often from him. Gospel ministers are not those who know it all but they are those who want to know it all. Gospel ministers will intentionally find a way to know more and more and more. The day you think you don't need to learn is the day you need to retire because you are going to be useless in the ministry.

Great Christians and great Gospel ministers are intentional learners. I don't mean great in the sense of the world's celebrity status but I mean great in the sense of the Kingdom's metrics

of being faithful to the Lord, His Word, His people and the Gospel. They can't wait to hear God's Word preached, get into books that help them understand what they have heard preached and Paul says these people are Bereans. The Bereans are more noble minded than those at Thessalonica. Acts 17:10–11 says *[10] The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. [11] Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.* Learning is intentional and essential.

The second exhortation is that learning is not only an objective in life but it is a way of life. It is learning in Christ, for Christ and by Christ. Continue in learning as the very fabric of your life. For the last 28 years I have carried around a journal because I am always surprised at when God is going to say something through somebody or I will read something or hear something and I'm so glad to have a way to capture it. I wished I had started this 58 years ago. Have a way to capture what God is teaching you and showing you. Find a way to conserve what you are learning. As I get older I can't always rely on my memory and that is why I use a journal to write it down so I can go back to it.

The third exhortation is effective ministers of the Gospel and effective Christians secure worthy models and mentors for life and ministry that can teach them and set an example before them. The Christian life is warfare. There is a book I have in my library that is an exposition of Ephesians 6:10–21. It is 1400 pages in length and it took me a while to go through. It is written by William Gurnall titled The Christian in Complete Armor. The first time I read it I thought, 'This man is crazy for how can he preach that many sermons and write that much on just 11 verses?' When I read it I finally got it. Gurnall is giving us that information from those 11 verses, not to show us how to live a piece of the Christian life called spiritual warfare, but he is giving us an insight as to how to live life because all of life is spiritual warfare.

It's an interesting warfare because Jesus has already won the war but we still have battles. We still have unnecessary casualties. We still get ensnared. We still get caught in ambushes. This is why Gurnall spent so much time laying it out for us in that 1400 page book. I believe the Christian life is a war. I praise God that the war has been won but I ask God to give us the ability to fight the battles and we need men that will lead from the front. We need men who are learners with good models and good mentors because you will also be our models and mentors.

As I mention Douglas MacArthur many of you will know who that is. You will probably either think of Korean conflict or World War II. What many people don't know is, like Eisenhower, MacArthur fought in World War I as a combat commander, a colonel of a regiment. In those days it was trench warfare. There had been five assaults on this one trench which all failed and they came to MacArthur and said 'You and your brigade have to take this trench.' MacArthur called the two leaders that were serving with him. One was a major and the other was a lieutenant colonel. The major was just barely out of officer training school and had just come on the scene. He brought them together and said 'Men, this is how we're going to do it' and MacArthur laid out the plan.

He stood in front of these men and said "Men, we're going to take this trench and it's because you are going to lead us there. I want you to watch me for I will be in the middle but I'll be in the front so you just follow me.' He looked to the boy, the major, whose eyes were wide anticipating his first combat role in command. He had purposely wore his decorated uniform and MacArthur said 'Son, do you see the medal, it was won for courage and awarded by the French nation. When this thing is over I'll see to it that you get one of these. You just follow me.' The

biography doesn't say whether MacArthur did this on purpose or whether it just came to him but he got about ten steps away and turned around and went back and said 'Son, I know what kind of man you are and we're not going to wait for you to get this so here you take my medal of courage right now. Follow me. I'll see you at the top.'

We need not only leaders like that in the Army of the Lord but I praise God that we have a Captain who has won the victory, has come forth from the grave and He has not simply a medal for courage but He has for us a crown of righteousness that is laid up for all who follow Him and bring others to the throne of grace. That is what God has ordained and installed you to and I praise God for it. We also get to benefit from it and then we get to set the pace for others. We get to set the pace by continuing in our learning. Choose those models and mentors well.

Here's the key. Paul said to Timothy "Follow me as I follow Christ." Choose those models and mentors who will lead you for Christ, to Christ and in Christ. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for this wonderful insight from Paul. Would You overrule the inadequacy of the one who has given this message to lay it upon the hearts of not only these men being ordained but all others who have been ordained to Gospel ministry? Father, we haven't come into the ministry to be fulfilled but we have come to fulfill the ministry. Bless them as they fulfill their ministry continuing in what they have learned with Godly models and mentors and then giving themselves to others as a Godly model and mentor themselves. Help all of us to find those who are walking in and for Christ that we can learn from and give us hearts that hunger to know the Word of God, live the Word of God and minister the Word of God to a lost world. I pray this Father, in thanksgiving, in Jesus' Name, Amen.