

Devotions for the Week of August 25, 2019

LARGE-PRINT

You've Got Mail:

A Journey Through a Few of Paul's Letters

Leadership - A Letter to Timothy

North East United Methodist Church

By Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian

Sunday, August 25, 2019

Read I Timothy, chapter 1.

Timothy most likely became a Christian after Paul's visit to Lystra, during his first missionary journey. Which we read about in Acts 16:1-5. Timothy became pastor of the church in Ephesus and faced all sorts of pressures, conflicts, and challenges from the church and the surrounding culture. Paul writes Timothy about 64 AD before his second Roman imprisonment. It was during that second imprisonment by Emperor Nero, which led to Paul's death, that it is believed Paul wrote 2 Timothy. Paul's letters to Timothy are to counsel and encourage this young minister and friend.

In the beginning of his first letter to Timothy, Paul points out that "*some people have been distracted by talk that doesn't mean anything*" (1:6). There are false teachers in the church and the church is immersed in endless debate, irrelevant questions, and controversy that is taking its focus off of the central message of the Gospel, the person and work of Jesus Christ. Paul gives thanks (1:12-17) to Jesus Christ and the mercy and grace he

received. He speaks of how the “*Lord’s favor poured over*” him and that “*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners...may honor and glory be given to Him forever and always! Amen.*”

Paul tells Timothy that Paul is “*giving [him] these instructions*” so Timothy “*can wage a good war,*” be a good leader as it was prophesied he would be, and bring the church back into focus.

As Samuel Johnson once said, “*People need to be reminded more often than they need to be instructed.*” Paul is asking Timothy to remind the Christians at Ephesus of the central message, of the One who changed his life, the one Paul is willing to be imprisoned for and to die for, Jesus Christ.

Do you find yourself easily distracted in the church? Distracted by gossip or differing opinions on how things should be done? Do you ever find yourself losing focus, no longer focused on Jesus Christ and His mission, but rather focused on some agenda that is setting you up against your brothers and sisters in Christ, making you feel discouraged rather than uplifted? What if you and I, like Paul, remembered every day of the moment when “*Our Lord’s favor poured all over [us] along with the faithfulness and love that are in Christ Jesus.*”

Pray and ask God to help you not get distracted, to help you keep your focus on the One who gave His life for you, to help you keep your focus on Jesus Christ and His mission to the world.

Monday, August 26, 2019

Read I Timothy, chapter 2.

Throughout this section of Paul's letter to Timothy, Paul calls on Timothy to pray. Paul writes, "*This is right and it pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth*" (2:3). Paul calls on Timothy to pray and to teach the church in Ephesus to pray, "*lifting up hands that are holy, without anger or argument*" (2:8).

Then, Paul addresses women in the church, calling on them to not only pray, but to "*make themselves attractive by doing good*" (2:10), by continuing in "*faith, love, and holiness, together with self-control*" (2:15); thus, honoring God. Paul focuses on the women in the church in Ephesus, who many scholars believed were new converts and not only did not have the necessary knowledge and Christian maturity to teach, but relished in their new freedom at times inappropriately. This is why Paul had to address hairstyles and dress. Regardless, the same truths Paul is addressing to Timothy to share with the women of the congregation apply to us all. We, too, should "*make [ourselves] attractive by doing good,*" be "*quiet listener[s],*" and live lives of "*faith, love, and holiness, together with self-control.*"

But one of the most significant verses is I Timothy 2:5, "*There is one God and one mediator between God and humanity, the human Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a payment to set all people free.*" First, Paul declares there is "*one God,*" not many. But then Paul asserts that

“there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

Barker and Kohlenberger, in NIV Bible Commentary, explain, *“‘Mediator’ occurs only once in the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Job was frustrated by the fact that God was not a man with whom he could converse. In despair he wished that there might be someone to arbitrate between himself and God (Job 9:33). Christ is the answer to this ancient cry for help. A ‘mediator’ is someone who intervenes between two parties, either to make peace and restore friendship, or to form a covenant. In keeping with this, Christ by his death restored the harmony between God and human beings which sin had broken.”*

Barker and Kohlenberger continue, *“To be of any use, a bridge across a chasm or river must be anchored on both sides. Christ has closed the gap between deity and humanity. He has crossed the grand canyon, so deep and wide, between heaven and earth. He has bridged that which separated us from God. With one foot planted in eternity, he planted the other in time. He who was the eternal Son of God became the Son of Man. And across this bridge, we can come into the very presence of God, knowing that we are accepted because we have him as a Mediator.”*

Give God thanks for Jesus Christ, for the fact that we have a mediator which allows us to cross the gulf between us and God, coming into His presence. Our prayers are heard. God has provided us a way to come

into a saving relationship with Him, to grasp truth. May we show God thanks for His gift, the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. May we show God thanks by “*doing good*,” living lives of “*faith, love, and holiness, together with self-control*.”

Tuesday, August 27, 2019

Read I Timothy, chapter 3.

Paul writes Timothy concerning the requirements of a leader in the church. A leader should be “*temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well...not a novice...moreover he must have a good testimony*” (3:1-7). Pauls writes so that Timothy and others who are leaders in the church “*may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living god, the pillar and ground of the truth*” (3:15)

James C. Hunter, in The World’s Most Powerful Leadership Principle, writes, “*Never forget: When we ‘signed up’ to be the leader, we volunteered for an awesome responsibility. Human beings have been entrusted to our care, and much is at stake. I never cease to be amazed at how casually and nonchalantly people approach their leadership roles.*” As John Wooden once said, “*A leader...has a most powerful influence on those he or she leads, perhaps more than anyone outside of the family...I consider it a sacred trust.*” Don’t forget that we

are not just talking about leadership in our church but also in our marriage, as parents, at our workplaces. We are all, in some way, in leadership roles every day.

As leaders, Paul reminds us, that we must be held to a higher standard. We must be of exceptional character. We must think hard concerning the choices we make each day and how those choices will affect those we lead. As Hunter writes, *“Will I be patient or impatient? Kind or unkind? Puffed up, boastful, and arrogant, or humble? Respectful or disrespectful? Selfless or selfish? Forgiving or unforgiving? Honest or dishonest? Committed or just involved?...[Will the people I lead, I am around] be better human beings as a result of having contact [with me]? Will they be inspired to do the right thing and develop their character? Indeed the ultimate test of leadership is this: Are the people better off when they leave than when they got there?”*

How are you leading your family, your children, your co-workers? How do people see your leadership in the church? Do people see strong character? A strong faith and testimony? When you read Paul’s list of leadership characteristics, are there any you need to work on? Pray that God will help you be the leader He created you to be, in public and in private, so you may influence people for Him.

Wednesday, August 28, 2019

Read I Timothy, chapter 4.

Paul continues to teach Timothy about leadership, to challenge him to be a Godly leader and raise up other Godly leaders. As a wise General put it, *“The first duty of any leader is to create more leaders.”*

Paul tells Timothy that leaders must train themselves for a Holy life. Paul writes, *“...exercise yourself toward godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come”* (4:7-8).

Paul states that it is vital that leaders train themselves that they may be a *“good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine...”* (4:6). Paul knows that much is at stake. He writes, *“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith...speaking lies in hypocrisy...”* (4:1). It is so important that leaders in the church meditate on Holy things, *“that your progress may be evident to all”* and that *“in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you”* (4:15-16).

Are you in shape spiritually? Are you training yourself to live a Holy life, that you might inspire and help lead others to God? That they may see Christ in your words and actions? When confused as to how you are doing as a leader in your family, your workplace, your church, find out how the people you lead are doing. Are they growing in their faith because of you? Are they closer to Christ because they see Christ in you? Pray that God will help

you grow spiritually and that other may see Jesus in your words and actions.

Thursday, August 29, 2019

Read I Timothy, chapter 5.

Paul tells Timothy not to rush to commission anyone to leadership (5:22). Why? Because a leader can not only have a very positive influence on the people around them but can also have a negative influence. Paul explains that leaders should “*give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully*” (5:14). How often a leader’s moral failure, adversarial attitude, or hurtful gossip paints a negative picture of the church in the community, allowing the “*adversary to speak reproachfully*” about God’s church.

Check your attitude. Check your character. Check your speech and actions. Do you ever give the “*adversary*” the opportunity to “*speak reproachfully*” about the church, about your family, about your workplace? When has your influence been negative rather than positive? How might you do things different in the future? In what areas might you ask God to help you with, to help you become a stronger leader and a greater, even more positive, influence?

Friday, August 30, 2019

Read I Timothy, chapter 6.

Paul tells Timothy and us to “*pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness*” (6:11). We

have been given opportunities to lead others, to influence God's kingdom. Paul writes, "*Guard what was committed to your trust*" (6:20). Guard closely your faith, the truth concerning Jesus Christ. Guard closely the people around you, your family, your spouse, your church. Guard closely, protecting them and surrounding them with "*righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.*"

How are you guarding what has been "*committed to your trust*"?

Saturday, August 31, 2019

Read II Timothy.

Ask God to reveal to you through His Word, to speak to you, about how you are called to use your gifts, to lead, to "*guard*" and influence others. Ask God what you need to work on? Ask God how you can get involved in your church...in your family, in your workplace, and in your community.

**And Don't Forget To
Invite Someone To Church Tomorrow!!!**

