Readings: Acts 16:1-5 2 Timothy 1:1-13

We have come to the last in our series ‘1+1=3’. We are going to look at relationship between Paul and Timothy and what we can learn from it and apply to ourselves.

We will see that Paul intentionally identifies Timothy as someone to carry on His work, and invests time and energy into teaching him, praying for him, empowering Timothy for church leadership and mission. Many have looked at Paul and Timothys relationship as an example of mentorship, that of an older leader mentoring an emerging young leader.

 Having used the word mentoring I’m thinking some of you may switched off now- thinking this isn’t for you. You don’t see yourself as being a mentor as you don’t see yourself as having the necessary skills and wisdom to successfully mentor someone. Please hear me out – hopefully there is something in what I am about to say which is for you!

I don’t feel I had a specific ‘spiritual mentor’ when I was younger. But looking back, when I reflect on my Christian journey- I realise many, many people have invested time, prayers and love and energy into me, encouraging me, nurturing me in the faith, discipling me.

From a Christian grandfather who prayed for me, talked to me about Jesus and Holy Spirit, modelled to me how to pray for healing by the laying on of hands to Sunday school teachers, youth and student leaders, mature Christian friends, - they have all helped me stretch and grow in my faith and pointed me towards God.

 When we read about Jesus- we see he invested particularly in a band of 12 men- his disciples. But the broader picture is that wherever he went, he was discipling people.

 Look at the woman at the well- Jesus gently challenged her about her sinful lifestyle and taught truth to her, or the rich young man- Jesus debated scripture with him and challenged him about the use of his money.

 Jesus commands us in Matt 28 to ‘go and make disciples of all people’ This is a command for **all** of us who love Jesus. And this doesn’t mean just converting people. Jesus built relationship with people, wanting them to understand more about Father God and to grow in their God- given potential.

Let’s look at the rest of that passage in Matt 28 :

***19****Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,****20****and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.’*

So whether you are parenting children, leading a home group, encouraging a friend, talking to people at work; as followers of Jesus we are all commanded, whatever our life experience is, whatever age we are , to take the lead in discipling others , encouraging them to grow in their faith and become more like Christ.

So let’s turn now to study the relationship between Paul and Timothy and we won’t use the word ‘mentoring’, but rather, let’s look at what we can learn about discipling others from their example.

We first come across Timothy in Acts 16. Paul is setting off on his second missional journey, and he stops in Lystra . There, he picks up Timothy from his family home to accompany Paul on his travels. From then on, Paul regularly refers to Timothy in letters to the believers.

When Paul mentions Timothy in these letters, we see Paul’s deep affection and respect for Timothy in the way he talks about him and addresses him:

*Phil 2:22 But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because* ***as a son with his father*** *he has served with me in the work of the gospel.*

*1 Tim1:2 To Timothy,* ***my true son*** *in the faith.*

*2 Tim 1:2 To Timothy,* ***my dear son****.*

Paul sees himself as a spiritual father to Timothy and everything he says and asks of Timothy comes from a place of love for him, wanting the very best for him.

As well as being a much-loved son, Paul saw Timothy as trustworthy partner in spreading the gospel and an effective leader of the Church.

1 Thess 3:2 ‘ *We sent Timothy, who is* ***our brother and co-worker*** *in God’s service in spreading the gospel of Christ.*’

In the 2 letters written directly to Timothy (1&2Timothy) when Paul was in prison in Rome, we see Paul, with a sense of urgency, encouraging and teaching Timothy, and giving instructions for Timothy to pass on to the Church. 2 Timothy is thought to be the last letter Paul ever wrote.

When facing imminent execution, Paul chose to write to someone he cared about deeply and trusted to carry on his work for the gospel.

Paul exhorts Timothy to ‘*guard what has been entrusted to you* ‘ (1 tim 6:20) and

 2Tim 2 :2 **‘** *the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.’*

Paul is entrusting Timothy with his teachings, He is spurring him on to maturity in faith, so that Timothy can pass the baton of the gospel on to others. And that baton has been passed from generation to generation of believers until it has reached us- you and me here today.

 We are the next generation of ’reliable people’ who are being called to disciple the next generation.

James Collins has used the quote before that ‘Christianity is always one generation from extinction ‘ By God’s mercy and grace , God continues to breathe life into the Church, by his HS, by working through reliable people.

 So, looking at the example of Paul, how can we nurture and encourage the next generation of believers?

Before anything else, we should examine our motives and ensure we disciple others from a place of Godly love and respect for that person- as Paul did for Timothy.

 How does Paul disciple Timothy?

Paul tells his **testimony** .

**‘***Here’s a word you can take to heart and depend on: Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. I’m proof—Public Sinner Number One—of someone who could never have made it apart from sheer mercy. And now he shows me off—evidence of his endless patience—to those who are right on the edge of trusting him forever.’*

 *1 Timothy 1:15&16 The Message translation*

 Throughout his writings, Paul points to his own life story to encourage and to stir faith in others, and to give God the glory.

Our life stories are visual aids to the next generation of believers. So find opportunities to tell others about what God has and is doing in your life. Testimonies are powerful; they bring God into a conversation and stir faith.

Psalm 45 :4 *‘One generation commends your works to another;
     they tell of your mighty acts’*

Gods word calls us to testify to His goodness to the next generations.

Next- Paul prays for Timothy- and teaches him about **prayer**. Paul sees prayer as foundational to the Christian experience and growth.

*1 Timothy 2:1 ‘**I urge, then,* ***first of all****, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone’*

 He’s teaching him about prayer.

*2 Tim 1:3b … night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers.* He’s praying for him.

 Paul saw amazing answers to his prayers,which must have spurred him on and encouraged him in his mission work. Let Pauls example be a challenge to each one of us to pray regularly for a younger person in the faith,and also pray for the youth and children’s work here.

 Paul taught Timothy the value of knowing **scripture.**

2 Tim3: 15…’*from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.****16****All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,****17****so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.’*

Notice in this passage that Timothy had learnt scripture from infancy. We know his mother and grandmother were godly women and would have encouraged and taught Timothy in his faith. Today, there are huge challenges for parents as they look to teach their children the value of the Bible and its truths.

Let’s stand by our Church families in prayer, but also practically, is there anything you can do? Could you volunteer to help with our children’s work – to help our children learn scriptures and the ways of the Lord?

 Some of us have had many many years of Bible teaching invested into us . How do we pass on that teaching helpfully to others? This passage says that knowledge of the bible equips us for **every** good work. Our knowledge of scripture should affect every aspect of how we live, so we can be godly role models to those around us . and that might show itself in being hospitable, in humble service to others, generosity.

Timothy was **accountable** to Paul.

Paul urged Timothy to be devoted and diligent in the way he lived his life, telling him ‘*What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching*,’. 2 Tim: 1:13

 Timothy had a personal responsibility to ensure he lived his life in a godly manner, but his relationship with Paul gave him accountability and support in doing this. As Christians, it’s not enough to know God’s Word, — we are also to support and disciple one another, lovingly holding one another accountable in living lives of obedience to God.  Attending Life groups, fostering godly friendships, and yes- perhaps having a mature spiritual mentor, all can be helpful in ensuring we remain accountable in our faith walk.

Paul encouraged Timothy in his **gifting.**

Going back to Paul and Timothys first meeting we read earlier in Acts 16 – it shows that Paul had done his homework on Timothy. He visited Timothy and his family, checked him out, asked others about Timothy and Acts records ’ they ’spoke well of him’. The very next sentence after this is ’Paul wanted to take him along on the journey.’

Timothy didn’t have to wait years, go to theology college, wait until he was older before being given opportunities to serve God. And he wasn’t given ‘low risk ‘ jobs to do either. By the very next chapter in Acts, He and Silas have been left by Paul to carry on his preaching work in Berea, where there was trouble brewing.

The future of the church depends on young Christians -whatever their age , being given opportunities to test and develop their gifts in the service of the gospel. And that will mean taking risks on someone, allowing mistakes to be made without then giving harsh criticism or closing doors to future opportunities for them.

In the story of Eli the prophet and Samuel in the old testament, the child Samuel kept hearing the voice of God but he didn’t understand who it was who speaking to him. Eli had the discernment and maturity to understand what was going on- he recognised God’s Spirit at work, and so told Samuel how to respond to Gods calling.

 Equipped by this teaching from Eli, the next time Samuel heard God calling him, Samuel responded by saying ‘*speak, for your servant is listening*’1 Sam 3:10

Our responsibility as church is to identify and encourage the development of peoples God given gifts -whatever age they are. Samuel was a just a child when Gods gifting was recognised in him and he was encouraged to use and develop it.

I am forever grateful for the youth work done here over the years. Young people have been given opportunities to be part of worship bands, lead small groups, have been encouraged to pray for each other, were given teaching in use of the gifts of the spirit. And I know many of those young people have gone on to become worship leaders ,to preach, go on missions, be on prayer teams , and are now mature followers of Jesus.

 We have been blessed by God in the past by seeing the results of this church purposefully investing in others. It is our corporate and individual responsibility to continue to serve the next generation by encouraging, nurturing and strengthening them in their gifting, doing this a loving and respectful way that is life enhancing and empowering for the recipient.

So, to recap:

**How does Paul disciple Timothy.?**

* With love and respect
* By giving his testimony
* He prays for Timothy and encourages him to pray also
* He teaches him the value of scripture
* Timothy is accountable to him
* He encourages Timothy in his gifting.

And what was the outcome of Paul investing time into discipling Timothy?

We know that Timothy was a blessing and encouragement to Paul. We know Timothy became a significant Church leader and evangelist. Paul had called Timothy to ‘fight the good fight ‘ and it appears he did – church legend say Timothy died a martyrs death in old age.

Would this have been the outcome if Timothy hadn’t humbly accepted, and acted on Pauls discipling of him? Probably not.

So as well as reflecting on Pauls example of discipleship today- lets also ponder on Timothys example to us .He was someone who showed grace, a teachable spirit, faithfulness in friendship, a willingness to take risks and step out of his comfort zone to serve God. May we be more like Timothy - prepared to be discipled ourselves -whatever stage of life we are in.

I want to tell you something that happened to me. Just before the pandemic hit, I got an email from someone saying; ‘ you may not remember me, but…’

It was from a woman who said I had written to her when she was at university, and that I had also prayed for her.

She had grown up in PBC about 25 years previously. It was custom then for members of the church to adopt a student when they went off to uni, and they would write to the student and pray for them. I had completely forgotten I had ever done that, and knowing my letter writing skills, I doubt she got many letters from me!

She asked if we could meet for a coffee. So we did. And I was bowled over as she told me her story. She said that she believed my letters and prayers had been helpful in keeping her faithful to God during difficult times at university. And that she had gone on to respond to a call to mission and has remained in full time mission abroad ever since .

What an awesome God we have! I just took my few loaves and fishes, made a small investment of time and prayer, which I didn’t even remember doing, and here was this wonderful Christian woman taking the time to come back to me and thank me for what I had done!

The series title has been 1+1 =3.

Paul and Timothys discipling relationship was God- given and Holy Spirit inspired. It was centred around God, and used by God to bless both Paul and Timothy, and to ensure the future growth of God’s church.

Don’t feel inadequate to the task of discipling others. Please don’t say ’it's not for me’.

Bring what you have; prayers, time, wisdom, letter writing, experience from a life spent with God, your testimony, and offer it to Father God for him to use. Take a risk, step out and invest what you have in discipling others – because its not about what we can do for someone,it’s about what God can do for someone **through** us. And you will find discipling someone can turn out to be a privilege and a blessing to you too.

God in his grace, takes our small offerings and miraculously multiplies them to bless others, to prosper His Church, to extend his kingdom and bring Glory to His name in future generations.

 Amen