

STUDY GUIDE

PLEASANT RIDGE BAPTIST CHURCH
PHILIPPIANS: CITIZENS OF HEAVEN LIVING ON EARTH
TIMOTHY'S EXAMPLE OF MINISTRY
PHILIPPIANS 2:19-24
10/15/2017



MAIN POINT

Timothy's example of Christlike self-giving inspires us to be living examples of Christ in our world.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What are one or two words you hope other people use to describe you? Why are these character traits important to you?

The apostle Paul spends much of Philippians 2 using his own life as an example of selfless, sacrificial service for Christ, which was modeled after Christ's own humility and sacrifice. In addition to using himself as an example, Paul also pointed to another believer worth following, Timothy, his coworker whom the Philippians knew, exemplified Christ's mind-set.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PHILIPPIANS 2:19-24.

Paul mentioned Timothy as a second example of a brightly shining star (2:14-16). In this section of the letter, Paul expressed hope for his immediate future. His intention was to send Timothy on a pastoral mission to Philippi as soon as Paul got news of the settlement of his case. Paul wanted to receive news from the Philippian church, and he expected that Timothy would bring that news. He fully anticipated being encouraged by the news that Timothy would bring concerning the church in Philippi.

What are two or three words you would use to describe Timothy and his ministry?

What was the relationship like between Paul and Timothy? How did the closeness of their relationship enhance their work for the gospel? When have you experienced this kind of partnership?

Timothy was a good example of someone who showed concern for others. What are key differences between false and genuine concern? Why is genuine concern for others an important trait for ministry?

What do you think Paul meant by his statement in verse 21, "all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ"?

Paul gave Timothy a great compliment when the apostle stated that Timothy was the kind of person who consistently put Christ's interests ahead of his own. We should be reminded that Christians who seek their churches' welfare ahead of their own are putting Christ's interests first and thereby demonstrating their commitment to Him.

If every member of our church would seek Christ's interests first, what sort of impact would that priority have on our church and community?

Spend a minute reflecting on which of your actions this week demonstrated that you are placing others' interests ahead of your own. Which demonstrated that you are placing your own interests first?

According to verse 22, what was the purpose of Timothy's mission? How was he a co-laborer with Paul?

Later on in Timothy's life, he would be the recipient of a letter from Paul, his mentor and co-laborer for the gospel, that encouraged him to persevere in his missionary efforts. Paul was in prison in Rome approaching what would likely be his death. Paul's imprisonment and impending death weighed heavily on the churches where Paul had ministered and he wanted to encourage Timothy, like he had encouraged the Philippians.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 TIMOTHY 1:8-18.

What are the things Paul was worried Timothy would be ashamed about?

In what way did Paul describe the gospel?

Why was Paul worried about shame? What kept Paul from being ashamed of the gospel? What keeps you from being ashamed?

Paul was afraid that Timothy and others would be ashamed of the testimony of Christ, and that they would be ashamed of Paul himself because he was in chains. Some may construe Paul's incarceration as a sign that he was giving up on the gospel, or that he did not believe that he needed to keep proclaiming the truth of Christ. Salvation is through Christ and so is the gospel, it was not about Paul.

What was Paul urging Timothy to do?

What happened to motivate Paul calling Timothy to loyal teaching (v. 15)?

Paul called Timothy to hold to the "pattern of sound teaching" or as some translate it "sound doctrine." The teaching to which Timothy was called came from Paul and was primarily about the faith and love that are in Christ. Paul urged Timothy to these things because churches and their leaders had turned away from Paul and sound teaching because Paul was in chains. Paul wanted Timothy to remain faithful to Christ so that he would receive mercy when he stood before the throne and gave an account of his ministry.

How does looking at what you've learned and experienced help you persevere as a co-laborer with other believers in the ministry of the gospel?

What ways does the Spirit aid you in facing the future?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Of the three character traits of the missionary that Paul highlighted in Timothy's life—concern, compassion, co-laborer—which do you need to focus on strengthening in your own life? How can our group hold each other accountable in this effort?

Do you give praise easily, or do you find this hard to do? Where do you need to improve? Why is it important to affirm the ministry work of others, as Paul did in this passage?

What service do you feel God has called you to do for His kingdom? How are you serving with dedication?

When shining stars shine as they should (living examples of Christianity), in what ways are they very powerful witnesses for Christ and effective at helping people learn how to live obediently?

PRAY

Review the description of Timothy noted during the study. Have your group members think about how these traits apply to their own lives—which ones describe them and what is one that they need to practice. Then invite them to confess silently to God where they fall short as you lead in a closing prayer.

COMMENTARY

PHILIPPIANS 2:19-24

Paul offered Timothy, his younger coworker, as a second example of Christ's mind-set (vv. 19-20). The apostle felt confident he would be able to send Timothy to Philippi soon. Paul wanted to receive accurate, detailed news about the believers' circumstances and welfare. Also, Timothy would offer needed encouragement and guidance. Knowing the believers were remaining faithful to Christ and were united would encourage Paul. The Greek word translated encouraged carries the sense of comfort and cheer; a good report from Timothy would lift Paul's spirits.

Paul could not go to the Philippian believers, but he would send the best substitute available: Timothy. No one else was like-minded (literally, "equal-souled") with Paul. The apostle could have meant that of all his coworkers, Timothy most closely matched Paul's servant attitude or spirit. More likely, however, Paul meant that of all the people around him, Timothy shared most deeply Paul's love and concern for the Philippian Christians.

Max Anders, Galatians-Colossians, vol. 8, *Holman New Testament Commentary*

2:19. Paul now returns to personal matters. Timothy was with him in Rome (Phil. 1:1). As soon as he knows the outcome of his legal situation, he plans to send this faithful man to get a firsthand report of how things are in Philippi. Such a report would bring renewed cheer and hope to the imprisoned apostle who was already rejoicing over what he knew concerning them (v. 17).

2:20. Timothy stood out uniquely among the young pastors Paul mentored. Like Paul, Timothy had a genuine interest in their well-being. He ministered not to fulfill ambition and needs for personal success. He ministered to meet needs of the church people. What a model for today's young ministers who are too often flooded with calls to achieve success rather than to minister.

2:21. The normal human way is the way of self-interest. Protect yourself. Get what you need. If time permits, then help others. Timothy lived a different lifestyle. Like Paul, he put aside selfish interests. He concentrated on Christ's interests. He lived out the humble, self-giving life Christ had exemplified. He stood out as a bright star in the dark heavens.

2:22. Young Timothy was a living testimony of the kind of Christian Paul was instructing the Philippians to be. Paul could testify. He watched Timothy prove himself as his associate in the ministry. Paul had sent Timothy to other churches as well. In 1 Corinthians 4:17, the apostle said: "For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every

church.” We know of no family or children of Paul. He treated Timothy like a son. Every young minister needs a senior mentor as his ministerial father.

2:23. Paul still needed Timothy for a while until he saw what his own fate would be. Facing such an uncertain future, Paul still thought of the church’s need and planned to send Timothy to help them just as soon as possible. Here Paul shows the fine line between total concentration on selfish concerns (v. 21) and legitimate concern for immediate personal needs (v. 23).

2:24. Paul, even with an uncertain future, anticipated being released to come see them, too. Such hope came not from confidence in the Roman legal system but from faith in what God had promised him (see 1:6, 25–26).

Knute Larson, I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon, vol. 9, *Holman New Testament Commentary*

1:13–14. A sense of urgency filters through Paul’s words as he focused on Timothy and pleaded, what you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching. Once again, Paul pressed home a familiar theme. The true gospel is founded upon the prophets, the words of Jesus, and apostolic teaching. Acutely aware of the damage inflicted by false teachers, Paul returned to the need for orthodoxy as revealed through Christ to Paul. It is this pure doctrine which is the pattern of sound teaching.

The word translated “sound” comes from the Greek *hugies*, used in the Gospels to describe the healing of the sick by Jesus. Paul used the word to distinguish apostolic doctrine from false doctrine. Truth produces health; it results in right thinking and godly behavior.

Paul did not prescribe intellectualism, the building of theological structures for their own sake. Truth is meant for life, and it is to be dispensed with faith and love in Christ Jesus. What we proclaim must be matched by our lives. If we are to guide people to Christ, we must hold a sincere trust in our Lord. Equally, our lives must be distinguished by love, divine in strength and giving. Both faith and love should be centered in Jesus.

Paul’s words reverberate with his awareness that death was drawing closer. He was anxious that Timothy comprehend the importance and urgency of following through with his instructions. He told him to guard the apostolic revelation: the good deposit that was entrusted to you.

Each generation is so charged, for the gospel must be preserved in purity. We must protect it from destructive teachings. It is a serious responsibility, for we handle the very words of God. But we must also admit our inability to fulfill so noble a task. This is why Timothy and all Christians must guard Christ’s gospel with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us. Paul again reminded us of this wonderful gift of God, this person of his Spirit who enables us to perform what God calls us to do.

This is a great picture of the Christian life and responsibility. God grants to us his gifts of grace and his Spirit of life—gifts freely given as we trust Jesus Christ as Savior. Our responsibility is to respond with obedient trust, not to gain salvation, but to express love, and to fulfill the calling of God upon our lives (Eph. 4:1).

Paul describes this interaction of giftedness and responsibility in Philippians. There he says to “work out your salvation” (Phil. 2:12) with a sense of respect and fear, not to gain salvation, but to flesh it out, to work out in our life the implications of being saved. Then the promise is given, “it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose” (Phil. 2:13).

Thus, we have personal responsibility before God but the promise of strength and provision by his Spirit as well. We are not alone.

1:15. When Paul had lived in Ephesus, so many people had received the gospel that the message of Christ spread throughout Asia (Acts 19:1–20). Since that time, the arrest of Paul and the rise of false teachers had weakened the church and shaken the faith of many. Perhaps, under the circumstances, they supposed Christianity was a failed enterprise. Whatever the cause, a dramatic shift of faith had occurred. Timothy was well aware of this: you know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes. It seems these men had once been faithful, and, although we know nothing about them, they were familiar to Timothy. Perhaps their desertion exemplified the pervasiveness of the apostasy, leading to Timothy’s own disheartened outlook.

1:16–18. From the faithless, Paul turned to the faithful. In the midst of widespread defection, one man, Onesiphorus, and his family remained committed to Christ. Paul was full of gratitude. He offered a prayer that the Lord show mercy to the household (v. 16), and that he [Onesiphorus] will find mercy from the Lord on that day (v. 18). God’s mercy belongs to those who remain faithful.

Onesiphorus and his family must have shown hospitality to Paul while he stayed in Ephesus. Giving him food and a place to stay, they refreshed him. In fact, this man was so devoted to Christ that, despite the general defection in Asia, he was not ashamed of [Paul’s] chains. At some point, Onesiphorus traveled to Rome and searched hard for the apostle. He never gave up but, with determination, hunted for him until he found [him].