

Helping your ‘Timothy’ become a faithful man

By Jay Wegter

As modeled by the apostle Paul’s investment in his protégé/understudy, a ‘Timothy’ is a person being discipled. Christ-followers are disciple-makers; faithful men who disciple other faithful men. But, who is a faithful man? In the pastoral epistles (**1 & II Timothy and Titus**), the apostle Paul gives us a comprehensive description of faithful men. And, in the first two chapters of **2 Timothy**, we see a summary of this faithfulness in the context of disciple-making.

The value of a clear conscience: “I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day, longing to see you, even as I recall your tears, so that I may be filled with joy” (2 Tim 1:3-4). Clear conscience benefits: *endurance* in suffering (in trouble, God is not punitive), *boldness* in witness, *confidence* in prayer, *spontaneity* in worship.

2 Timothy is the last epistle Paul wrote (A.D. 67) before his own martyrdom, and it is filled with intense emotion. Paul is writing this letter to Timothy who is his disciple and is now pastoring the church in Ephesus. And further, the church had been invaded by false teachers (cf. **1 Timothy**). Timothy’s faithfulness and resolve are being tested through persecution, and so Paul writes to him in ways designed to assist him amidst the pressure (Ralph Drollinger, Capitol Ministries):

The power of spiritual sight/vision: “For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with *me* in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher. For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day” (2 Tim 1:5-12).

Meekness is not weakness, but is often mistaken for it. Timothy was faltering as a pastor in light of difficulties created by some ambitious trouble-makers; Hymenaeus and Alexander (cf. **1 Timothy 1:20**). Paul’s response to Timothy’s situation is to exhort his disciple to *kindle afresh* his spiritual gifts of teaching, preaching, and evangelism

and be like Paul himself (v. 6). Sometimes past criticisms by opponents of the true gospel serve to paralyze future progress (undermining boldness). Paul here is saying the just the opposite should be true—that even though in all likelihood the further exercise of his spiritual gifts and devout commitment to the Great Commission would bring more personal *suffering*—Timothy, and all genuine believers, should not be *ashamed* (1:12). Instead, *lean in to your calling, achieve your destiny*; after all, it is the continual, industrious fulfillment of your calling that best silences your critics (Ibid.).

Paul charges us not to be *timid* (1:7) (weak-kneed) but to ‘man-up’ in the midst of trials and persecution, using himself (Paul) as an example. The apostle is acting as a model for Timothy—himself *not* being *ashamed* of the gospel (v. 8), even though he suffers greatly for proclaiming it. Paul is saying to his understudy, and to every believer: Our **audience of One** is the Lord Himself, **our doctrine** is the exclusivity of the cross, and our **confidence** is the sovereignty of God. Since Christ had called him, no other man should be able to separate Timothy from his divinely appointed work.

The slightest bit of shame concerning the unpopularity of the gospel can make us mute; keeping us from testifying of Christ. We must not allow even the tiniest beginnings of shame to arise in the soul. But, prepare yourself to take your share of evil for the sake of the gospel. Spiritual sight/vision enables us to develop this kind of resolve. What a comfort in the face of misunderstanding and persecution that the hand of God and the heart of God have been upon His elect vessels before the world was created (v. 9). The true believer has unwavering confidence and boldness because of the revealed truth about God’s power, faithfulness, and immutable covenant love for His them.

Who is the ‘faithful man’ spoken of in 2 Timothy 2:2? Every Christian man ought to aspire to being the kind of man who is a disciple, and who shepherds. There is a cost to being a ‘faithful man’, the following qualities must be present.

Eight of the marks of a faithful man from 2 Timothy chaps 1-2:

1) A faithful man retains the standard of sound words (the truths of Scripture and the pure doctrine it teaches). The first quality of a faithful man is stewarding the sacred trust of Scripture. **He guards the treasure** (he guards, not hoards the sacred trust of biblical truth) **committed to him**, showing love and kindness in communicating the truth to others. “Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you” (2 Tim 1:13-14).

This quality addresses a man’s relationship to God through Scripture and his handling of the Word in ministry. In this quality, there is an attitude of heart

which ought to characterize every Christian man: “I cannot live without the Bible. I have to know what it means. I have committed myself to study it and understand it and obey it, because I can’t live without it—my life is utterly dependent upon it.”

That’s what our Savior called ***building upon the Rock (Mt 7:24ff.)***. The faithful man’s attitude is: “My relationship to the Word is my lifeline in my walk with God. The Word feeds my faith and worship; the Word gets me to God in communion and fellowship. I have to apply the Bible to my life and allow it to define and order every area of my life, prioritizing my world, and controlling my affections and decisions. I will walk by the Spirit so as to make it my ambition to be pleasing to the Lord (**2 Cor 5:9**). I will see myself as living in the presence of God, presenting myself back to Him daily because He bought me and I am not my own, He has taken possession of me” (**Rom 6:11-13; 1 Cor 6:19-20**).

As a believing man continues to grow, navigating and plotting his course by the Word of God, there will be countless ***course corrections***. Thus, the godly man practices ongoing repentance as he frequently adjusts his heading to the imperatives of Scripture. He seeks the Lord in the Word and in prayer and he is constantly aware of the grace of God restoring, renewing, and rectifying his life. Out of gospel promises believed and lived, comes an ethical lifestyle of sanctification—characterized by conformity to the truth and Christian service (**Rom 12:1-2**).

Many believing men are merely brushing up against Scripture, but not preaching its truth to their own souls. Permit an illustration: you can admire a hot juicy steak, have your appetite stimulated by its smell, but in order to gain nutritional value from it, you must chew it very finely. In order for its proteins to benefit the human body, a complex series of digestive steps take place. Once swallowed it is mixed with a host of enzymes which break down its components until at last it is reduced to the molecular level so that it can be assimilated into the bloodstream via the small intestine. So also, there is ‘digestive’ work to be done in order to have Scripture become a part of us: observation, interpretation, correlation, and application. All four are involved in believing, knowing, understanding, loving, and doing the truth.

2) The second quality of a faithful man is to have a life that is dominated by Christ’s grace (gospel-driven, gospel-saturated). Paul commands Timothy to ***“be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 2:1)***. This is the foundation for an effective ministry. “Our sufficiency is of God” (**2 Cor 3:5**). We receive this ongoing grace through Christ from the throne of grace—we obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need (**Heb 4:16**). The faithful man is conversant with his gracious resources in the gospel.

Grace also comes from abiding in Christ and getting to know Him experientially (His faithfulness, love, and lordship). “Grace and peace be multiplied to

you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord” (2 Pet 1:2). Our knowledge of the Lord increases as we appropriate and take advantage of His grace through prayer, worship, devotion to His Word, and communion with Him. Grace also comes to the humble (1 Pet 5:5-6).

He is a man who is strong in the grace that is found in Christ Jesus—he does not settle for, or resign himself to weakness, but relies on the Lord, and continually renews his commitment to minister to others. “You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 2:1). He relies on Christ, he knows that his Savior is the source of his strength—he has practice exercising this reliance. “Strong in grace” is inseparable from having been instructed in grace in a discipleship relationship.

3) The third quality of a faithful man is that he must also be committed to the ministry of multiplication as illustrated in 2 Timothy 2:2: “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” *Commit* is in the imperative. The NT Greek, *paratithami*, means to place to another’s trust, entrust, to deposit, to commit for safe keeping. Commit to ‘faithful men’—men who are in the Word of God, for faith comes by hearing (Rom 10:17). Select men who can be trusted. Paul also stresses in this verse that they should be *able to teach others* also. First, teachable, then able and desirous to teach others—that is part and parcel of multiplication (note Christopher of Zambia).

Many (the majority of men) men who are ‘faithful’ in church attendance and in helping at special functions are NOT passing on what they have heard and learned. When selecting faithful men, you must find a man who is both teachable, AND holding a strong heart’s desire to share the Scriptures. In other words, he has the vision for multiplication. In every church, there are men (perhaps the majority) who have never been challenged or shown how to transmit biblical truths to other effectively. The disciple-maker first learns how to do this; then he learns how to teach others to do it (Wayne Moore, *Multiplying Disciples*, pp. 52-53).

He invests in men who have proven Christian character (‘faithful men’). **He is committed to the Lord’s mechanism of truth transmission—which is disciple-making.** He disciples men who are committed to investing in other men. “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim 2:2).

In contrast to the weak-kneed (the half-hearted who have abandoned and/or betrayed the Apostle Paul), Paul instructs Timothy to *entrust* the gospel to *faithful men*. The application is not only to Timothy, but every fellow believer has 2 Timothy 2:2 laid to his charge. This passage is another way of expressing the Great Commission—every believer is to be *making disciples: entrusting* the doctrine he has been given (from a reputable disciple-maker) to another *who will be able to teach others*. This is the

primary biblical methodology for the expansion of God's Kingdom.

Four generations of *discipling* are in view in this one passage. “*Mathetes*” is the Greek word for *disciple* and it means “a learner,”—no wonder that a disciple-maker at all levels of spiritual maturity is referred to a *teacher* (*didasko*). A Bible teacher needs a learner and a learner needs a Bible teacher. Believers who do not desire to place themselves in the presence of, in close relational space to, and learn from Bible teachers are biblical enigmas. Thus, it is also reasonable to say that a brother who avoids **2 Timothy 2:2** will not be living out the values set forth in **2 Timothy 2:3**. Those who are not being disciplined, and subsequently do not disciple others, are in no position to *endure* or *suffer hardship* that is attributed to their faithfulness to the Word of God.

Biblically malnourished believers are always weak at the knees. Paul bids his disciple, Timothy to remain loyal in the battle for truth. The disciple-maker does not spend his precious time investing in any and everyone who has made a profession of faith. **2 Timothy 2:2** makes it clear that we are to enter relationships with faithful men; men who are committed to teaching other men to obey all that Christ has commanded (**Mt 28:19-20**) (Drollinger).

4) The fourth quality needed by a multiplier/discipler is the discipline required for a life that pleases God. For, we are on earth for His pleasure (**Rev 4:11**). “Suffer hardship with *me*, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier” (**2 Tim 2:3-4**). Discipleship is not an easy, laid back, go-with-the-flow, or ‘let’s just hang out’ endeavor. It is a demanding life—in four verses (**2:3-6**) there are three metaphors which signal what is needed to finish well and bring to harvest. The *soldier* depicts undistracted focus; absolute dedication (**vv. 3-4**). The *athlete* pictures disciplined training and an adherence to the rules of competition (**v. 5**). The *farmer* image reveals that diligence is accompanied by patience and trust that God will enable our labors to be fruitful (**v. 6**).

The discipler is to expect hardness, obstacles, and to successfully endure it, he must not complain or seek to escape into illicit pleasure when the going gets tough. A soldier of Christ is under orders, goal-oriented, and obedient to his Supreme Commander. We need discipline in order to live this kind of life; for the ‘faithful man’ is not a quitter no matter how tough things become.

He knows that single-minded devotion to Christ, hard work, and patience are essential to victory and fruitfulness. There is always a cost to doing battle for biblical truth; it will separate soldiers of Christ (willing to *suffer hardship* in the battle for righteousness), from those who are not, whose selfish purposes remain central.

There is a common theme in this epistle from start to finish of *suffering hardship*. Such is *normative* for the follower of Christ—it is not optional in

biblically understood Christianity (EX. Cuomo; live as if their relationship with the Lord is exclusively for them.). Paul repeatedly states that *suffering hardship*, persecution, and trials are typical of authentic Christianity. But, if conditioned otherwise (*comfort governs commitment, not calling*), then what routinely occurs when persecution arises is that hordes of “believers” duck out of sight. Why? It’s not what they originally signed up for!

By the use of these three metaphors Paul uses in 2 Timothy 2 to describe and characterize real Christianity: the *soldier*, the *athlete* and the *farmer*. Paul is illustrating to full-time ministers such as Timothy, and by way of extension to all *disciple makers*, their need to be *undistracted* (characteristic of *soldiers*) by worldly, selfish pursuits; to be *obedient* (characteristic of *athletes*) and to be *hard-working* (*as is characteristic of farmers*). In this case, to the end goal of making disciples. Being undistracted, obedient, and hard-working are all requisites, fundamental disciplines necessary for anyone who wants to make disciples over the course of their lifetime. These virtues that are totally opposite the qualities of weak-kneed “believers” (Ibid.).

5) The fifth quality needed is a willingness to suffer whatever inconvenience, misunderstanding, and rejection may accompany his Great Commission efforts, knowing that the elect (those chosen of God for salvation), must hear the gospel and believe in order to be saved. “Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel, for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned. For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory. It is a trustworthy statement: for if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; if we endure, we will also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us; if we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim 2:8-13).

Paul is revealing his motives for ministry. He perseveres under persecution for the sake of the chosen and their salvation: As ambassadors for Christ (**2 Cor 5:20**), Paul, and you, and I have a deep-seated reason for living, even when the environment is so hostile to the words of life as to suggest we should somehow pull back, retreat, and bow out. The salvation and maturation of the saints—making disciples—compels us to live with internal strength which flows from eternal values (Ibid.).

6) He handles Scripture with precision, and devotes himself to accurately, clearly, competently imparting God’s Word to his hearers. “Remind them of these things, and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers. Be diligent to present yourself approved to

God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some” (2 Tim 2:14-18) Paul informs Timothy not to engage in debates with false teachers (forum). Conversely, he is to spend his energies *accurately handling the word of truth* (v. 15). This separation from false teachers, however, does not mean one fails to warn others about them (**Gal 1:16–19; Eph 5:6–11; Jude 3**). The faithful man contends for the truth and is able to refute error (**Titus 1:9**). Many New Testament epistles are *polemics* alerting the saved concerning heretical teachings and false teachers; such instruction is a major component of biblical ministry. Notice that *Philitus* was yet another person who betrayed Paul in ministry. The list grows (Ibid.).

7) The seventh quality needed is a clean, available life (vessel). “Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart” (2 Tim 2:20-23).

God commands that we pursue Christian character with all of their might: “Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 1:5-8).

We must have the lives to back up what we speak; **proving to be the examples to the flock of godly manhood (1 Pet 5:1-5). The faithful man is available for service to the Lord because he keeps himself from impurity and wickedness;** he cleanses himself from iniquity—knowing that it is a clean vessel that is “a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master and prepared for every good work.” “‘Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness.’ Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work” (2 Tim 2:19b-21). (EX. p-nut butter jar illustration.)

The faithful man is proactive in pursuing personal holiness; he diligently cares for his relationship with the Lord. He does not toy with uncleanness, but

instead he “flees from youthful lusts and he pursues righteousness, faith, love, and peace with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.” “Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love *and* peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart” (2 Tim 2:22).

There is no greater cause or motivation than to clearly understand one’s biblical identity and marching orders in Christ. These internal, theological truths should lead to personal endurance in ministry (orthodoxy leads to orthopraxy). Conversely, one who is weak-kneed to the point of denying Christ (v. 12) when under persecution, in a continual sense, is not saved to begin with, i.e. the trial serves to separate the saints from the “aint’s.” Trials and persecution are sometimes meant by God to identify, and to separate the tares that are present amongst the wheat of the body of Christ (1 Jn 2:19).

These seven marks of a faithful man are both motivating and sobering. Who can hear these marks of faithfulness expounded without thinking that he has room to grow spiritually? But, there is great value in studying these marks with a view to obedience and transformation. But, the purpose of our retreat is not to merely leave with you the conviction that you and I need to grow, improve, and develop. No, the purpose of our conference is to get us thinking how your relationships with your brothers in Christ can become an active catalyst in your development of biblical faithfulness.