

Paul and Timothy: Passing the Torch

The Genius of Paul's Plan

Rough Transcript

Patrick Morley

Patrick Morley:

Good morning, men. Welcome to Man in the Mirror Bible study. So if you thought this was going to be a Rotary meeting this morning, let me apologize for those of you who are joining us online, we want to welcome you as well. And we're in a series called **Paul and Timothy: Passing the Torch**.

Before we get started, why don't we go ahead and give the guys online a big rousing Man in the Mirror welcome. On the count of three. 1, 2, 3, Hoorah! Welcome, men. We're honored to have you with us.

Yes. So we are in series and this morning we're going to be looking at **The Genius of Paul's Plan**. First thing up to talk about is the problem that he was facing then, and the problem that we're facing now. The problem then and now.

THE PROBLEM THEN AND NOW

Jesus had looked at the crowds and saw that they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. He went on to say that the problem, however, is not that the harvest is small. The harvest is that there are not enough workers to bring in this harvest. Then, right before his resurrection, he gave us what we know as the great commission. He said, "All authority," this is Jesus, "all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and I will always be with you." And in Acts chapter one, verse eight, he also says, "And the Holy Spirit will come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, also in Judea and Samaria, and even to the ends of the earth."

So this is the vision. This is the commission that Jesus gave. Now, what's going to happen now with these 12 disciples? Well, none of the 12 disciples, 11 if you take out the traitor, are known at this point at least to have been brilliant strategists, great businessmen, great operators, great mobilizers. And so against that backdrop there was this scoundrel named Paul. At the time his name was Saul and he was a very religious person. He was a Pharisee, a brilliant man, and he was a vicious and violent persecutor of this upstart sect called the Nazarenes or alternatively called The Way even before they were called Christians.

So for, it's estimated, about three years after the death of Jesus, this violent man was going around and doing a lot of things that you see in the news today. As it happens, Jesus needed to stop Paul from doing what he's doing, or the entire operation was going to fold. I've studied organizational change and starting a movement is not an easy thing. In fact, two thirds of all organizational change initiatives or change initiatives fail outright. And we also, you've heard this statistics about business failures. So the possibility of this startup operation that Jesus had with a few small number of people, the chances of that being successful were very remote to begin with. And how much less so when you have somebody who's trying to basically stamp it out of existence.

So Jesus confronts Paul on the road to Damascus and says, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" And then he said, "I have come to appoint you to be a spokesman, my spokesman, and to take my message to all of the Gentile world." So Jesus is going to even expand this cult beyond the Jew. At that

point, it was just basically a bunch of Jewish people who had become essentially a religious sect. In fact, if you think about in your church today, if there was a little small group of people who came up with a set of ideas that went all counter to your normal doctrine of your church, what would happen? Well, you'd be very upset with them too and you'd be trying to get them out of your church. That's exactly what Paul was doing.

But after this conversion of Paul, he said things like, "God our savior wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." Paul was a brilliant businessman. He's the kind of business leader, the kind of organizer that Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk would've paid big bucks to go to be able to sit under his teaching. He was just brilliant. And he came up with this incredible strategy, this genius plan to establish small groups of people called churches in all the major cities of the Roman empire. And over a period of 10 or 15 years, that's exactly what he did. He used the existing technology, that happened to be the system of Roman roads, in order to be able to gain quick access to all of these cities. He would set up small groups of people in those cities. He would train the leaders and then he would move on to the next city. He did this over a series of several trips. Famously we know about three missionary trips that he took.

And then he gets to be an old man. And he's starting to think about, okay, well, how do I keep this moving? What is the problem that he's trying to solve here in Second Timothy? The problem he's trying to keep to solve is: how do I keep this movement from dying out? How do I keep this movement from losing momentum? How do I keep things going?

It was a big question to him because his movement was under attack by false teachers, by desertions, so he's concerned about two things in today's text. He's concerned about safeguarding the message, and he's concerned about how will we transmit this message from generation to generation?

Hey, this is kind of like what's happening today as well. We are seeing a mass exodus of men, and especially younger men, from the church today. There are a lot of interesting philosophies and teachings that are drawing men, luring men away from the gospel today. So we might be asking the question, it would be normal for a speaker who's trying to get an audience all jacked up and amped up and ramped up and excited to sort of make some sort of a dire prediction, create some sort of a chaos, to create some kind of a crisis situation that just, "Unless we act now, everything's going to go to hell!"

But I'm here to tell you that this is really nothing new, what's going on right now. In fact, It's been going on throughout every generation. Voltaire said, "Another century, and there will not be a Bible on earth." Deceased 1778, about 250 years ago. Robert Ingersoll, a famous agnostic, said, "In 25 years, the Bible will be a forgotten book." Deceased 1899, well over a century ago.

So these are not new problems. They're problems that are faced in every generation. Here's the truth. Five billion Bibles have been sold. Five billion Bibles have been sold according to the Guinness World Records. 2.38 billion people call on the name of Jesus Christ, over 30% of the world population, according to one source.

And so, how did this happen? How did this happen? It happened because of the genius of Paul in his plan. And it's found right here in the text we're going to look at today, Second Timothy chapter two, verse two. The text reads this. "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."

This is what we know as the principle of spiritual multiplication. Many people have noted that there are four generations just in this one text. There's Paul, and then there's Timothy, and then there are the faithful men that Timothy entrust these teachings to, and then they're able to teach others. So, four generations. The principle of spiritual multiplication.

It's fascinating because we learn something in this text we really don't learn anywhere else. Jesus did not actually become this explicit. It's fascinating. In the, I would call it secular literature, this book called

the Triumph of Christianity, it's by a scholar named Bart Ehrman who's... I guess he's the head of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina, but he's an atheist. But he's the chairman of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina. He's an atheist, and he writes brilliantly about various things.

He says this about the apostle Paul, "I'm all too aware of the problem of hyperbole, but I nonetheless stick to my claim. Paul was not simply the most significant convert of the first few years of Christianity or of the first century or of the early church. He was the most significant Christian convert of all time." This is a guy who doesn't believe in Christianity. "One can argue that without Paul, Christian history as we know it would not have happened."

And then James McGregor Burns who won a Pulitzer Prize, winning book, this is really considered the bible in leadership studies or one of the bibles of leadership studies, he wrote of the Apostle Paul. He said, "Paul's codification of the values of Jesus is what makes the assimilation of these values expeditious and effective."

So Jesus gave us the vision, but Paul gave us the plan. And this is the plan, "The things which you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will also be able to teach others." We'll come back to this, but here's the Big Idea for the day. And you'll notice something about it. We claim this is our organizing principle. And that's because this Bible study was founded and has always been based on this verse that we're studying today, Second Timothy 2:2. The **Big Idea** today, **our organizing principle from this text: invest in men who will invest in other men**. This is the principle of spiritual multiplication. This is the genius of Paul's plan.

A SPIRITUAL FATHERING MOVEMENT

Now the next thing I want us to look at is, how this became and can be for us, a spiritual fathering movement? Again, to the text, "The things which you have heard me say, entrust to faithful men who'll be able to teach others." Okay, so what are these things? What are these things? Well, it would be all of Paul's writings. It would be all of the gospels. It would be all of the Bible that was in circulation at that time.

But Paul says this in First Corinthians 15 verses three to eight, he says, "For what I received, I pass onto you as of first importance." So of all the things that Paul was teaching, all the many things, all the things that he was wanting Timothy to entrust to reliable men, these are the things that are of first importance: that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised. And on the third day, according to the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, or Peter, and then to the 12, and after that to over 500 witnesses at the same time, most of whom were still living when Paul wrote this. And then in verse seven, he appeared to James and then the apostles. And last of all, he appeared to me. This is the experience that Paul had on the road to Damascus.

And this is the resurrection. This is the evidence of the resurrection. The foundation of the Christian faith is the resurrection of Jesus, the bodily resurrection of Jesus. If there was no resurrection, this would've just been another cult that came and went. But these people witnessed Jesus after he was raised from the dead. Jesus proclaimed that he had come to seek and to save the lost, and he died for our sin. But what makes Christianity alive, what makes the plan of Paul work is that Jesus was visibly seen by all of these witnesses after he had been brutally murdered on a cross. And he even appeared to Paul. That was what so dramatically changed Paul's life. This violent, unscrupulous persecutor of this small group of people completely changed when he came to believe in the resurrection.

These are the things that are first importance. These are the things that spiritual fathers pass on to their sons. Again, to the text, "These things, then, which you've heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will also be able to teach others." Paul started a movement

of spiritual fathering, a spiritual fathering movement. He was the father to Timothy, and he encouraged Timothy to do the same with other men. What kind of men? Faithful men.

This Bible study, as I said, was started around this verse. And we have a couple of documents that table leaders have to sign each year. One is a job description. And at the top, one of the things that it has there is investing in men who will invest in other men as a focusing idea, as an organizing principle of the Bible study.

Then at the bottom of this job description each year, I won't go into all the detail, but there are some major responsibilities that a table leader has and they're numbered. In front of each number is a blank line. Every year, each table leader puts a number from one to four in that blank line. Before, and I'll give you one example, "personal holiness" is the first one. There's a line in front of it. And after personal holiness, it talks about what the table leader will endeavor to do in terms of his own personal holiness.

Most informal organizations don't have an exit strategy for men who have changed their minds about what they're doing. We do. Every year, every table lead leader has the opportunity to renew or move on to a new calling by evaluating his own faithfulness. "Entrust these things to faithful men." So number four, number four means "very faithful." Number three means "mostly faithful." Number two means "somewhat faithful." And number one means "not faithful." And then, so, in front of nine different items, the table leader will put one, two, three or four. And so most of the guys, each year, put threes and fours, "very faithful" or "mostly faithful." Every now and then somebody will put some ones and twos, "not faithful," or "somewhat faithful." And then we have a little talk. Usually what I find is that it was a really tough year. There was this incredible business project. His wife had to become a caretaker for an aging parent, and everything was just thrown into chaos and turmoil, but there's still the passion. And so, that's fine. We renew for the next year. We clear that up.

Also, every year, table leaders have to sign The Man in the Mirror statement of faith. It's on our website if you wanted to look at that, you could find that there, 10 items. I took the Campus Crusade for Christ crew. This is, whatever it was, in 1991 or something. I took the Campus Crusade for Christ statement of faith and just modified it, shortened it a little bit, and that's on our website. Basically, what this statement of faith does, is it recounts the things that Paul said were of first importance and a few other things and puts them down.

And so, we want to have a movement of spiritual fathering ourselves. And the way that we do that is we take these things, which we've heard from Paul in the presence of many witnesses, and then we entrust these to faithful men who will also be able to teach others. A spiritual fathering movement, a movement of spiritual fathering. The Big Idea here today is that this is **our organizing principle** of the Bible study: **invest in men who will invest in other men.**

ARE YOU READY TO BE A SPIRITUAL FATHER?

So the final thing, then, today is: are you ready to be a spiritual father? Are you already part of the movement? Are you already spiritually fathering? Are you already a Paul to another man or a Timothy to another man? A Timothy who's entrusting? Somebody's fathered you and now you're fathering someone else. Are you ready to be a spiritual father?

The text did not say, "Entrust these things to powerful men." It did not say, "Entrust these things to successful men." It did not say, "Entrust these things to unscrupulous scoundrels like Paul," but that's exactly what God did. God can use a scoundrel; he can use a successful man. When I first left business and did my first ministry project, it was in Mississippi. When I arrived, there had been a group of pastors in the city of Jackson, Mississippi, who had been praying that God would send someone to help them pull together the Black and White community in Jackson, Mississippi.

One of the pastors there, Dan Hall said to me, pulled me aside. He said, "We've been..." And he's the one that told me they've been praying for years that God would send somebody to help them. He said,

"Yeah, we've been praying for years that God would send a man. I just can't believe he sent you." He said, "You remind me of that text in First Corinthians where it says how God uses the weak things of this world." I said, "Well, I couldn't agree more. I'm not a great speaker. I'm not the best speaker in the world. I'm not the best writer in the world, but I tell you what I am, is I am faithful. I am faithful. And that's the characteristic that's required to be a spiritual father."

Dwight L Moody, really my favorite... He was an Evangelist in the 1800s. I can't tell you which category he's my favorite in, because he's my favorite in so many different categories, but he was a man of passion. He was a man of passion. And as a younger man, he heard this said one day that God has yet to see, the world has yet to see, what God can do through a man who is fully consecrated to him. When he heard those words, he said, "He just said 'a man.' He did not say 'a great man,' or 'a learned man,' or 'a rich man,' or a wise man,' or 'an eloquent man,' or even 'a smart man.' He just said 'a man.' I am a man. And it lies within the man himself, whether or not he will make that full and complete consecration. I will do my utmost to be that man."

It changed his life. And he became a spiritual father to an entire generation of people because he was willing to answer the call to be part of a spiritual fathering movement, to do Second Timothy chapter two, verse two, "And the things that you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to reliable men, faithful men who will also be qualified to teach others."

So are you ready to be a spiritual father yourself? Two things. Commit, make a commitment to the things that Paul shared with us, the gospel, the first things, the resurrection, the forgiveness of sins, the gospel of Jesus. Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes." He said, "I've been crucified with Christ and I no longer live. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me." This is the passion that comes to a man who embraces those things of first importance. To be a spiritual father is to embrace the things.

And then the second part of being a spiritual father is to be faithful, to entrust the things to others who may also then be qualified to teach others.

Somewhere right now, in your orbit, maybe in your neighborhood, maybe at your place of work, maybe in your family, maybe one of your children, maybe a parent or some other relative, or someone you've been building a relationship with through a hobby or a sport, right now that person does not know how they can go on one more day. Their soul is so shriveled up, they are so distraught over the state of the world, they have no sense of where their life is going, they have no sense of who they are, they have no sense of why they exist. And they are aching for someone to come alongside them and be a spiritual father. They're aching for someone to come alongside of them and show them the way, to take them under their wing and show them the ropes just like someone did for you.

It's not enough to become a disciple. "Disciples not making disciples" is an oxymoron. It's an internally inconsistent statement. On behalf of Jesus, and on behalf of Paul, I'd just like to invite all of us to either make the commitment or reaffirm or rekindle the commitment that we will be the men who will reach the next generations, that we will be the spiritual fathers that save this city, that you will be the spiritual fathers that will save your city from the current crisis. Oh, it will pass, but the thing is, if we don't answer the call, God's going to pick somebody else. But right now you've heard this message because he wants to pick you up. Let's pray.

Our Father in heaven, we know that the times do seem dire. And yet times, it seems dire all the time. We don't despair because we have the gospel. But Lord, we know that there are many who don't have this gospel or don't have it as firmly as we have it and they are in despair. Help us to father those people, especially to be spiritual fathers to other men in our spheres of influence, who right now may be desperate. We ask this in Jesus name. Amen.

