



Editor's Note

You will notice with this edition, we are going back to our former layout. Thanks to all who gave us feedback on that. Our goal, despite the cosmetic changes, remains the same: to provide short, concise, practical teaching for elders. We trust you are blessed by reading each issue. As we enter our 13th year of publication, we thank the Lord for His provisions through those who faithfully support this ministry.

If you know of someone who is not currently receiving ESN, why not pass a copy along to

them and encourage them to subscribe? See our back panel for information or go online at www.bible-equip.org/esn.

One last notice, Everyday Publications has offered to publish ESN in book form, in a five volume series. The first one has already been printed and includes articles in the category of "Biblical Foundations." You can order a copy online at <http://everydaypublications.org/EPI/> or wherever books by Everyday Publications are sold. 

Biblical Foundations Foundation for Serving

by Chuck Gianotti

Studies in 2 Timothy—Part 1 (1:1-14)
This is the beginning of a multi-part series on 2 Timothy. For the series on 1 Timothy, see Elders' Shopnotes, V6N6 through V9N4.

Training for a young Christian leader by an older mentor—that is the biblical ideal. We get a rather large glimpse of this in action in the writings from Paul the older to Timothy the younger. As the apostle on a number of occasions has instructed, we should follow his apostolic example (see Phil 3:17, 4:9, 1 Cor 4:6). We can infer from this that we should seek out a mentor (if we are younger) or seek out someone to mentor (if we are older and more experienced).

Few of us have been mentored and therefore are confused about how to mentor someone else. However, we can gain some insights by observing the relationship of Paul and Timothy as revealed in his 2nd letter. In this small letter we can both look to the apostle as our own mentor and also see his heart and method for mentoring others.

From the start of this letter, Paul views his identity in his 1) spiritual giftedness as an apostle, 2) submission to "the will of God" and 3) rootedness in the promises of God. Keeping this in focus is the foundation for serving the Lord and His people!

Mentoring is not something to be institutionalized, like a military training program, or regimented within an ecclesiastical authority structure. Rather, it is characterized by affection and personal relationship ("my beloved son"). And true to form, Paul hopes for grace and peace for his reader (as he does in all his letters, and here he adds *mercy* as well)—three necessary ingredients for genuine spiritual ministry.

Timothy is not mentioned as an apostle,

but the term "Christian leader" would aptly describe his ministry of teaching, exhortation and influence. To this young Christian leader, Paul intimates that when serving the Lord and His people, two things, thankfulness and a clear conscience, are indispensable! Thankfulness, because leadership is a privilege, not a right—and as such is something which should elicit gratitude. Leadership is not something a person is entitled to, for example, because of theological training or even years of faithful service.

Getting this wrong proves to be the downfall of many men who feel a sense of entitlement to be an elder or leader. While a person can train for leadership through his

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study of the word, living faithfully and gaining experience in different leadership scenarios, the actual and legitimate role of a leader among God's people is something that God alone bestows, as He does all spiritual gifts and services. Personal ambition for such "achievements" leads to spiritual failure or at best spiritual ineffectiveness. William MacDonald points out that, "We should remember that [Paul] was writing from a Roman dungeon," yet was still thankful for the privilege of serving God (see also Acts 5:41 where Peter and John were "rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name").

Further, Paul speaks of the value of genuineness in his service ("clear conscience"). He did not simply go through the motions expected of leaders (see Galatians 1-2 for his assertion of being free of the "men-pleaser" syndrome). Leaders must be clear in whom they serve (namely, God), and why they serve (because of His will, not their own).

As a mentor of the first order, we see Paul reminding Timothy of his spiritual background

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Some years ago, a young believer in a well-established assembly rushed up to one of the elders on a Sunday morning and said in a tone of alarm, "Sir, our assembly is falling apart!" "What do you mean?" replied the elder. "Come and see." Following the young man out the door and around to the back of the building in which they met, the problem was pointed out. Sure enough; there were several large foundation stones that had come loose over the winter falling out of the wall that supported the building.

We smile at such a story as the young man had obviously not yet gotten his terminology straight, but it does make several good points. He knew danger when he saw it, instinctively he sought help from a more experienced brother, and in so doing he was demonstrating his love for his home church.

This true story has always reminded me of a passage in Titus 1:9-11. After listing qualities of a church elder, Paul the apostle mentions one of surpassing importance: the ability of an elder to handle the Scriptures to defend the church. Referring to false teachers "whose mouths must be stopped," Paul describes the danger in graphic terms. He says that their teachings will do in the church what this young brother saw happening to the building. The NASB says "they undermine whole families." The word literally means "to overturn" or "to upset."

Consider what is actually being described. This was probably not an open attack against the doctrines of the faith that could be quickly identified as unorthodox, but a subtle erosion of foundation truth upon which true Christianity rests. How do elders protect the church from false doctrines of the subtle sort?

Elders must know the Scriptures, be able to identify dangers and courageously confront the opposers. Three things will help in this good work. Preparation, vigilance and courage are all virtues of godly leaders, and require a close walk with the Lord and partnership in a disciplined team effort to succeed. Let's think about how this can work practically.

Preparation

Elders are generally portrayed in the New Testament as ordinary working men with families and jobs. They are not religious professionals with special degrees

and often have no formal religious training, although there is nothing wrong with good Christian education. The point is that most elders do not become leaders in the church because they have attained proficiency in systematic theology but because they love the Lord and have a care for the flock.

Some may be especially skilled in the handling of Scripture, but it has often been pointed out that false doctrines are most dangerous when they closely resemble the truth. Wise elders will acquaint themselves with the foundational doctrines of the faith, and the Scripture passages that sup-

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port those doctrines. And elders should make good use of reference Bibles, good books by men who have wisdom in these matters, as well as Bible correspondence courses and (where possible) schools of higher learning.

The very description of an elder given by Paul in the Titus 1 passage is instructive; "Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught...." (vs. 9 NKJV) Not only must the elder know the Word and hold it fast, but note also that he is a teachable man. There is no shame in an elder admitting that he does not know everything and could become more useful by sharpening his skills. Wise elders will devote some part of their meeting times together in the study of the Word (Acts 6:2,4).

Vigilance

In his farewell address to the elders of the church at Ephesus (Acts 20), Paul used words like "take heed" and "watch" because of threats that would come after his departure. He specifically warned of dangers coming into the church both from the outside and also rising up from within the church. These latter individuals would speak perverse or corrupt words with the intent of drawing away followers as their disciples.

Elders must always be watching and weighing the spirit of the ministry given in the church. In spite of the dangers of false doctrine, there is never the slightest hint in the New Testament that the free exercise of the priesthood of the believer is too

risky and ought to be replaced by a one and only speaker who, because he is hand-picked and authorized, will say only things that are "safe." As in those early days, so the church today must receive teaching through a healthy number of trusted brethren, and the elders will always, as a matter of oversight, be ensuring that the food given to the flock is sound and edifying, for they bear the ultimate responsibility for the feeding of the flock (Acts 20:28).

Prov. 11:14 reminds us that "in the multitude of counselors there is safety," and we can picture a team of elders exchanging counsel on the profitability of ministry given by those who visit and those who share in the regular teaching of the assembly. This wise plan is God's design, and allows young men who have some gift in opening the Word to edify the very congregation where they are well known. How different from groups where the gifts of men in the congregation can lie dormant while the church calls in strangers to fill the "empty pulpit."

Finally, it should go without saying that whatever dangers might come through the public preaching, can be even more insidious when passed on quietly in private conversations. Thankfully, the Lord has His ways of bringing these things to light to elders who make it a regular practice to "watch and pray."

Courage

A past article in ESN (May, 2004) was devoted to the necessity of elders being willing to confront difficult people and situations when required. Here is one area where boldness is a great virtue. Elders cannot afford to sit quietly by while diseased teaching upsets the church and undermines the faith. How many congregations have been decimated by error disguised as "exciting new truth," while the overseers stood silently by?

Using some strong words in Titus 1:9-10, Paul describes the false teachers as "gainsayers" (KJV) or "those who contradict" (NKJV), "insubordinate, ...idle talkers, and deceivers" who undermine the faith of believers with a motive of personal gain (vs. 11). As peace-loving men, elders are probably reluctant to enter into controversy with men who may be in great favor with the people of the church. Whenever possible,

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Wives' Corner

Forgiveness

by Ruth Spender

The Lord Jesus Christ willingly came to earth over 2000 years ago as the Babe born in Bethlehem. He lived and died that we might know His love and forgiveness in our lives. Are we enjoying unbroken fellowship with Him as we seek His forgiveness on a daily basis? Are we forgiving others?

As believers, we are fully forgiven and secure for all eternity. But when it comes to our daily walk, there is an on going need to forgive one another as we work side by side.

In the Lord's prayer we are reminded that our Heavenly Father will "forgive our debts as we forgive our debtors." God's Word makes it very clear that practicing forgiveness is not optional in the Christian life (Eph 4:32). Bitterness and resentment will result if we fail to forgive. Forgiveness is the oil that allows our relationships to purr and run smoothly. You remember how large-hearted Peter felt when he asked the Lord if he should forgive an erring brother seven times. Thank God that His ability to forgive us is limitless. 1 John 1:9 says that "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive..." (NKJV). Can we do any less?

Many years ago when I was a young bride, a woman verbally ripped my husband to shreds after his Sunday morning message. I was quite upset with her, to say the least, but chose to deal with the problem by avoiding her. This went on for several months. The Lord spoke increasingly loud to my heart and reminded me that I was to forgive her as Christ had forgiven me. I was not to wait until she was sorry for what she had done. As soon as I did this, there was a peace in my heart and a love for this sister that I enjoy to this day. She would answer to the Lord for what she had done, not to me.

How is this working out practically for us in our everyday lives? Charity begins at home. Are we as wives quick to forgive our husbands or our children when harsh words are exchanged or there is a display of self centeredness? Do we seek to make our homes a place of refuge, not only for the family, but for any who may enter? As those who are called upon by God to guide the home, do we take seriously our role of setting a God honoring tone for those around us? It doesn't mean we will be perfect, but like Paul, we press toward the mark for the prize of the high

calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Once we do this, we gain credibility to reach out to our brothers and sisters and display forgiveness within the local church.

Perhaps you struggle as I have in forgiving someone who does not see the need for forgiveness in her life. Remember Christ's example from the cross. "Father forgive them for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). We need to forgive someone who may have hurt us even if they feel they have done nothing wrong. Forgiving others does not make their wrong right. It does make us free...free to carry on our work for God. We simply place the situation in the Lord's hands. He has the next move.

I often think how wonderful it is that we can partner with God in forgiving others. How it must bring Him joy when we readily extend this grace freely. Is there anyone that you should forgive, but for some reason you are holding back? How wonderful it would be to look at each believer we know and say, "I truly love you as my brother or sister in Christ." 

Protecting the Church from False Teachers *(cont. from page 2)*

such confrontations should be handled privately. But there are times when elders must take a public stand to refute error, and even reject those who bring false doctrines. How much of this is to be inferred from the statement "whose mouths must be stopped" (vs. 11) can only be guessed!

Not long ago, the writer witnessed a situation where elders felt constrained to

confront men whose teaching had crippled the assembly through legalism for many years. The process was painful and required real courage, but the outcome was delightful. One elder was heard to remark that the very

tone of the fellowship times had a new freshness, as friends were now coming in and cold hearts were thawing out, giving way to smiles and hugs of endearment, as the Word was received with joy and rejoicing.

Some Reminders

Many young people today are growing up in a permissive society where it is normal to be suspicious of, or even resent au-

thority. Even after conversion, some of this may hold over in their thinking. In time they will grow, but in the meantime, it is especially important that all admonition and correction be undertaken in a Christlike spirit of sincerity and grace.

Paul told Timothy to "Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine...." (I Tim 4:16). This advice is just as needful today

It is hard work to learn good doctrine. But it is critical so that faulty doctrine can be recognized.

Living as we do in a world of lawsuits, elders must be wise in handling necessary disciplines regarding false teaching. They must never think: "Such things could never happen to us." Keeping dated notes of meetings, and making sure that difficult

public statements about persons involved in doctrinal or moral difficulties are carried out, with written copies available to all in the fellowship, will provide helpful safeguards. Accusations and inflammatory statements

should be avoided, and the simple statement of the error and consequent action should be written as if it might become evidence in court. It has happened to some!

Elders who work at being gentle and gracious shepherds without giving up their calling as "overseers" or watchmen will not find their assembly falling apart because the foundations have been eroded. Rather, they will be an encouragement to healthy growth among God's people. 

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as when written. Elders who labor in the Word and doctrine (I Tim. 5:17) do a good work and should be honored. Why? The flesh longs to be soothed and made to feel good. Teachers who tickle "itching ears" (II Tim. 4:3) can win a place in the hearts of young believers as they tell of their exploits and travels and make the audience laugh with their jokes. But this will not build sound doctrine into the hearts of the saints!

Foundation for Serving *(cont. from page 1)*

and heritage of faith (vs. 5), and challenging him to live up to God's gifting in his life (vs. 6)—or, to adapt the words of Galatians 5:25 (NASB), to keep in step with the Spirit's giftedness in his life and ministry. Paul had a unique awareness of Timothy's giftedness but also his timidity (vs. 7), and admonishes him to serve in "power and love and discipline." Younger men need mentors willing to provide this kind of encouragement, that is, admonition rooted in an affectionate love.

As a young man seeking to serve the Lord, I found myself in one particular situation where I was guilty of making a bad decision that affected some others. An older brother came along side of me with gentle love and concern and said, "Remember this, a man who never makes a mistake, is a man who never does anything." At the same time, I was rebuked (his statement acknowledged that I had indeed made a bad decision) and also encouraged (he recognized that I was making a genuine effort). This counsel from a trusted brother encouraged me to continue on with proper correction. In the same way, Paul, as a mentor, humbly implies that he also had struggled with fear by his use of the pronoun "us" (vs. 7) What a beautiful admonishment that surely must have moved Timothy to corrective action.

A mentor cannot call someone to a standard higher than he himself has attained. Paul accepted suffering in his own service, and therefore invites Timothy to the same suffering. In Timothy's case, it means not being ashamed of the "testimony of the Lord" (vs. 8). Others might think less of him because of his service for the Lord and

he should not shrink back from the more difficult aspects of service.

Ministry is a calling, and Paul wants to emphasize this to his mentoree. God "has saved us and called us with a holy calling" (vs. 9). He was appointed a preacher, apostle and teacher (vs. 11), just as Timothy was appointed through the laying on of hands (vs. 6). Leadership must be seen as a calling—otherwise the sacrifice will be too great. From a human perspective, it has been said that leaders need thick skin to endure the difficulties and conflict that accompany leadership. But spiritual leaders need a strong sense of God's calling to endure the hardships. What are these? Long hours, late night preparations for ministry, resistance, conflict, dealing with strong personalities or spiritual immaturity, and the list goes on. Not to mention the burden for the spiritual lives of the Christians. Paul presents himself to Timothy as an example of these things (vs. 12).

He is convinced, in reference to his life and ministry, that God "is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day" (vs. 12). He dared to believe the Lord had raised him up for his ministry and he sacrificed greatly for that calling—and then left the results to God. When leaders take responsibility for the *results* of their ministry, they are doomed to discouragement or superficial satisfaction. How could anyone measure effectiveness over a certain length of time, when the God of eternity, for Whom one day is as a year, and a year as a day, reserves evaluation of our ministry until a later time? We

need to be careful about superficial, time-bound judgments of ministry and God's ministers. Our goal is to live out our giftedness faithfully, and leave the results up to God. Who knows but our goal may be to show forth God's glory through our patience and faithfulness when we don't see the results in our lifetime!

Therefore, following Paul's example, we need to keep in step with the Spirit (vs. 14) and guard the "treasure which has been entrusted to" us, namely our ministry for the Lord. We need to guard against discouragement, feelings of rejection, self-pity and comparisons with others. Let us not let our ministry default – which removes any hope that God can use us. David feared he would become useless to the Lord's purposes—that is the essence of his plea, "Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me" (Psalm 51:11). Paul feared being "disqualified" (1 Cor 9:27). Therefore, as elders let us guard the treasure of spiritual leadership so that we will not be rendered useless to God's purposes. 

THE SMALL PRINT

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