

# **Timothy**

**Learning to Lead**

**By Jon Byler**

The following is a compilation of a biweekly email newsletter series on the life of Timothy. These “Reflections for Serving Leaders” were written for serving leaders around the world to learn what it means to lead like Jesus. The issue number and date used are the dates for the original publication.

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# Timothy: Hungry to Learn

#350, May 31, 2023

In the previous series we looked at what Paul did as a serving leader to develop his leadership pipeline. Our primary focus was on what Paul did to help Timothy grow in leadership. In this series we'll flip the focus to Timothy and look at what he did that helped develop his leadership capacity. Although we don't have any recorded words of Timothy, his life is a model for us in learning how we can grow and develop our own capacity and how we can encourage the heart and actions of Timothy in those we lead. Consider Paul's words to him about learning:

*<sup>14</sup> But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, <sup>15</sup> and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 3:14–15, NIV).*

At the heart of Timothy's leadership journey was his lifelong passion to learn and grow. His life is an example to all serving leaders.

## **Timothy acknowledged the priority of learning.**

Timothy was likely only a year or two old in his new faith when Paul requested him to join the team. He was young and inexperienced, and he realized that he had a lot to learn. He would spend the next season of life with Paul who was already an effective leader. But Timothy recognized that Paul's training would only be effective if he was a willing learner.

Some leaders are content to learn enough to get the job done, but they don't have a hunger to learn more. They see learning as only a tool to accomplish a task or achieve a specific goal. But serving leaders see the priority of learning and begin a life-long pursuit of growth so that they can influence and serve more people. They recognize that their growth will also impact the growth of those around them. And serving leaders know that unless they grow and develop themselves, they cannot effectively grow and develop others.

## **Timothy accepted the process of learning.**

Timothy accepted the reality that his learning would be a process. It began by choosing the right people to learn from. *"...because you know those from whom you learned it."* Timothy watched Paul's life carefully, but he also learned much from his mother and grandmother. (See 2 Timothy 1:5). Timothy recognized that the learning process would be continuous. *"...continue in what you have learned..."* Timothy was now a seasoned leader on his own. But he wanted to continue growing. He realized that this would be a lifelong process.

Some leaders try to take shortcuts in the learning process and only pursue more growth when they face an obstacle they can't overcome. But serving leaders choose continued growth knowing that the price they pay is worth the effort.

## **Timothy acquired the product of learning.**

As Paul observed Timothy's life at this stage, he recognized that Timothy had acquired a deep conviction from his learning. *"...you...have become convinced..."* Timothy began his journey uncertain and inexperienced, but over time, as he learned and grew, he developed confidence. This confidence was not arrogance, but a settled conviction that he was ready and able to lead others. This confidence grew out of the continuous learning journey that he had pursued all his life.

Some leaders never acquire confidence in their gifting, calling and capacity and are unable to genuinely serve others. Without confidence they assert power and use their position for themselves. But serving leaders acquire confidence through a lifetime of learning and release power and authority to those they serve.

*For further reflection and discussion:*

- How hungry am I to grow as a leader? Is my hunger increasing or diminishing over time? How does this impact my leadership capacity?
- How can I develop a greater hunger to learn in my own life? What daily or weekly disciplines do I have that keep me growing? Who am I intentionally looking at as a person that helps me grow?
- Reflect on those you lead. What can I do to encourage them to develop a hunger for learning? Am I doing my part to make learning accessible and expected for them?
- In addition to the verses we used in this issue, consider the following verses from Timothy's life: 1 Timothy 4:12, 15–16; 1 Timothy 6:20-21; and 2 Timothy 1:6, 13-14. What additional insights do you find from these verses about how Timothy was hungry to learn and grow?
- In this series we are looking at the life of Timothy. It's a great time to read through the two books in the Bible with his name, written to him by Paul. As you read, reflect on what Timothy did to grow as a leader and how his actions apply to your own growth.

Until next time, yours on the journey,

Jon Byler

In the next issue, we'll look at how Timothy paid the price of leadership.

# Timothy: Paying the Price of Leadership

#351, June 14, 2023

Timothy was hungry to learn but he also recognized that growth in leadership comes at a cost. He was willing to pay the price that was required to shape him into the strong leader that he would become. Consider these scriptures about his life:

*Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek (Acts 16:3, NIV).*

*For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God (2 Timothy 1:7–8).*

*Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity (1 Timothy 4:12).*

These verses, and many others, hint at the price Timothy needed to pay to be the leader we admire today.

## ***Timothy paid the price of surrendering.***

Before he even left home, Timothy learned that leadership is not about him and his comfort but about being ready and willing to serve others. The pain of circumcision was more than physical, it meant that he was willing to surrender his own comfort for the sake of those he wanted to serve. When people would look down on him because of his youth, he would surrender his desire to fight back and declare his position. Timothy was learning an early lesson that all serving leaders eventually learn—at the heart of serving leadership is a heart attitude of surrender.

Some leaders are not willing to give up their own ambitions, dreams, and ego for the sake of those they serve. But serving leaders pay the price of surrender, not once but daily.

## ***Timothy paid the price of stretching.***

When Timothy agreed to join Paul, it was an exciting new adventure but it was also costly. Traveling to new cities was not all exotic, especially when they were chased out of town with stones! This journey would require Timothy to stretch and grow in ways that would not be comfortable. He had to relocate and leave the comfort of his own home and place of his birth. He would need to stretch his “timid” personality to be a bold leader. He would stretch out of his comfort zone with continual new challenges and greater levels of responsibility as he matured under Paul’s guidance. He would pay the price of learning to receive the correction and counsel that Paul continued to give even as a seasoned leader. He needed to stretch his own character to be a model for others.

Some leaders want responsibility and authority without being willing to pay the price of being stretched in their own growth. But serving leaders accept that leadership is a journey of continual growth and development. Serving leaders focus on stretching themselves before directing others.

## ***Timothy paid the price of suffering.***

Timothy paid the price of physical suffering and was likely jailed at least once. (See Hebrews 13:23). But he also suffered along with Paul as they were persecuted on many occasions. He suffered the isolation of separation from his family, the discomfort of continual

moves, and the false accusations others made about him. Apparently, he also suffered physical ailments. (See 1 Timothy 5:23).

Many leaders step back from leadership when they face suffering and decide to take a less costly path. But serving leaders accept that suffering is a price of leadership and will be used to strengthen their character and make them more effective in serving others.

*For further reflection and discussion:*

- What price have I already paid to lead? Are there other steps I should take as a leader that have seemed too costly for me to take? What will it take for me to be willing to pay the price? Who can help me take this step?
- In what way(s) have I surrendered my own ambition, dreams or ego this week? How does this impact my leadership?
- In what way(s) am I currently stretching my leadership capacity? Are any changes needed?
- How do I respond to suffering in my leadership and how does this impact my growth?
- What can I do to help those I lead be willing to pay the price of leadership?
- In addition to the verses we used in this issue, consider the following verses: 2 Timothy 2:3, 3:12, and 4:5. What additional insights do you find from these verses about how Timothy paid a price for his leadership?

Until next time, yours on the journey,

Jon Byler

In the next issue, we'll examine how Timothy clarified his calling.

# Timothy: Clarifying the Call

#352, June 28, 2023

Timothy had a gifting and calling to the leadership roles in which he served, especially in his leadership of the church at Ephesus. But there were many years of growth and development that preceded this assignment and during that time Timothy was clarifying his calling. Consider these instructions Paul gave to Timothy:

*Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you (1 Timothy 4:14, NIV).*

*For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands (2 Timothy 1:6).*

*Timothy, my son, I am giving you this command in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by recalling them you may fight the battle well (1 Timothy 1:18).*

In these passages Paul encouraged Timothy to be clear about the call he had received to be a leader. There are several steps Timothy took to clarify his call which serve as a model for all serving leaders.

## ***Timothy recognized the call to lead.***

Paul reminds Timothy that there was a time that a body of elders laid hands on him and prophetically identified the calling and gifting that was in Timothy. We can't know for certain when this happened but since Paul later reminds him to remember the call, it is likely that it was early in his leadership journey, perhaps when he first left home to travel with Paul. In any case, when this happened it was the beginning of recognition of his gifting and calling. Like most leaders Timothy did not likely see his own abilities and needed others to speak into his life to confirm his gifting. Serving leaders receive this as a part of their journey and they also seek to do the same for others around them.

## ***Timothy reinforced the call to lead.***

Paul encouraged Timothy to “not neglect” and to “fan into flame” the gift that was within him. This is a call to nurture and develop what has been identified. There would be many steps of learning and growth that were required before Timothy was ready to lead the church at Ephesus and we'll look at many of these later in this series. For now, suffice it to say that the gifts in Timothy were clearly given but also needed to be reinforced. He would have to learn to lead as the prophecies foretold. He would practice and sometimes make mistakes but continued learning and growing. Timothy would also learn to acknowledge that he was not gifted in every way, he had his unique strengths but he would not be excellent at every aspect of leadership. Serving leaders acknowledge that they are called and gifted to lead and at the same time recognize the diverse gifts that are needed around them. They “fan into flame” their own gifts as they learn to lead well.

## ***Timothy remembered the call to lead.***

Paul admonishes Timothy to “recall” the prophecies that had been spoken over him years earlier. What was the purpose of this reminder? Perhaps Timothy was going through a difficult time in his leadership journey and needed encouragement. Or maybe he was feeling so successful that he was forgetting the reason that he was serving. Timothy, like all serving

leaders, needed to stop and reflect on why he was doing what he was doing. They need to remember their own call to serve others with their leadership gifts.

Paul wanted Timothy to remain in Ephesus...maybe it was difficult and Timothy felt like giving up. We need to remember the purpose behind our serving. Encouragement is needed.

*For further reflection and discussion:*

- Where did I first recognize that I was gifted and called to leadership? Were there others who affirmed this in me and if so, have I expressed my appreciation to them for this gift?
- Who around me has leadership gifts that I can identify and affirm? How and when will I do this?
- What are my greatest leadership strengths and what am I currently doing to develop them?
- How deeply have I accepted that I will never excel at every element of leadership but I can bring a team around me to complement my weaknesses? How does this impact my leadership?
- Reflect on those you lead. What can I do to encourage them to clarify their own calling?
- In addition to the verses we used in this issue, consider the following verses: 1 Timothy 4:15-16; 6:11-12, 20; and 2 Timothy 2:14. What additional insights do you find from these verses about how Timothy clarified his call?

In this series we are looking at the life of Timothy. It's a great time to read through the two books in the Bible with his name, written to him by Paul. As you read, reflect on what Timothy did to grow as a leader and how his actions apply to your own growth.

Until next time, yours on the journey,

Jon Byler

In the next issue, we'll look at how Timothy learned the Word.



# Timothy: Learning the Word

#353, July 12, 2023

One of the many things Timothy needed to learn as a church leader was how to understand, apply and teach the scriptures. As a follower of Jesus, this was his essential textbook for life and leadership.

Consider these exhortations from Paul:

<sup>15</sup>*and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.* <sup>16</sup>*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:15–16, NIV).*

*Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).*

We might hear Paul's words as instructions to us and rightly so. But underneath his admonitions Paul reveals what Timothy had done over a lifetime of exposure to the ancient Jewish scriptures.

## **Timothy learned to know the Word.**

Paul reminded Timothy that *"from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures..."* Paul observed a discipline that Timothy had developed for years. Without the luxury of pulling a book off the shelf at his home, Timothy invested time to learn the Word. He had to take time to go somewhere, listen, study, memorize and ponder the meaning of this book. He likely discussed with his teachers the meaning and application of the ancient texts. In the Word he observed the lives of successful and unsuccessful leaders. He learned that some leaders focus on themselves while others focus on those they lead. As he learned to know the Word his character, thinking, and leadership actions were slowly but deliberately shaped. His leadership was grounded in ultimate realities far beyond himself.

Some leaders don't give careful thought to what model of leadership they will follow. Instead, they seek to do whatever seems right and most likely to produce the outcomes they desire. But serving leaders recognize that what they read, study, and ponder shapes their thinking and their actions. They seek the truth of the Word as the foundation for their leadership journey.

## **Timothy learned to live the Word.**

Paul also noted that the scriptures *"make you wise for salvation..."* and are useful for *"training in righteousness."* Timothy not only learned to know the word; he learned to put into practice what he was learning. He transferred knowledge from his head to his hands, living out what he learned. He realized that before he could tell others how to lead, he had to model what he wanted them to do.

Some leaders pursue knowledge for the sake of knowing and impressing others. But serving leaders seek knowledge that shapes their actions. They show the way before they teach the way.

## **Timothy learned to teach the Word.**

Paul was not satisfied for Timothy to know the Word and to live it out, he wanted so see multiplication! So, he told Timothy that the Word is *"useful for teaching..."* Timothy was to use his own life and leadership to raise up other leaders, sharing with them the truths he had

learned and practiced. While some leaders focus only on their own growth and development, serving leaders always look for others to develop. They invest their lives in passing on to the younger leaders what they have learned as Paul did with Timothy. Serving leaders shape the lives of others as they teach a different way to live. Where this is done effectively, leadership gets better with each generation!

*For further reflection and discussion:*

- How can I more deliberately see the Word as my primary source of leadership training? Am I taking the time to know it well? Do I ponder what the instructions, stories and examples teach me about leadership?
- Reflect on those you lead. What can I do to encourage them to use the Word as a source of their growth and development? If I am leading persons who do not share my faith, how can I point them to this source without being offensive?
- Can I say with confidence that my life is a model for others to follow? If not, what do I need to change to practice the Word?
- In what ways am I deliberately teaching younger leaders how to live and lead? How can I do this more effectively?
- In addition to the verses we used in this issue, consider the following: 1 Timothy 4:12; 15–16; 2 Timothy 2:25–26; 4:2 What additional insights do you find from these verses about how Timothy learned the Word?

Until next time, yours on the journey,

Jon Byler

In the next issue, we'll examine how Timothy learned to think and reflect.

# Timothy: Learning to Reflect

#354, July 26, 2023

Timothy was a young man, eager to save the world as he joined his mentor, Paul. But along the way he learned that leadership is not all about action. Leadership certainly involves the actions leaders take as well as the heart and motives underneath the actions. But leadership also includes the mind, thinking, pondering, and reflecting. These are things that Timothy would learn on his own journey. Consider these instructions Paul gave Timothy.

*Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this (2 Timothy 2:7, NIV).*

*But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry. 2 Timothy 4:5 (NIV)*

Paul calls Timothy to “reflect” and to “keep your head.” Timothy needed to learn how to think as a leader, spending time learning the importance of reflection and thought. His example teaches serving leaders to understand the power and practice of reflection.

## **Reflection releases insight.**

Paul tells Timothy that reflection will produce insight. Paul could have simply told Timothy the insight, but he wanted Timothy to develop the capacity to reflect and gain his own insight! The muscle of reflection needed to be exercised for Timothy to gain insight. Reflection takes a leader out of the immediate tasks and allows thought on the bigger picture. Reflection allows a leader to gain insight that helps them lead. This insight may be a needed change of direction or a clearer focus on current priorities. It may be a greater self-awareness as the leader reflects on their own leadership actions and how their leadership impacts others. The insight might be a new thought that helps solve a perplexing challenge. The insights gained ultimately benefit the entire organization and in this regard reflection is one of the greatest gifts a leader can give to those they lead.

Many leaders lead with little insight! Others seek insight from many places, perhaps good sources, but which are still shortcuts to the discipline of reflection. But serving leaders gain insight as they take time to step away and reflect. They don't think they're leading unless they're thinking!

## **Reflection results in stability.**

Paul calls Timothy to “keep your head in all situations.” He is urging Timothy to be a stable leader one who would not rush in many directions at the same time or change course at the slightest obstacle. He needed to keep his head straight! Reflection brings stability to leadership. Leaders who don't stop to reflect often change course erratically with little thought to how it impacts those they are leading. They learn that leading only with action often produces a reaction! But serving leaders stop and reflect, then lead from a position of calmness and stability.

## **Reflection requires time.**

Reflection has great benefits but is a discipline that requires time. Reflection requires a pause, stepping back from normal activities and thinking deeply and pondering. Reflection cannot be rushed or squeezed into the margins of our day. This is a challenge for leaders with the many demands on their time. There are pressing tasks that need to be done, objectives

that must be met, people to see and places to go! In this environment it is hard to stop and reflect. It may seem to be a waste of time. So, the discipline of reflection, like all leadership disciplines, must be intentional and planned in the calendar.

Many leaders don't take time to stop working to think and reflect. They press on *with* the work they are doing with no time to reflect *on* the work. But serving leaders understand that the benefits of reflection outweigh the costs and they build time for reflection in their leadership rhythms.

*For further reflection and discussion:*

- How can I develop the discipline of reflection in my own life? Do I have time in my daily, weekly, quarterly, and annual rhythms to pause and reflect? How can I improve my reflection time?
- Reflect on those you lead. What can I do to encourage them to develop their own ability to reflect? Do I invite them to reflect for insight as Paul did to Timothy, or do I too quickly share my own insight with them? How would they answer this question?
- Would others describe my leadership as “stable” or “inconsistent” and what impact does that have on my leadership?
- In addition to the verses we used in this issue, consider the following: 1 Timothy 4:2,15–16, 2 Timothy 1:13-14. What additional insights do you find from these verses about how Timothy learned to reflect on the instructions Paul gave him?

(In this series we are looking at the life of Timothy. If you haven't already, this is a great time to read through the two books in the Bible with his name, written to him by Paul. As you read, reflect on what Timothy did to grow as a leader and how his actions apply to your own growth.)

Until next time, yours on the journey,

Jon Byler

In the next issue, we'll look at things Timothy learned to leave behind.

# Timothy: Leaving Baggage Behind

#355, August 9, 2023

Timothy, like all of us, became a leader with all his life experiences, memories and circumstances. While many of these were good and beneficial; others were not helpful and could have been hinderances to his ability to lead. Metaphorically we can refer to unresolved issues, disappointments, wrongs, and trauma from the past as “baggage”, a heavy load that weighs us down. Timothy had to leave some of his own baggage behind to become an effective serving leader. Consider these verses which we will examine to discover what could have been baggage for Timothy and how he left it behind:

*Paul came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was Jewish and a believer but whose father was a Greek (Acts 16:1, NIV).*

*Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity (1 Timothy 4:12).*

*When Timothy comes, see to it that he has nothing to fear while he is with you, for he is carrying on the work of the Lord, just as I am (1 Corinthians 16:10).*

## **Timothy released the baggage of family.**

Timothy came from a culturally, religiously, and ethnically mixed family line, his mother was Jewish and a Christian while his father was Greek and not a believer. Timothy could have struggled with his ethnic identity and felt unworthy to work among Jews and side by side with Paul, a full-blooded Jew. At the same time the Gentiles might see him as an outsider! Yet Timothy left this behind and became an effective leader with Paul and to the Gentiles he was called to lead. Family history and heritage can become baggage for everyone, either leading to inferiority or pride. Family systems can shape the way we respond to conflict and how we deal with emotions, etc. Many leaders are unaware of the baggage they carry from their family of origin. Serving leaders learn to identify and acknowledge where they came from and work through issues that need resolution so they can lead others in a healthy way.

## **Timothy released the baggage of age.**

Paul had to remind Timothy that even though he was young, he could be an example and lead well. Timothy was young and had to overcome the mental challenge of leading people who were older than he was. They would naturally have looked down on him and if he allowed himself to dwell on his youthfulness and inexperience he would have become insecure in his leadership. Some leaders may allow their young age to keep them from growing and leading well. Others may be middle aged and look back with longing to days that they had more energy and youthfulness. Those who are older may be tempted to relax and not continue growing in their leadership capacity or to be proud of their accomplishments. No one can change their age but serving leaders release the emotional baggage of focusing on how old they are and choose to focus on serving others in the present.

## **Timothy released the baggage of personality.**

Paul instructed those where Timothy would visit to see that he had “nothing to fear” with them or to “put him at ease” (ESV). In other places he admonishes Timothy to not have a spirit of fear. These seem to indicate that by nature Timothy had a fearful and perhaps introverted personality. His personality could have kept him from being an effective leader,

but Timothy learned to move past that and to lead well. While Timothy's personality could have led him to be more timid than he should have been, other personalities will be more naturally overbearing and stronger than helpful. Some leaders allow their personality to control their leadership but serving leaders work to develop their personality in ways that allow them to best serve the needs of those they lead.

*For further reflection and discussion:*

- What is the baggage that comes with my specific family history, my age, and my personality? (Make a list of each). How do these impact my leadership? Which one is most important for me to focus on leaving behind right now?
- Reflect on those you lead. Are some of the challenges I see them facing related to baggage that they carry from their family, age, or personality? What can I do to encourage them to recognize and leave behind their own baggage? Would they consider reading this reflection and having a discussion with me about it?
- In addition to the verses we used in this issue, consider the following: 1 Timothy 5:23 and 2 Timothy 2:22. What additional insights do you find from these verses about how Timothy might have carried additional baggage in his leadership?

Until next time, yours on the journey,

Jon Byler

In the next issue, we'll examine how Timothy learned self-control.

Note: In this series we are looking at the life of Timothy. It's a great time to read through the two books in the Bible with his name, written to him by Paul. As you read, reflect on what Timothy did to grow as a leader and how his actions apply to your own growth.

# Timothy: Learning Self-Control

#356, August 23, 2023

As he developed his leadership capacity one of the areas that Timothy needed to learn was the discipline of self-control. Consider these instructions from Paul to the young leader:

*I thank God, whom I serve, as my ancestors did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy (2 Timothy 1:3–4, NIV).*

*Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will (2 Timothy 2:25–26).*

*Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly (2 Timothy 2:16).*

*Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives tales; rather, train yourself to be godly” (1 Timothy 4:7).*

These passages reveal three areas in which Timothy learned self-control.

## **Timothy learned to control his temper.**

Paul remembers Timothy’s tears and urges him to instruct “gently” when he would be tempted to lash out in anger. Sorrow and anger are two of the many emotions that every leader faces. Paul does not rebuke Timothy for these emotions, but tenderly encourages self-control, one of the fruits of the Spirit (see Galatians 5:22-23). Anger is perhaps one of the most potentially destructive emotions for leaders. No one wants to follow a leader who cannot control their temper and a lack of self-control in this area has hindered the effectiveness of many leaders. A temper out of control is a leadership nightmare.

But serving leaders both acknowledge and control their emotions. They are not afraid to reveal their tears and they learn to keep their anger from being destructive. They acknowledge that they can’t serve others when they lose their temper.

## **Timothy learned to control his tongue.**

We have already observed Paul’s instruction for Timothy to instruct his opponents “gently”. Paul recognized that it requires great self-control to speak gently when there is direct opposition! The tongue often verbally expresses the anger in the heart and will not lead to the repentance encouraged by a gentle tongue. Paul also warns Timothy against “godless chatter....godless myths and old wives tales..” He is referring broadly to speech that is not helpful. While words spoken in anger are obviously harmful, other speech is simply not helpful and Paul cautions Timothy to control his tongue so as to avoid this kind of speech. Many leaders have tongues that are as unpredictable as the weather and are more harmful than helpful. But serving leaders seek to control what comes out of their mouths so that it is never harmful and always helpful.

## **Timothy learned to control his time.**

Part of Paul’s instruction to Timothy to “avoid godless chatter” and “old wives tales” is a direct challenge for him to use his time well. Here and in other places Paul urged Timothy to be diligent in focusing his time and attention to the things that matter and to avoid distractions. In some cases Paul urged Timothy to “Come quickly” while at other times not to be “hasty” (see 1 Timothy 5:22 and 2 Timothy 4:9). Timothy had to learn to manage his time well. If these instructions were given today we might hear Paul say, “Don’t waste your time

on useless conversations and following the latest controversies on social media!” Many leaders allow the tyranny of the urgent to keep them from the most effective use of their time. Serving leaders learn to control their schedule so that they are doing the things that best bring value to those they serve.

*For further reflection and discussion:*

- Which of these three areas (temper, tongue and time) are most difficult for me to control right now? Reflect on the question below for that area:
  - Temper.** When have I lost my temper in leadership and how did it impact my influence with others?
  - Tongue.** In what way do I use my tongue in ways that are not helpful for those I lead? What do I need to do to more fully allow God to help me develop self-control in this area?
  - Time.** What are my greatest time wasters? What do I need to do to develop greater self-control in this area?
- Reflect on those you lead. How do I encourage them to develop control of themselves that goes far beyond obeying external instructions? Which of these three areas should I be talking about with my key leaders?
- In addition to the verses we used in this issue, consider the following: 1 Timothy 5:22; 2 Timothy 2:4; 4:2, 9-12, 21. What additional insights do you find from these verses about how Timothy learned self-control?

Until next time, yours on the journey,

Jon Byler

In the next issue, we'll look at how Timothy became a role model to others.



# Timothy: Becoming a Role Model

#357, September 6, 2023

Timothy learned early that leading himself came before leading others. Before he called others to follow, he had to model the way. Consider these verses:

*Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives tales; rather, train yourself to be godly” (1 Timothy 4:7, NIV).*

*Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity (1 Timothy 4:12).*

*<sup>15</sup>Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. <sup>16</sup>Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers (1 Timothy 4:15–16).*

In this chapter Paul exhorted Timothy to be a role model to those he was leading, to “set an example” to others. Serving leaders acknowledge that leadership is an inside job. Before serving leaders tell others they show them what it looks like. As Timothy followed Paul’s instructions he became a model in several significant ways.

## ***Timothy modeled discipline.***

Paul instructed Timothy, “train yourself to be godly.” To lead others Timothy needed to be the right kind of person—a godly man. This would not happen without focus and discipline. Athletes training for their sport leaders need to exercise discipline. The discipline of training can be tiresome and difficult. There are many days that any athlete would prefer to stay in bed rather than do the necessary training.

Many leaders want to be seen as great leaders, but they aren’t willing to pay the daily price of discipline that is required to become great. They look for shortcuts to help them lead others without improving themselves. Serving leaders acknowledge that discipline is the price of becoming a role model. They are willing to pay the price before they attempt to lead. They discipline themselves to be the right kind of person before they seek to lead others.

## ***Timothy modeled distinction.***

Paul encouraged Timothy to overcome the challenge of being a young leader by setting an example for others. Timothy could not change his age, but he could work towards becoming the most mature young person around. He would distinguish himself from the crowd of others his age by growing in “speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.” Timothy modeled distinction, standing out from the crowd by rising above the crowd.

Many leaders want to be elevated because of their position and authority. Serving leaders seek to be the best version of themselves that they can be at whatever age they are. As they do so they become more mature than their peers and serve others as a model of distinction.

## ***Timothy modeled diligence.***

Paul called Timothy to diligence “*so that everyone may see your progress.*” Timothy learned that growth takes diligence. While it was good to be an exemplary young leader he needed to make continual progress that was obvious to those watching his life.

Many leaders stop growing when they think they are good enough to get the job done. But serving leaders are diligent to keep growing in ways that become a model to those around them.

*For further reflection and discussion:*

- What area of my life is currently not a good model to others? What do I need to change this week to start improving in that area?
- Do I model a continuous improvement in my life and leadership that is obvious to those around me? If not, what do I need to change?
- Reflect on those you lead. What can I do to encourage them to become models to those around them? In what ways can I affirm and encourage those who are currently role models?
- In addition to the verses we used in this issue, consider the following: 1 Timothy 4:6; 2 Timothy 1:13-14; and 2 Timothy 2:16, 22. What additional insights do you find from these verses about how Timothy was called to be a role model and specific areas in which he was to show others the way.

Until next time, yours on the journey,

Jon Byler

In the next issue, we'll examine how Timothy developed good friendships.

# Timothy: Establishing Healthy Friendships

#358, September 20, 2023

We have already seen several factors that helped Timothy grow in his leadership capacity. He was hungry to learn, he paid the price of leadership, he learned the Word and how to think and reflect. Timothy left hindrances behind and learned self-control as he became a role model. In this issue we focus on another factor that helped make Timothy an effective leader—he established healthy friendships. Consider these verses:

*<sup>2</sup> People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, <sup>3</sup> without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, <sup>4</sup> treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—<sup>5</sup> having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people (2 Timothy 3:2–5, NIV).*

*To Timothy my true son in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord (1 Timothy 1:2).*

*Do your best to get here before winter. Eubulus greets you, and so do Pudens, Linus, Claudia and all the brothers and sisters (2 Timothy 4:21).*

These verses indicate that Timothy succeeded in establishing relationships that were healthy and beneficial to him and to the others involved. Serving leaders seek to act in the same way to develop healthy relationships.

## ***Timothy's healthy friendships resulted from choosing.***

Paul reminds Timothy that there are many people who would not be healthy friends. He cautions Timothy strongly, *"Have nothing to do with such people."* Timothy learned to choose friends well. He understood that the choices he made in his relationships would either strengthen or undermine his leadership.

Many leaders don't give careful thought to their choice of friends. They might choose friends based on perceived advantages or how the friendships can benefit them. Or they may simply allow relationships to develop without conscious thought. But serving leaders think carefully about those with whom they spend time. While they seek to love and serve everyone, they choose their friendships deliberately and thoughtfully.

## ***Timothy's healthy friendships required commitment.***

Paul didn't have any biological children but called Timothy his "true son." How did Timothy earn this endearing position with Paul? He had shown his loyalty and faithfulness to Paul for years, demonstrating his commitment to their relationship. As he paid the price of a healthy friendship with Paul, he learned how to have healthy relationships with others.

Some leaders want the benefits of healthy relationships but are not willing to invest the time, energy and commitment that is required. Serving leaders recognize that healthy friendships are costly but worth the investment. They focus on loving and serving well and see their commitment rewarded with healthy friendships.

## ***Timothy's healthy friendships released companionship.***

When Paul was in prison and awaiting martyrdom, he summoned his faithful friend Timothy for a last farewell indicating the depth of their friendship. And he conveyed greetings from many others who loved Timothy deeply. After years of carefully selecting the right

friendships and investing deeply in them, Timothy—and his friends—reaped the reward of genuine companionship, something every person longs to achieve.

Many leaders come to the end of their lives and tragically discover that they really don't have any committed companions that will be with them. Serving leaders, like Timothy, choose their friends carefully, nurture those relationships diligently and have some of the richest relationships possible as a result.

*For further reflection and discussion:*

- How would I describe “healthy” and “unhealthy” friendship?
- As I reflect on my current relationships how satisfied am I at the health of these relationships? What, if anything, do I need to change?
- What one relationship can I focus on in the coming month to strengthen and how will I invest deliberately in this friendship?
- Reflect on those you lead. What can I do to encourage them to develop healthy friendships?
- In addition to the verses we used in this issue, consider the following: 1 Timothy 4:6-7; 5:1-2, 21, 24-25; 6:20-21; 2 Timothy 1:2, 15-18; 2:16-18; and 4:9-12. What additional insights do you find from these verses about how Timothy cultivated healthy relationships and the results of his actions?

Until next time, yours on the journey,

Jon Byler

In the next issue, we'll look at how Timothy related to different generations.

In this series we've been looking at the life of Timothy. It's a great time to read through the two books in the Bible with his name, written to him by Paul. As you read, reflect on what Timothy did to grow as a leader and how his actions apply to your own growth.

# Timothy: Connecting Across Generations

#359, October 4, 2023

One of the marks of Timothy's great leadership was his ability to connect with people from different generations. Consider these instructions from Paul:

*<sup>1</sup>Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, <sup>2</sup>older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity (1 Timothy 5:1–2, NIV).*

*Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity (1 Timothy 4:12).*

As Timothy followed these instructions he learned, even as a young leader, how to connect with and lead those who were older and those who were younger.

## ***Timothy connected across generations by respecting consciously.***

As Paul talked to Timothy about how to relate to other generations he used the analogy of a family. He challenged Timothy to treat the older generation like fathers and mothers, and younger persons like sisters and brothers. Healthy families treat parents with respect and care tenderly for those who are younger. Good families show conscious respect for the different generations.

Some leaders focus on the task that is to be done with no consideration of the person doing the task. They expect production and treat everyone by the same standard. Serving leaders learn to consciously respect and value those who are from other generations. They listen to and gain wisdom from those who are older and have more experience. They treat younger persons with gentleness as they learn and grow.

## ***Timothy connected across generations by talking carefully.***

Paul tells Timothy, *"Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father."* Correction is one of the most difficult tasks in leadership and doing it with those who are from another generation adds complexity! Timothy learns to talk carefully by thinking of the older man as a father and reflecting on how he would address a problem with his father.

Leaders often rebuke or correct with little thought about the person receiving the correction. They see themselves as the boss and assume that others should change when they bring correction no matter how it is delivered. But serving leaders focus on the person as a human being with their own need to be valued and respected. They carefully adjust their correction by considering the age and specific needs of that individual.

## ***Timothy connected across generations by loving completely.***

Paul challenged the young leader Timothy to be an example in many areas including love. Generational differences require greater effort to understand and appreciate. A heart of love is fundamental to bridge these gaps.

Some leaders view love as a 'soft' leadership trait that has little value. But at the heart of serving leaders is a genuine care for others, a desire to see them succeed and thrive. Because they love, serving leaders seek to understand and appreciate those from different generations, both those who are older and those who are younger. They listen and ask questions to gain understanding and then adjust their leadership to meet the needs of those they serve. As they exercise effective leadership they build strong, multi-generational teams.

*For further reflection and discussion:*

- How would I describe my leadership towards those who are older? Younger? Do I find it easier to connect with those who are older or those who are younger? Why? How can I develop stronger connections with persons from other generations that I lead?
- Reflect on those you lead. What can I do to encourage them to develop greater inter-generational understanding?
- In addition to the verses we used in this issue, consider the following: 2 Timothy 2:22-26 and 3:2. What additional insights do you find from these verses about how Timothy understood and lead with the unique challenges of different generations?

For further learning on this topic, I highly recommend Tim Elmore's book, *A New Kind of Diversity*, which focuses on the broad spectrum of generations currently in the workforce and the value each brings to the team.

Until next time, yours on the journey,

Jon Byler

In the next issue, we'll examine how Timothy learned to teach.

# Timothy: Learning to Teach

#360, October 18, 2023

Timothy quickly learned that a significant part of leadership is passing on to others what he knew and believed. He learned to teach. Reflect on the following instructions from Paul to Timothy:

*And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful (2 Timothy 2:24, NIV).*

*Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. 2 Timothy 4:2 (NIV)*

*<sup>1</sup>You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup>And 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 (2 Timothy 2:1–2).*

*These are the things you are to teach and insist on (1 Timothy 6:2).*

Timothy was a gifted teacher and served well by teaching well. All leaders, even those whose primary gifting is not teaching, can learn from him how to better serve those they lead through effective teaching.

## **Timothy learned to teach by defining his motive.**

Timothy first needed to learn to teach for the right reasons and with the right heart towards those he led. So, Paul instructs Timothy to check his motives for teaching. Some leaders teach to win an argument or prove their point. But Timothy learned that serving leaders are not to be “quarrelsome.” Some leaders teach with resentment towards those who know less than they do and are impatient with the learners. Timothy learned that serving leaders are not “resentful” and they have “great patience.” Serving leaders get their hearts in the right place before they open their mouths to teach.

## **Timothy learned to teach by determining his message.**

Timothy next learned to think critically about the content of his teaching. He learned from Paul to focus on “...the things you have heard me say...these are the things you are to teach.” Timothy learned that not every message is of equal importance. He learned to give careful thought to what he would teach. Some leaders teach whatever happens to be at the top of their mind in the moment. But serving leaders give careful thought to the content of their teaching and methodically share what is most important. Serving leaders focus their message on things that really matter for the organization, especially the vision, mission, and values.

## **Timothy learned to teach by developing his methods.**

With the right motive and the correct message, Timothy also learned how to use effective methods as a teacher. He heard Paul insist that he be “able to teach” and to train those he served to “be qualified to teach others.” Timothy understood that effective teaching requires continual growth in learning what methods best serve the audience. Some teachers assume that it is the work of the audience to figure out what they are saying and what needs to be done in response. But serving leaders strive to use teaching methods that make the message crystal clear. They learn from their mistakes and adjust their style to serve those in the audience. They observe and learn from other communicators how to communicate

effectively. And they ask for feedback from others to continually strengthen their teaching methods because they understand that teaching well is serving well.

*For further reflection and discussion:*

- How can I develop the ability to teach others in my own life? In the three areas we examined (motives, my message, and methods) where am I strongest? Weakest? When I examine my own heart and motive for teaching others, what do I discover? How carefully do I consider the content of what I teach others? What are the next steps for me to strengthen my ability to teach well?
- Reflect on those you lead. What steps can I take this week to help them develop their own ability to teach others?
- In addition to the verses we used in this issue, consider the following: 1 Timothy 6:2-5; 2 Timothy 1:6, 13-14; and 2:14. What additional insights do you find from these verses about how Timothy learned to teach?

In this series we have been looking at the life of Timothy. If you haven't already this would be a great time to read through the two books in the Bible with his name, written to him by Paul. As you read, reflect on what Timothy did to grow as a leader and how his actions apply to your own growth.

Until next time, yours on the journey,

Jon Byler

In the next issue, we'll look at a final characteristic of Timothy's leadership, how he learned to fight!



# Timothy: Learning to Fight the Battle

#361, November 1, 2023

All leaders fight battles—but not all leaders know *what* battles they should fight or *how* to win the battles. Paul gave Timothy instructions about how to serve others by successfully fighting and winning the right battles.

<sup>18</sup> *Timothy, my son, I am giving you this command in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by recalling them you may fight the battle well,* <sup>19</sup> *holding on to faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and so have suffered shipwreck with regard to the faith (1 Timothy 1:18-19, NIV).*

<sup>11</sup> *But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.* <sup>12</sup> *Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses (1 Timothy 6:11–12).*

Some of Paul’s instructions to Timothy go against the natural instincts of a leader who is faced with a battle. But serving leaders carefully observe what Timothy learned from Paul and learned how to fight by running in the right direction at the right time.

## **Timothy learned to fight by running back.**

Paul encouraged Timothy to remember the “good confession” and the prophecies that had been made about him “*so that by recalling them you may fight the battle well...*” Timothy learned to fight by running back to the memories that would help keep him grounded. He needed to remember who he was, why he was called, and the great purpose for which he served as a leader. As he ran back, he would gain clarity on which battles to fight and which direction to run.

Some leaders facing battles run away instead of running back. Others run quickly towards the battle but lack the solid footing that comes from recalling their purpose. They run into the battle with no sense of who they are or why they are leading. Serving leaders facing any battle fight first by running back! They run back to where they get their stability and strength. They reflect on where they have come from and why they are leading. They recall their great purpose. Then, with clarity of purpose and focus, they can face the battle.

## **Timothy learned to fight by running away.**

Paul also encouraged Timothy to fight by fleeing “*from all this*”! It does not seem courageous to avoid battles, but Timothy learned that some battles are won by running away! (\*See note.) He needed to turn away from areas of temptation and weakness.

Some leaders try to fight every battle. They simply charge forward believing that if there’s a battle, they should lead the charge and win. But serving leaders run away from some battles and find victory by avoiding the things that lead them in the wrong direction.

## **Timothy learned to fight by running toward.**

At the same time Paul urges Timothy to flee from some things, he tells Timothy to “pursue” others. Timothy was learning to fight by running toward what was right and good. As he pursued these things, he strengthened his leadership capacity and was better able to serve those he was leading.

Some leaders never learn to run towards the right goals. They settle for short term wins and quick success. They measure victory only by the “bottom line” instead of the finish line. But serving leaders fight by running towards the qualities and actions that will bring ultimate success to those they serve.

Timothy served well by fighting battles well. Serving leaders learn to serve those under them by knowing when to run back, when to run away, and when to run toward their battles.

*For further reflection and discussion:*

- How can I learn to run in the right direction when I face the battles of leadership? What do I need to run back to that will keep me grounded? What things do I need to run away from? What things do I need to pursue? What happens when I run *toward* before I run *back* or *away*?
- Reflect on those you lead. What can I do to encourage them to develop their ability to fight well? Do I need to remind some to run back to their grounding? Are there ways I need to encourage some to flee areas of weakness? How do I call my team to pursue what is good?
- In addition to the verses we used in this issue, consider the following: 1 Timothy 1:18, 6:6-11, 20-21; and 2 Timothy 2:22. What additional insights do you find from these verses about how Timothy fought by running?

Until next time, yours on the journey,

Jon Byler

(\*In this context Timothy was especially encouraged to flee from the desire for money. In another place Paul warns him to flee sexual temptation (see 2 Timothy 2:22). Both of these are areas where many leaders lose the battle.)

As we conclude this series on the life of Timothy, I want to acknowledge the hard work of those who serve behind the scenes to get these out to you! Milonica Stahl-Wert and Linda Boll both use their keen editing skills to sharpen these emails. And Brian Drewery does all that is needed with technology to get these on our websites and on their way to you. Our world is better because of many who, like them, serve behind the scenes!

In the next issue, we'll begin a series on the serving leader and money.