

## SERVING AS A SECOND MAN

Almost everyone gets started in church ministry by serving as a staff assistant under a senior pastor. That's the way it should be. We learn to lead by learning to follow. This is the biblical pattern we observe in the ministry of Jesus with His disciples and Paul with his ministry helpers. A leading example of a very effective "second man" is Timothy. Let's take a moment to see how Paul chose and developed Timothy.

### Paul Chooses Timothy

The Paul/Timothy relationship begins in earnest in Acts 16:1-5. Paul was looking for a helper to join him and Silas as they embarked on the second missionary journey. This was a time for **evaluation**. Paul listened to the locals talk about this special young man Timothy (Acts 16:2). His name meant "honoring God" and he lived up to his name. People saw something different that marked Timothy's life and character. His godly mother and grandmother poured the Scripture into him (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14-15). Timothy knew well the way Paul had been mistreated on his first missionary journey in Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch (2 Timothy 3:10-11) and no doubt Paul's endurance made a deep impression. Timothy was willing to immediately undergo the necessary **preparation** for ministry with Paul (Acts 16:3) and to leave home for the gospel's sake. Timothy was willing to do hard things. Next there was **initiation**. He started serving and was involved in productive ministry with Paul and Silas spreading the good news of salvation by grace through faith alone (Acts 16:4-5; cf. Acts 15:11). Churches were strengthened and people came to Christ.

### Paul Develops Timothy

The second missionary journey gave Timothy many opportunities to **observe** Paul as he preached the gospel and established churches (Acts 16:6-18:22). Paul and Timothy were often together, but at times Paul would send young Timothy to check on or care for a church, such as in Thessalonica (1 Thess. 3:2). Such **participation** no doubt increased Timothy's confidence in the Lord to work through him as he sharpened his ministry skills. As a wise leader Paul knew the art of delegation and development. The wise apprentice faithfully served his superior and did not disappoint. It is clear from 1 and 2 Timothy that there were plenty of encouraging **exhortations** in Paul's mentoring of younger Timothy. There were also abundant **commendations** by Paul of Timothy as evidenced by such phrases as "my beloved son" (1 Cor. 4:17), "minister of God" (1 Thess 3:2), and "man of God" (1 Tim. 6:11). Paul's highest commendation of Timothy is found in Philippians 2:20-22: "For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's; but ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel." What an accolade for anyone to live up to!

Senior pastors should ask themselves, "Am I truly seeking to mentor younger men for effective lifelong ministry?" Aspiring young men should ask themselves, "Am I eagerly seeking direction and guidance from a seasoned man of God and willing to serve him and follow his example and exhortations?" There should be both an eagerness to teach and an eagerness to learn

in a mentoring relationship. The learner will ask many questions and seek to please, serve, and improve. The mentor will show patience, kindness, and love.

### **Pointers for a New Second Man**

Here are some practical pointers for the new second man on a church staff. Remember that the pastor has been very kind to bring you onto his staff and give you the privilege to serve as an assistant pastor, youth pastor, music minister, or as a staff assistant. You are very likely directly responsible to him in your new role.

#### *Be Observant*

Gradually you will discover your pastor's strengths, personality, convictions, philosophy, and methodology. You will learn the key big ideas and influential people who have shaped his views in ministry. Be a keen listener and observer. Ask appropriate questions. Determine that you are committed to carrying load in ministry and not adding load to your pastor's ministry. Do more than is expected, show willingness to sacrifice, be early not late, follow through, and complete all his expectations. Stay cheerful, resilient, and positive. Keep your eyes on the Lord when disappointments arise or misunderstandings occur. Own your mistakes and clarify that you will not let those happen again. Find out the pastor's dress and appearance expectations for church on Sundays, at work during the week, and in public generally. Meet his expectations and even be a little sharper than you need to be. Deport yourself in a way beyond any question in all relationships with every age group. Be careful, be courteous, and appropriate always. Be sure that your wife and family are also onboard in all these areas.

#### *Be Submissive*

Remember that when you are working for another man and ministry, you must comply with their outlook. You are an employee. Pastors and churches navigate the delicate theological and practical issues of ministry in differing ways. You may differ personally at times with an interpretation or application of Bible teaching to everyday Christian living. Your choices or convictions are important, but you must submit yourself to the pastor's and church's expectations without making known to others that you may differ. As a matter of personal integrity, you should live according to the expectations of the ministry in which you serve. Avoid listening to complainers from within the church, and do not foster differences within the staff or the church.

#### *Be Loyal*

Hold firmly to the principle of loyalty. It is clear in Philippians 2:19-23 that Paul could count upon the loyal service of Timothy. Paul knew that he could trust Timothy because Timothy was trustworthy. Loyalty loves the Lord and His Word and is determined to follow its precepts above all else. Loyalty perseveres by working through challenges and difficulties, staying true for the long haul. Loyalty respects older people and mature leadership (1 Timothy 5). Loyalty protects against division, deceit, false accusation, and opposition. Loyalty overlooks human faults and foibles, realizing we are all sinners who fail to please God in every respect all the time. Loyalty accepts the pastor and other leaders for their own gifts and talents and does not compare with others. Loyalty seeks to resolve conflict humbly and wisely. Assume that you were wrong

or wrongly perceived and then genuinely apologize. Look for the point of misunderstanding in communication, which is usually an unspoken assumption. Loyalty appreciates and esteems others very highly in love for the sake of God's work (1 Thess. 5:12-13). Hold to the concept of principled loyalty which places God and His Word at the apex of our loyalty. If a serious sin issue arises then patiently seek a godly resolution to the matter through the right channels of church leadership. Avoid unfounded and unwise accusations, allegations, and innuendo. Ask for your pastor's help in navigating difficulties and ask God for His grace and wisdom.

Ask God to help you to be the very best servant that you can be, by His grace. God will help you and He will teach you many things about yourself, ministry, people, and Himself. Stay focused and stay faithful. Always keep a servant's heart. If you will have a servant's heart, you will never be without a ministry. What a privilege to serve God as a second man!