

Route 66

1 Timothy: Training and Transparency

Part 54 – March 20, 2011



Paul founded the church in Ephesus, a coastal megacity (in modern day Turkey), and pastored it for three years. He later wrote “Ephesians” to encourage his friends in Ephesus to imitate Jesus.



Ephesus was a vibrant city, enjoying its prime in Paul’s day. A large population (400,000 - 500,000) and prosperity gave it a status 2nd *only* to Rome. It was smaller than Seattle (2009 population: 616,627), but bigger than Miami (2009 population: 433,136).



Now, about eight years after leaving Ephesus (three years after writing), Paul is released from house arrest in Rome and travels with Timothy to revisit several churches that Paul has planted. And when they get to Ephesus, Paul finds false teachers, swindlers, inappropriate overseers, and a serious lack of superintending. So Paul, being on a tight schedule, persuades the timid and reluctant Timothy to stay behind and take charge. He later writes:

As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus ... - 1 Timothy 1:3 NIV

Recalling your tears, I long to see you ... - 2 Timothy 1:4 NIV



Paul sends *two* letters of encouragement and practical advice to Timothy regarding his overwhelming task in that ancient megacity.

Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight ... - 1 Timothy 1:18 NIV



Imagine how unprepared he must’ve felt, as he faced *hundreds* of Ephesian house congregations and their pastors [i.e. elders or overseers (5:17, 3:2)] and assisting leaders [i.e. deacons (3:8)]. In 2nd Thessalonians we talked about the comen, whose corrupt chatter was spreading like gangrene among the believers in Ephesus.

Among them are **Hymenaeus** [HIGH-meh-NEE-uhs] and **Alexander**, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme. - 1 Timothy 1:20 NIV

These are the type of tigers that Timothy is supposed to tame.

... command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer ... - 1 Timothy 1:3b NIV

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

Timothy, who was likely in his early 30's, had traveled with and assisted Paul for over 15 years; and Paul *knew* Tim's potential.

Until I come, devote yourself to the **public reading of Scripture**, to **preaching** and to **teaching**. Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you. - 1 Timothy 4:13-14 NIV

Paul has far more faith in Timothy than Timothy has in Timothy!



Only a third of Ephesus has been uncovered, but there are two specific locations among the ruins that we can be fairly certain Timothy, at one time or another, would've actually *sat*. One is this 25,000 seat amphitheater.



It was already over 200 years old when Timothy was left on his own in this megacity. The other is a 50 seat public toilet (a very modern, 1st century A.D. convenience). Timothy had an ongoing battle with ... tummy trouble.

Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses. - 1 Timothy 5:23 NIV

It encourages me when God does what God does best; like bringing His power and authority to a megacity, second only to Rome, through someone who's timid, sickly, and insecure. I wonder how many times God met Timothy *right here* to reassure him?



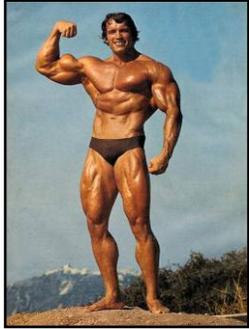
Do you know how to turn potential into power? Training. How many of you could *not* run a full marathon this afternoon? But, what if you tried *really, really* hard? No? The incredible thing is, *everyone* in this room with few exceptions, and *lots of training*, could eventually, successfully run a marathon. But we read, see, or hear something that inspires our faith and we think, "I'm going to try *really, really* hard to be like that."



We vastly overrate trying and underrate training. How many of you could *not* go out this afternoon and be "like Jesus" if someone cut you off and drove *slower* than you were? Significant spiritual transformation requires more than trying.

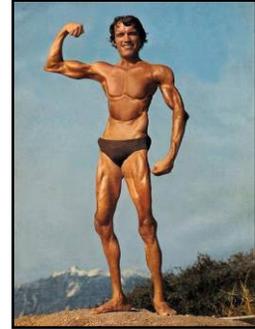
... **train yourself to be godly**. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things ... - 1 Timothy 4:7b-8a NIV

Godliness-training was Timothy's (and *our*) only hope! This is why it's vital to include simple spiritual disciplines in our daily lives; so that we can eventually, successfully be like Jesus in ways we can't be right now through direct effort. Things like meeting with God, reading His Word, memorizing His promises, openly sharing our failings with others ... wait, what?! Paul goes on, in his advice to *Timidly*, I mean Timothy, to say ...



Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, **so that everyone may see your progress.** - 1 Timothy 4:15 NIV

But like a bodybuilder who oils up, pumps up, tans up, and Speedos up in order to display his muscles in peak performance, our pride often tempts us to “flex” our spiritual strengths in order to present a polished product - rather than reveal the embarrassing weaknesses that preceded it.



Something that makes us spiritually timid is when we look at our track record of failings and conclude that God won't use damaged goods like us; when really, it's exactly the opposite. Paul encourages Timothy by “going first” ...

Even though I was once a **blasphemer** and a **persecutor** and a **violent man**, I was shown mercy because I acted in **ignorance** and **unbelief**. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners — **of whom I am the worst.** - 1 Timothy 1:13-15 NIV

Paul is boldly transparent and brutally honest about his past. What has more value when sharing with others: telling how much *they* need Jesus or showing how much *we* did (and *still* do)? Think about the irony of God choosing Paul, a *Christian-killer*, to take the lead in offering new life through Christ! The power in your story comes from sharing *why* you needed God's “mercy” and “grace” and *how* you received it through “faith” and “love” in “Christ Jesus”. And Paul goes on to say ...

But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life. - 1 Timothy 1:16 NIV

When we're broken, humble, and *bold* about our failings, God *will* use them to inspire, support, correct, and draw those around us.

In this letter, Paul offers pastoral advice on confronting false doctrine, interceding for those in authority, selecting leaders, interacting with fellow believers, and assisting those in need.

... I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth. - 1 Timothy 3:14b-15 NIV

The epistle crescendos with Paul's righteous fury against those ...

... who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain. - 1 Timothy 6:5b NIV

God isn't going to make us wealthy, so we'll be content. He desires to make us content, so we'll be *truly* wealthy.

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. - 1 Timothy 6:6-8 NIV



So, is it bad to want good stuff? No. It's bad to want good stuff to be our source and sense of security, identity, power, joy, or peace. At best, stuff is a fast-fading, dim reflection of the genuine fulfillment found *only* in intimacy with God (and of course, new-car-smell!). Treat stuff as the source and it's idolatry ... and quite *foolish!*

There's a big, but wickedly-subtle, difference between: buying stuff *and being* content; and, buying stuff *in order to be* content. *Everyone* pretty much knows that stuff isn't fulfilling. But, for those outside of Christ, this "trap" is the closest they can get.

That's why demonstrating contentment, while *not* owning *everything* we desire, is such a powerful testimony to those around us!

People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. - 1 Timothy 6:9-10a NIV



Well, that's just un-American! This is the land of *consumerism*. According to Wikipedia: "*Consumerism is a social and economic order that is based on the systematic creation and fostering of a desire to purchase goods and services in ever greater amounts.*" And according to BusinessDictionary.com, it's the: "*Doctrine that ever-increasing consumption of goods and services forms the basis of a sound economy.*"

Do you see the depth of the deception that we're up against? Our economy functions and thrives on discontentment! "Enough" is actually *engineered* to never be enough.

We're almost *programmed* to be discontented when the latest model of *whatever* is unveiled.

So, it's up to timid little *you* to fight the good fight and show this mega-world, by training and transparency, the only true source of security and identity and power and joy and peace.