

“The 2-2-2 Principle”

2 Timothy 2:1-7

Series: Stoked Week 2

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Beware of people bearing compliments. You never know what's hidden inside. A pastor was leaving his congregation and moving to another. He visited an elderly member to say goodbye. The woman sighed deeply and said, “Well, we'll never have another minister as good as you.” The pastor blushed and said, “Oh, I'm sure your next pastor will be excellent.” The woman shook her head with determination. “You don't understand,” she said. “I've been here through five pastors and each one has been worse than the last.”¹ I laughed at the story until I remembered I am the fifth pastor of Woodside.

For years we've been facing a growing crisis: a lack of leaders. Corporations and organizations have a hard time finding leaders and keeping leaders. Those who fill a role don't seem to have the training or the tenacity to fulfill it. I don't know what you see in your field but I can tell you churches are struggling to find pastors. Less people are going into the ministry, more pastors are dropping out. I noticed the time between the five pastors of Woodside grew longer with each search for a pastor. It was 18 months between the time my predecessor left and I arrived. Now it takes more than three years. (Don't worry I'm not going anywhere). So for the church, the solution is not in seminary.

And it never has been. God actually has plenty of leaders – all He needs. Where are there? Right here. Every follower of Jesus is a leader. Jesus began His ministry by calling the most unlikely leaders.

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.” Matthew 4:19

Following requires leading other people to Jesus. You are not following Jesus if you are not leading. At the end, before He ascends into heaven, Jesus repeats the call.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age. Matthew 28:19-20

He tells His followers to keep leading people to Him. Now remember, these are not educated, denominationally approved ordained pastors. These are four fishermen, an ex-tax collector, a former revolutionary and the rest have no resumes. To be a leader your age does not matter. Your occupation and education do not matter. Your past and appearance do not matter. If you follow Jesus, you are a leader.

¹ Doug Scott, Radnor, Pennsylvania. Christian Reader, "Lite Fare."

Now you may not feel like a leader. As we saw last week, neither does Timothy. Paul assigns him to oversee the churches scattered around central and western Turkey. The young man feels timid, alone, ashamed, ill-equipped and nearly burned out. So Paul writes 1 and 2 Timothy to stoke his fire. You may say, “I’m not worthy to be a leader.” You’re right. Neither am I. Neither is Timothy. Paul writes,

God has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time. 2 Timothy 1:9

There is nothing you or I have done which earns us the right to be leaders. We can’t boast or brag. God chose us by grace, in spite of our flaws and failures. God chose us for his purpose not ours. There’s no reason in the world God would chose us to be leaders but here’s the amazing truth: He chose you and me to be His leaders before the world even began. You’re not here by mistake. He wants you on His team.

So now that you know you are here on purpose, how do you lead? Paul tells us in chapter 2 of 2nd Timothy. First, you **Lead with your Will – Stay With It.**

No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer. Similarly, anyone who competes as an athlete does not receive the victor’s crown except by competing according to the rules. The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this. 2 Timothy 2:4-7

Strong leaders are strong workers. They are dedicated to the mission. They give it their all. I’m not talking about being a workaholic. Work at your work but don’t worship it. Paul uses three images to describe working with all your will. A soldier pleases the commander (Jesus) not the complainers. An athlete plays by the rules and is not above the law. A landowner provides for the farmers instead of keeping all the crops to oneself. Leading is hard and we’ve all heard of leaders who find it hard to stay with it. They are either people pleasers, they think the rules don’t apply to them, they keep all the praise and profits for themselves instead of sharing with their team.

What you lead will eventually reflect the way you lead. If you are a sloppy or a slacker leader your organization will act that way. If you are aggressive, insensitive or offensive you’ll start to see that come back at you. If you are self-motivated, selfless, a servant you’ll create that kind of culture. God’s leaders please the Lord, play by the rules, pass on the praise to others. Will you lead with all your will?

Second, **Lead with your Mind – Stay Focused on God’s Word.** Paul says, 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. Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. Their teaching will spread like gangrene. 2 Timothy 2:15-17

A leader must watch out for two opposite dangers: Majoring in What's Minor and Undermining What's Major. In the first one, Paul warns Timothy to avoid arguments over silly trivia. Churches are especially good at splitting over absurd issues. Thom Rainer compiled a list of "25 Silly Things Church Members Fight Over." Here are a few:

An argument over the appropriate length of the worship pastor's beard (Dawn and Jane please pay attention to this!)

A fight over whether or not to build a children's playground or a cemetery (I'm dying to know the outcome of this one.).

A 45-minute heated argument over the type of filing cabinet to purchase: black or brown; 2, 3, or 4 drawers (They decided this at an official cabinet meeting.).

An argument on whether the church should allow deviled eggs at the church meal (Only if it's balanced with angel food cake for dessert).²

The devil loves to distract and divide us with trivia. While we focus our eyes on minor things, he undermines our major beliefs, the truths which form the foundation of our faith. This was true in Timothy's day. Paul mentions two church leaders

Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have departed from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some. 2 Timothy 2:17-18

The Resurrection is a core belief. We are not sure what they taught but it caused believers to fall away from the faith. Paul calls this "gangrene"- a disease which kills the body. If not stopped it can eat away at limbs and lead to death. Timothy must stop this gangrene eating away at the Body of Christ.

The gangrene in our day comes from disciples and leaders who are more influenced by the internet and DIY religion than the Word of God. According to Paul a leader needs to be "a worker ... who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:13). Stay focused in the Word. Let it fill your mind. Avoid mixing in popular opinion or the latest fad. Each week we teach God's Word. But don't take my word for it. Check out the Scriptures yourself through your daily quiet time and, above all, join one of the Growth Groups or Microchurches listed in the handout. Now is the best time to begin as we start our fall churchwide study "Share." Learn the Word in your Mind. Lead by the Word. It's the only cure for spiritual gangrene.

Third, Lead with your Heart – Stay Pure.

Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels.

² Thom Rainer <https://churchanswers.com/blog/twenty-five-silly-things-church-members-fight-over/>

And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. 2 timothy 2:22-24

Recently I moved my patio chairs to the side yard. In just one week a vine reached and wrapped around them on both sides. It took me some effort to free them. When it comes to temptation and evil desires, Paul tells Timothy to flee temptation. Don't stand or stay in a place where the vines of desire can wrap you and trap you. Watch what your eyes see and your mind absorbs.

Tiny bacteria can poison pure water. Next week at ShareFest we will do a Walk for Water – a 15 minute walk around the shopping centers – to raise awareness and funds for clean water at the Mandevu School in Zambia. So many illnesses, especially among children, are traced back to water – something we all need to live, something we take for granted. Whether you walk or not, you can donate to provide better access to this pure water. In the same way, your heart is the well of your life. Keep it pure by moving away from temptation and desire and toward righteousness, faith, love and peace.

All leaders face opposition. When you confront real resistance, Paul tells Timothy to respond with kindness and gentleness. Don't hold resentment in your heart. Instead, see opponents as someone Jesus wants to save.

Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth. 2 Timothy 2:25

If you lead with a heart that is pure and peaceful you will lead more to Jesus.
Lead with Others – Stay the Course. Paul charts out a course for how to spread the Gospel. I call it the 2-2-2 Principle since it comes from 2 Timothy 2:2
You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 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

There are four generations in this one verse.

First Generation: Paul

Second Generation: Teaches Timothy

Third Generation: Invest in Reliable people

Fourth Generation: Who are qualified to teach others

This is how the church spread so rapidly from 120 believers to a million in a couple of decades. Every follower of Jesus was a leader. Every one guides someone else.

Dream with me for a minute. What if every follower of Jesus at Woodside guides at least one other person? What if every child, teen, adult had a Timothy? What if every band member, choir member, Growth Group leader, youth group leader, youth group member, Adventure Club leader, Sunday School teacher, REACH member, AV team member, elder, deacon, staff member, mission leader ... had a Timothy? How? You model the ministry for someone until they are ready to lead it. Here are 5 Simple Steps

1. I Do. You Watch. We Talk.
2. I Do. You Help. We Talk.
3. You Do. I Help. We Talk.
4. You Do. I Watch. We Talk.
5. You Do. Someone Else Watches.

Every step in the process is crucial. Don't skip a step. Don't forget to stop and talk at each step of the way. The talking part can be as simple as sitting down after an event and asking, 1) "What worked?" 2) "What didn't work?" 3) "How can we improve?" The 2-2-2 Principle will change the way we do everything at Woodside. It will mean less stress, more ministry and more people coming to Christ.

So today I want to unleash your inner leader with three simple questions. 1) What ministry are you in right now? 2) Who is your Paul? Who is leading you? 3) Who can you ask to be your Timothy? Who can you guide, to learn from you using the five steps?

Al was a humble 24 year old farmer. Despite being a new Christian and short on Bible knowledge, he was full of the Spirit and enthusiasm. He wanted to see all his friends meet the Savior. A popular, controversial traveling preacher was coming to town and Al wanted everyone to hear him. So he borrowed an old truck to transport his guests. Several of his friends agreed to come but one friend – a popular guy at the local high school - refused. He wasn't interested. Yet Al didn't give up. The young man resisted Al's repeated invitations for about a month until the visiting preacher said some things which got the students from Central High in an uproar. Rumors spread that they were going to protest that night in front of the pulpit. Now Albert said to his friend, "Why don't you come out and hear our fighting preacher?" he suggested. That put a little different slant on things. "I like a fighter." Al told his friend he could drive his old vegetable truck to the meeting. Since his friend desperately wanted to drive, he agreed.

Al's friend did stay and he went back again and again to hear the preacher until the night he gave his life to Jesus Christ. Albert's friend is named William. But we know him as Billy – Billy Graham. He has been the counselor to countless presidents, royalty and international leaders. It's estimated that he has preached the Gospel to 2.2 billion people and that 3.2 million have given their lives to Christ through his ministry. But even he was once a Timothy who was apprenticed by a Paul named Albert McMakin.

Who knows where your Timothy will go.