

## **Sermon: The Apprentice**

**Text: Acts 16:1-5**

### **Introduction:**

Down through the years, I've heard a certain question come up from time to time as it relates to the issue of discipleship. That question is:

- Who is your Paul; and who is your Timothy?

This question assumes that two TYPES of people need to be in our lives in order for us to truly grow in our faith as a disciple of Christ.

The first type is that of “a Paul.” This is the person in our life who is MENTORING US. It's a person who is further along in their faith, and is intentionally building into our lives. They minister to us in the same way as a coach does with an athlete. They are the person that we can go to with any question we might have (without the fear that we might be asking “a stupid question”). They are someone who really believes in us—and sees the potential in us. They are leading the cheering section in our “great cloud of witnesses.” (Hebrews 12:1)

- Do you have a “Paul” in your life right now? If yes—who is it? Did you ask them to take on this role—or is it just mutually understood? If no—why not? Are you fearful of asking someone to take on this role in your life? Are you afraid they might say no? Are you hesitant to give someone that kind of “access” to your inner life? Who is the person that comes to mind when you think about who this might be?

The second type is that of “a Timothy.” This is the person in our life whom WE ARE MENTORING. You see, no matter where we are in our journey of faith—there is always someone that we can be helping and ministering to. The obvious reason that we DON'T look for a “Timothy” in our lives is because we simply don't think we know enough about the Bible—or we don't “have our lives together”—or we're just not mature enough in our faith. The fact of the matter is that these are nothing more than excuses. God can ALWAYS use you to make a difference in someone else's life. I can promise you that there is someone that you know right now who would greatly benefit from your intentional love, care and mentoring in their life.

Both of these types of relationships require intentionality. They don't just happen on their own. We have to choose to make them happen.

I remember a time in my life—back in my 30's—when I was making a lot of decisions regarding my future. I sensed that the Lord was calling me to take on certain leadership responsibilities, but I was hesitant to do so. It was right in the midst of this internal wrestling that a retired gentleman in our church (who I actually didn't know all that well) asked me to lunch. I learned that this man had been a very successful businessman, and had coached many young leaders. He asked if I would be open to meeting with him once a month—reading a book on leadership each month—and allowing him to speak into my life. This man was a God-send! What a blessing that he took the initiative, and invited me into this kind of relationship. I draw upon many of the lessons that I learned from him to this day.

### **Examination:**

- Read **Acts 15:39-16:5**
  - As we saw in last week's message, Paul and Barnabas had a major disagreement as to whether to take young John Mark (Barnabas' younger cousin) with them on a second missionary journey. Barnabas insisted that they should, and Paul refused. In the end, it was agreed that Barnabas and John Mark (the "John" was later dropped) go in one direction (Cyprus), and Paul chose another team mate and headed to what is modern-day Turkey. The man that Paul chose was Silas (a shortened version of the name Silvanus). What do we learn from these passages about Silas:
    - Acts 15:22
    - Acts 15:30-32
    - Acts 16:37-39
  - Beyond what we learn about Silas in these brief passages, what other qualities do you think Silas possessed? What would it take (gifts/abilities/personality) to team up with Paul on a journey of this magnitude and obvious danger?
  - Paul and Silas travel to some of the cities that Paul and Barnabas had visited on their first missionary journey. One of those places was a town called Lystra. What happened in Lystra on that previous journey? (see Acts 14:8-20)
  - What do verses 1-2 tell us about this young man named Timothy? Why do you think that Paul wanted to bring him along? What do you suppose his parents thought about this?
  - Verse 3 can seem very contradictory on face value. Paul had argued uncompromisingly that circumcision was NOT required for a person to become a Christian. And yet—here we see Paul requiring Timothy to be circumcised in order to join the team. There is a brief explanation as to why in verse 3. Beyond this explanation—why else do you think Paul made this decision? (see 1 Corinthians 9:20-23)
  - In verse 4, we see that Paul returned to the towns that he had previously visited, "delivering the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey". (Acts 15:28-29) Do you think that the rules/guidelines of the elders have anything to do with the churches being strengthened and increasing in number as we see in verse 5? What does Christ say about His commands—do they bring us joy or dread (see Matthew 11:28-30; 1 John 5:3). Do we normally think of rules or commands bringing us happiness and joy? Why or why not? How are the commands of the Lord different from those we encounter in the world in everyday life?
  - On numerous occasions, Dr. Luke (author of Acts) makes a point to tell us that the church was growing and adding people [see Acts 2:41; 4:4; 6:1; 6:7]. Why do you think he tells us this?

### **Application:**

The mission that Jesus gave us all is to go into all the world and MAKE DISCIPLES. Discipleship is very intentional. A key component is that we have a "Paul" in our lives (someone mentoring us) and a "Timothy" (someone we're mentoring). Who is that in your life?