

Investing in the Church's Future: 2 Timothy 2:1-7

Text: 2 Timothy 2:1-7 “Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully. The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits. Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things...”

Introduction:

- **Some stats:**
 - **In April 2023:**
 - 1 in 4 pastors will retire in the next 5 years.
 - The average age of a pastor is 52.
 - That number is now 57.
 - There is an aging trend in our culture: 16% of current pastors are 40 or younger; in 1992 it was 33%; and in 1968 it was 55%
 - **For perspective:**
 - In the late 1960's there were more ministers under 35 than over 55.
 - Today there are 9 times as many ministers over 55 than under 55.
 - **Some countertrends:**
 - Despite the aging minister population, God is working in younger American.
 - According to some recent surveys, there are some encouraging counter trends.
 - Gen Z Americans are more likely to engage in regular church attendance than Millennial and Boomers.
 - The unaffiliated trend in America has bottomed out.
 - There seems to be a resurgence of interest in the Bible and Christianity especially among Gen Z men.
- **Some pastoral considerations:**

- If they are looking for answers, where are they going?
- What are they finding?
- Are we actively taking steps as a church to meet this need?

Summary: The church needs a vibrant culture of investment in the next generation

Truth 1: Generation transition is a normal part of life: 2:1-2 “Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also...”

- **Every ministry has a final season: 2 Timothy 4:6-8** “I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day...”
- **The end of life can be very lonely:**
 - **2 Timothy 1:15** “All they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes...”
 - **2 Timothy 4:10** “Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world...”
 - **2 Timothy 4:16** “At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge...”
- **We need people to build on our shoulders: 2 Timothy 4:1-2, 5** “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ...Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine... watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry...”
- **The people we have served with are the most likely to do that well: 2 Timothy 3:10-11** “Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, Persecutions, afflictions...”

Truth 2: There are two sides to a healthy transition: 2:1-2 “The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also...”

- **The established generation needs to be faithful:**
 - Teach sound doctrine.
 - Leave a healthy pattern of ministry.
 - Work with a forward-thinking mindset.
 - Prioritize your duties carefully.
 - Make yourself approachable.
- **The rising generation needs to embrace the good and build on it:**
 - Relate to older people with humility.
 - Exercise patience with the opportunities you are given.
 - Be willing to commit yourself to learning and doing the things you have learned.
 - Develop endurance.

Truth 3: The church needs to give the next generation the tools to be successful: 2:3-7 “Endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully. The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits. Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things...”

- **The soldier:** This is a spiritual battle
 - Endure
 - Sacrifice
 - Do not become entangled
- **The athlete:** There is a need to endure
 - Strive
 - Follow the right patterns
 - Focus on that day
- **The farmer:** We are cultivating lives
 - Work
 - Embrace the process
 - Stay engaged to the end

Applying these truths:

- **We should anticipate that God will bring people into our church if we are faithful.**
- **We need to personally contribute to a healthy discipling church culture.**
 - There are two offices in the local church: Pastors and deacons.
 - The church needs to create ways to invest in future leaders who are not yet but could potentially be in these roles.
 - Internships are a great way to do this.
 - Staff positions like a pastoral assistant are another great way to do this.
- **We need to be faithful where He plants us:**
 - **For Pastor Josh and me:**
 - **Teaching is a major part of our internship program:**
 - **Reading and journaling:** (Daily)
 - **Ministry talks:** (22 topics)
 - **Friday Sermon discussion:** (Friday Mornings)
 - **Giving outlets for service:**
 - **Outreach:** (Mostly Doorhangers)
 - **Church visitation:** (Mostly Seniors)
 - **Teaching and preaching:** Rescue mission, Sunday School, Sunday night, and FTL
 - **Giving opportunities to invest in community:**
 - Sunday night games after the service.
 - Meals with staff families
 - Meals with church families
 - **Love offering:** Opportunity to express how they have been a blessing.
 - **For our families:**
 - Have family worship on a regular basis.
 - Be faithful in church and make sure your children are engaged in the worship.
 - Establish a home culture where a daily walk with the Lord and a commitment to the body of Christ is central not secondary.
 - Discuss the things you are learning and observing in an edifying way.

- Do not ignore issues that are brewing in your homes.
- See every issue as a teaching opportunity and an opportunity to build up your children.
- Be consistent, honest, and approachable.
- **For those who are on your own:**
 - Let the church body be your family.
 - Invest in people who have needs.
 - Learn from people who have expertise.
 - Enjoy the body of Christ.