

Shepherds & Servants 14

Disciple Relationally

1 Timothy 5:1-2, 6:1-2

Memory Verses: 1 Timothy 5:1-2

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

Over the course of the last few weeks we've looked at the church's responsibility to reject legalism, follow the example of our youth, train in godliness, and persist in preaching. Shepherds, servants, leaders, elders, deacons, laypeople, congregants, regular attenders, or covenant partners... it makes little difference, we are all called to a higher standard of spiritual living within the body of Christ. We must all hold ourselves to a higher standard and that standard is the Word of God and example of Christ. If there is anything that the book of First Timothy communicates to us all it is that there is more work yet to be done in each of us. We all have more steps to climb. None of us have arrived yet and so we must, in the words of **Philippians 3:14**, keep pressing on toward the prize of the high calling of Christ.

When I think of pressing onward towards the prize of Christ I think of mountain climbing. There is nothing that gives me a clearer picture of what it means to keep struggling towards a goal than those who, through every adversity, keep inching their way towards the peak. I think of the men who have trained harder than most and honed their skills so that they could conquer Lhotse, K2, and the grand daddy of them all, Everest. Very few people have ever reached the summit of Everest. Even fewer have done it without the help of supplemental oxygen. When you climb higher than 6000 meters, your body starts to shut down on a fundamental level. Every step takes you closer to death. Your brain could swell and you would die. Your lungs could fill with liquid and you would die. You could get hypothermia and you would die. We weren't made to go that high. Even moving a couple of feet takes every ounce of strength one has. To reach that peak you must truly press on.

In 1996 12 people died on Everest in a matter of days. The events are captured in the book "Into Thin Air" by Jon Krakauer who was one of the people on that expedition. There are a lot of reasons for that catastrophe but I would think the biggest one is that instead of cutting off the climb at the predetermined turn around time the leaders kept the group going two to three hours after. By then it was too late to get down and they got caught in a storm.

But this tragedy illustrates today's message. We all, leaders and laypeople alike, need to push each other on toward righteousness and spiritual maturity. But we must do so in a way that doesn't push people to

hard to the point where they break and get overwhelmed. Yes we press on, but we press on through partnerships of grace and understanding. We aren't tyrants who make demands of one another. Rather we are brothers and sisters who gently, but firmly, lead one another to a greater walk with Christ! In other words, we are called to disciple relationally! Look with me at our passages for this morning in **1 Timothy 5:1-2 and 6:1-2**. This morning I want us to see that ... **Meaningful Discipleship Takes A Relational Approach!**

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing we need to see is that... **We Rebuke Those Inside The Church With Gentleness**. Look again at **vs5:1a**. The command here is to not sharply rebuke. Meaning, rebuke is part of discipleship. We must do it for one another. But we must be careful to be gentle in our rebuke. Rebuke simply means to judge one's actions as incorrect. We rebuke one another when we call out each other's bad attitudes or sinful actions. It is a call to repentance and restoration. The problem is when we do it harshly. The word used here for sharp rebuke is "epiplesso" which is a very harsh term meaning violent rebuke or verbal abuse. This is not the approach a Christian is supposed to take when correcting other believers. This is not the way family corrects one another. When a believer is confronted in such harsh ways they may be discouraged or beat down to the point that they run away from God or the church. This type of discipleship is harmful to the body. Rebuke is meant to **encourage** believers to **press forward** into their **spiritual maturity journey... not pull away** from it. Remember we speak the truth, but we speak the truth with love. Verbal abuse is not loving.

But harsh judgement is not the only way one can rebuke sharply. When we push people in their walk with Christ too hard or too fast we are in a way sharply rebuking them. As I've said many times. We are to take baby steps towards Christ. Sometimes we can take a couple steps a month. Sometimes it takes a couple years to take one step. Sometimes we take one step back for every two we take forward. The point is... the process of discipleship isn't quick and easy. It is long and tedious. If you rush it you are basically being too sharp and too hard. **You can't rush it! Trust me. I've tried it and it fails every time.** I remember two different kids I tried to mentor in one of my previous youth groups. They showed an interest in growing for Christ so I immediately began a weekly books study with them. I gave them reading assignments and verses to memorize and was pretty strict with them about it all. I also tried to push them into leadership roles with a lot of responsibility. I thought the more they were doing in the youth group the more dedicated to Christ they would become. I couldn't have been any more wrong. Within months I had pushed them so hard that they both dropped out of youth group completely and as far as I know, they are both **living apart from Christ right now**. The point is this. We aren't the Holy Spirit

and we can't try to take his role. We plant seeds, and we water. But we can't bring the change... only God can. So **we should disciple one another in way that pushes them towards Christ, but doesn't push them beyond their capacity**. Babies grow slowly. Baby Christians will also grow slowly. It takes time, don't try to rush it. When we rush another Christian's discipleship journey we are sharply rebuking them and we run the risk of pushing them to a breaking point or burning them out. So whether it's through harsh judgment or whether it's through a pushy discipleship process... we must not sharply rebuke other christians. Rather we must disciple them in gentleness and let the Holy Spirit do his thing! **Meaningful Discipleship Takes A Relational Approach**.

The next thing we need to see is that... **We Appeal To Those Inside The Church As Family**. Look again at **vs5:1-2**. The NASB uses the word appeal instead of encourage. Encourage is a good word, but appeal works in the context of discipleship as it shows a yearning to help them grow in their faith. We appeal to older men as fathers, and younger men as brothers. We appeal to older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters. When we appeal to different people in these ways, we encourage them in their walk with Christ, rather than discourage them.

How does one tend to speak to a father or a mother? Well, biblically, we are to speak to them with respect and honor. **Leviticus 19:3** says we are to revere them. One of the reasons we honor them and revere them is because of their life experience and wisdom. **Job 12:12** tells us this along with **Proverbs 16:31**. As Christians we are supposed to see other believers as our family. This is much more so in the local church. When we covenant together as partners we are making a pledge to each other as brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, mothers, and fathers. We see fathers and mothers as those worthy of a gentle word rather than a harsh rebuke. If your mom messes up, do you go and yell at her or treat her with contempt? If your father messes up do you harshly rebuke him? Of course not. Instead you, in the most sensitive way possible, approach them, love on them, give them accolades, tell them of what they mean to you, and then in humility tell them where they may have messed up. The old saying is you catch more flies with honey than vinegar is still true. You will win over someone with a kind word but you will push someone away with a harsh approach. **Proverbs 15:1** makes this abundantly clear. Therefore we must cling to **Colossians 4:6**. **We should be more grateful, gentle, forgiving, and loving to one another in the church because we are family!** When we disciple one another as brothers and sisters, fathers and sons, mothers and daughters. When we disciple each other as family, we will be firm, but we will also be patient, kind, and loving. We appeal to and encourage each other as family! **Meaningful Discipleship Takes A Relational Approach**.

The last thing we need to see here is that... **We Inspire Those Outside The Church Through Service**. Let's look again at **vs6:1-2**. We disciple those in the church with gentleness like family. But that doesn't mean our approach to those outside the church should be all that different. All people respond well to gentleness and family like relationships. But here we see Paul turn Timothy's attention to a discipleship approach to those outside the church. He's dealt with older men, older women, younger men, and younger women, and now he deals with our approach to our bosses. As Christians, when we show our bosses respect and honor God is honored. They will see our lives match our beliefs and it will turn their attention to God. We can see this in the way Paul turned the attention of his jailers to Christ in **Acts 16:25-34**. I love the contrast between **5:1-2** and **6:1-2**. The first shows us how to disciple others relationally and the second shows how to disciple others through our example. It's words and life. It's attitude and action. It's both. **You don't just disciple people in small group or one on one bible studies**. You also disciple others by being an **example of Christ in the way you work and live!**

Application

The point is that as Christians we should always view our lives as discipleship opportunities. We don't disciple to harshly, be we don't neglect to push people towards Christ either. And we most certainly must live as examples of Christ. We love others like brothers and sisters and we serve everyone as servants and in the end we will see the Holy Spirit do the work that only he can do! **Meaningful Discipleship Takes A Relational Approach**.

Conclusion

Beck Weathers was one of the men who they had thought was dead on Everest back in 1996. On the mountain he had gone blind and eventually was lost in the storm. But some how after days of being lost in the -40 degree weather, with severe frostbite, Beck managed to make it back to the highest base camp. Beck Weathers is a miracle who survived one of the greatest climbing disasters of all time. How did he do it? The hand of God of course. Beck is still the only person to have ever recovered from a hypothermic coma. But on the human side he gives a lot of the credit to Mike Groom who kept a blinded Beck from falling off the mountain multiple times. Mike tethered Beck to himself and lowered him down the toughest parts of the mountain. It wasn't til they got to the bottom of a steep section that Mike untethered Beck to help others get down the mountain too.

Mike is a hero no doubt! But he exemplifies our job as disciplers. We are to tether those struggling through their spiritual journeys to our ropes and help them up to the peak or down to safety. When we tether people to ourselves, it means we are close. We better get comfortable with each other

real quick. We had better be gentle, and intentional. The point is that as Christians we should always view our lives as discipleship opportunities. We don't disciple to harshly, be we don't neglect to push people towards Christ either. And we most certainly must live as examples of Christ. We love others like brothers and sisters and we serve everyone as servants and in the end we will see the Holy Spirit do the work that only he can do! We had better be relational! Remember, **meaningful Discipleship**

Takes A Relational Approach