

# **FINISH THE RACE – Stay Focused**

July 12, 2015

First Baptist Church Peachtree City

## **Introduction**

If you have a copy of the Scriptures, I would invite you to turn to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2. Last week we began a journey through this encouraging letter from the Apostle Paul (awaiting execution in a dark, damp Roman prison) to Timothy (his protégé in the ministry).

Timothy was no longer a young believer, nor a rookie pastor. But he was in a season of life and ministry where he was discouraged and afraid. Paul spent chapter one providing streams of encouragement from a variety of directions hoping to spur along his great friend to finish the race...and to finish it well.

For many church goers, (especially in western culture), this race (the Christian journey) is about receiving salvation and forgiveness from God, securing eternity in Heaven, surviving the culture, and living in a way that does not upset God or the church too much. But Paul is about to remind Timothy (*and us*) that following Christ is about so much more.

Following Christ is about knowing Him more intimately each day and reflecting His love and glory to a world that so desperately needs Him. It includes the calling and privilege of making more disciples of Jesus Christ. Our enemy, Satan, can and will try to distract us from fulfilling our purpose by discouragement and distorting the picture of the Christian life.

I am told that to train someone how to recognize a counterfeit, keep him focused on the qualities of the genuine article. In this next portion of his letter, Paul paints images to help Timothy (*and us*) stay focused on what it looks like to be a faithful, enduring, and effective disciple-making follower of Christ who finishes the race...and finishes well.

### ***Are you ready to continue our journey in God's Word?***

**1** You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. **2** The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

### **Focus on the Qualities of a Faithful Disciple-Maker (v. 1-2)**

- A. Knows our calling, strength, and ability are all found in God's grace. (v. 1)
- B. Knows our message is not new...it begins and ends in the Gospel. (v. 2a)

***"Meditate on the Gospel daily because you never outgrow your need for it."*** (Merida)

- C. Knows our method is modeled after Christ (and Paul) - personal investment (v.2b)
  - a. ***'Entrust'*** is same word that Jesus spoke from the cross. (Luke 23:46)
  - b. ***Investment begins with time...risks personal hurt...trusting God for results in multiplication you may never personally see.*** **Examples**

***Being a Faithful Disciple-Maker can be personally rewarding...but it certainly requires significant sacrifice, accompanied by a lot of patience, perseverance, and endurance.***

### **Focus on the Qualities of an Enduring Disciple-Maker (v. 3-13)**

**3** Suffer hardship with *me*, as a good **soldier** of Christ Jesus. **4** No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. ***[Soldier willing to sacrifice personal desires and cultural approval.]***

**5** Also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules. ***[An Athlete willing to discipline himself for the purpose of godliness (1 Tim. 4:7), realizing rules are intended to help us experience God's best.]***

6 The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops. **[A Farmer who understands the principles of cultivation, planting, watering, weeding, and harvesting...who understands the principles of sowing and reaping...who rejoices in seeing the spiritual progression in others. He realizes that although he invests much personally, only God can bring the harvest and facilitates spiritual growth / maturity.]**

7 Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. 8 Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel, 9 for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned. **[A Realistic-Optimist who sees the sufferings of Christ and embraces suffering for Christ, but always in light of His victorious resurrection, promise of eternity, and the ineffective attempts of the Enemy to stop the spread of God's Word and the Gospel.]**

10 For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory. 11 It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; 12 If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us; 13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself. **[A Visionary who sees through difficult circumstances in light of individual life-transformation, eternal reward, and a perfectly faithful God who engages people in His plan who trust Him imperfectly.]**

**Enduring as a disciple-maker is not dependent on our strength to persevere, but rather our ability to see, with Holy Spirit insight, God consistently at work... and to keep living, trusting that He is still at work when our faith or vision cannot see.**

**Focus on the Qualities of a Effective Disciple-Maker (v. 14-26)**

14 Remind *them* of these things, and solemnly charge *them* in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers. 15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. 16 But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, 17 and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, 18 *men* who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some. 19 Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness."

**[a] Navigates distractions...and also helps others navigate distractions.**

**[b] Accurately handles God's Word - "Straight Cutting"...knowing that faithfulness to and excellence in communicating Truth takes personal and 'spiritual' sweat.]**

20 Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. 21 Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these *things*, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. 22 Now flee **[like a fugitive]** from youthful lusts and pursue **[with great effort and passion]** righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. **[c] A consistent pursuit of personal purity for the purpose of being optimally usable by God for His plan and purposes...and to be a better worshipper. (1 Tim. 4:16) "Pay close attention to your life and your teaching."**

**"You cannot press a 'skip' button in the process of sanctification." (A. Fulks)**

**"A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God." (R. M. McCheyne)**

23 But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels. 24 The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, 25 with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, 26 and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will. **[d] A consistent view of lostness that reveals itself in the characteristics of Christ being displayed in and through you: (1) Being kind to all; (2) Display gentleness, even in confrontation or controversy over the truth. (3) See the Gospel potential and purpose in people out of a genuine compassion. Example: Most Difficult Person**

**Without Christ...Hopeless and Helpless. With Christ...Hope, Help, and Possibilities!**

### Conclusion

1. Our genuine compassion for souls in making disciples is born out of gratefulness for the impact of the grace and gospel of Jesus Christ in our own lives.
2. Our willingness to invest in making disciples is born out of understanding our God-given purpose, along with a Holy Spirit-inspired ability to see the potential in others.
3. Our ability to make disciples is born out of a heart passionate to know God intimately and surrendered to the pursuit of knowing Him accurately.
4. Our effectiveness in making disciples will be hindered by a lack of our pursuit of personal purity, as well as allowing discouragement and fear to distract us from focusing on our God-called privilege to join Him in accomplishing His redemptive plan for mankind.

### Response

How might God be calling you to respond to His Word today?

- (1) Are you distracted by fear or discouragement? We have encouragers who will be here at the front ready and eager to pray with you and encourage you on your journey.
- (2) Are you struggling in your pursuit of purity or holiness? Why not get back on track through confession and repentance...and re-engage on a path of obedience to God.
- (3) Are you struggling in your pursuit of learning God's Word and handling it accurately. We can help...come and let us know your desire, so we can come along side you.
- (4) You may say, like so many, that you are not sure what it looks like to engage in making disciples because no one really ever invested in discipling you. We have some great people who are ready to invest in your life and to show you how you can invest in the lives of others...come and let us know that you desire someone to walk with you.
- (5) Finally, as we have been talking about investing in others God's Word and the Gospel, maybe God has been holding up a mirror in front of you...and all you can see is **"Hopeless and Helpless"**. Let me assure that Jesus Christ did not die to leave you there...and He has placed us here this morning to encourage you. There is **HOPE, HELP and POSSIBILITIES** available for you. And we have pastors or encouragers would love to help you on your faith journey as you take that next step.

**This altar is a safe, encouraging place. I'm going to pray for you...our encouragers are going to be here for you...you respond as God leads you.**