5.5

WALKING WITH OTHERS IN DISCIPLESHIP



Optional *Lectio Divina* Prayer

1. Read 2 Timothy 2:1–5.
2. Meditate on the words.
3. Speak to Christ about this passage.
4. Rest and listen in God's presence.
5. Discuss together.

What do you think of when you picture St. Paul?

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Many Christians remember the pre-conversion Paul, who "persecuted the Church of God violently and tried to destroy it" (Gal 1:13). He is well known for his dramatic conversion to Christianity on the road to Damascus, his missionary work as the great apostle to the Gentiles, and his writings, which make up a major portion of the New Testament.

But Scripture shows us another side of Paul, a side not as well-known but just as influential for the Church and the world: his intentional discipleship with those he was forming in the Faith.

Paul's traveling companion for much of his missionary journey was a young Christian named Timothy. Upon arriving in Lystra on his second missionary journey, Paul learned of the sound reputation of this faithful young Christian. By the end of Paul's visit there, Timothy was inspired to leave everything behind and to join the great apostle on mission.[1]

As Paul and Timothy journeyed together, Paul intentionally trained Timothy to lead. Paul sent Timothy first to Thessalonica and later to Macedonia to encourage the Christians there, exhorting him to "[l]et no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity" (1 Tm 4:12). After each assignment, Timothy returned to his mentor for even more training in mission.

After a period of deep investment and laboring together, Paul trusted that he had formed Timothy well enough to let him lead on his own — so he sent Timothy on an extended mission to a troubled community in Ephesus. As Timothy fought to address false teachings there, Paul encouraged him: "I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these instructions to you so that, if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God" (1 Tm 3:14).

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A few years later, knowing his own death was near, Paul summoned Timothy to Rome.[2] In his last letter, Paul writes with gratitude for their friendship: "I remember you constantly in my prayers. As I remember your tears, I long day and night to see you, that I might be filled with joy" (2 Tm 1:3–4). But Paul also makes it clear: Timothy's charge was to take up the torch that had been handed on to him by Paul over their many years together and to continue to spread Christ's teachings to the ends of the earth (cf. 2 Tm 2:2). Their "partnership in the Gospel" bore great fruit through their own ministries, but the ripple effects were only beginning (Phil 1:5).

DISCUSS

What do you find most inspiring or surprising about this story of the early Church? What strikes you about Paul's investment in Timothy? What does it reveal to you about discipleship that Paul and Timothy were on mission for more than 15 years together, even when their lives took them apart from one another?

THE IMPORTANCE OF DISCIPLESHIP

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Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

— 1 Corinthians 11:1

St. Paul was an incredible missionary in many ways. But there was only one St. Paul. He couldn't be everywhere at once, and his days on earth were numbered. His missionary efforts produced great fruit in his time, but his investment in passing on the Faith and raising leaders who could continue that mission after he was gone was what truly produced a lasting impact.

The goal of every missionary disciple is to help form other missionary disciples who will live out the Little Way of Evangelization wherever the Lord calls them. It is inviting them to a journey of imitation, an invitation to "be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1), as Paul himself invited the early Christians to do.

To fulfill this mission, we are called to accompany others in discipleship like St. Paul did, which involves so much more than just teaching ideas about the Faith. It entails walking with them through the ups and downs of both their spiritual journey and all other parts of life. It is not about a club or a program but a commitment to a person, to their spiritual growth and to the mission the Lord has in store for them. We can do that by doing for others what Paul did for Timothy.

DISCUSS

How has someone led you like Paul did for Timothy? When considering what they did, what was most transformative for your own understanding of mission?

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LEADING LIKE ST. PAUL

How do you begin investing in others the way Paul invested in Timothy? How do you prepare them to be built up in relationship with Christ and sent on mission? We can follow St. Paul's example of forming missionary disciples in four ways:

- ***Paul shared life with the people he served.***
- ***Paul gave Timothy intentional training for ministry.***
- ***Paul invited Timothy to go out on mission together with him.***
- ***Paul sent Timothy to entrust the mission to others.***

Let's look more closely at each of these elements of walking with another in discipleship.

Sharing Life with the People We Serve

Paul didn't just lead Timothy in a Bible study or have one-on-one training meetings with him. Paul spent a lot of time with Timothy outside of formal meetings. As they journeyed together on mission, Paul and Timothy shared much of everyday life together: meals, prayer, service and many long days of travel. Paul loved Timothy as a close friend, sharing with him not only the Gospel but his very life (cf. 1 Thes 2:8). Paul cared not only for Timothy's mission. He cared about Timothy.

You are called to do the same as you walk with those in your life. You have probably been doing this already; continue to share life with the people you are leading by cooking meals together, visiting the Blessed Sacrament together, and pursuing other ways to share life together.

Intentional Training for Mission

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Paul took the time to teach Timothy how to lead and form others during their time together; when they were apart, Paul wrote letters to Timothy instructing him what to teach, advising him on how to deal with conflict, and encouraging him in keeping his own faith. Paul formed Timothy both in his own personal growth and in practical training for mission.

Once someone in your life has made a commitment to Christ and desires to grow in their faith, they are ready to be intentionally formed. This intentional formation looks different depending on where the person in whom you are investing is in their journey.

- When the person you are investing in is in the "Build" phase, you will likely want to meet occasionally to talk about their walk with Christ, particularly in the basic Christian practices of Acts 2:42: prayer, fellowship, the sacraments, and the teaching of the apostles (see articles 3.0 – 3.6). But we don't just want to *talk about* these ideas. We also want to create opportunities for the person to have *experiences* together in prayer, sacraments, Christian fellowship, and faith formation.

- Once someone has accepted the High Call to Mission, it is best to meet regularly (with a group of other missionary disciples, if possible) for intentional formation and training for mission. This is where you will discuss the "Send" articles (see articles 5.0 – 6.4), practice your mission skills, and spend intentional time going on mission together.

Going on Mission Together

Paul did not simply give Timothy lessons on what to do in the mission field: He modeled mission for him and gave him opportunities to practice. Timothy learned from Paul as he watched him preach the Gospel, answer questions, debate unbelievers, call sinners to repent,

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and encounter rejection, scorn, and even imprisonment. Paul did not just *teach* Timothy about mission; he also *lived it alongside him*.

In your own discipleship, it is important to go on mission together, embodying how Jesus sent his disciples out two by two throughout the Gospels (cf. Lk 10:1). For example, attend the Bible study of the person you are leading and discuss with them afterward what went well and where they could improve. Invest in new people together. Go together to a parish event and meet new people. These are just a few of the ways you can go on mission together.

Seeing Beyond Timothy

In their missionary efforts, Paul was not only concerned about Timothy but also about those Timothy was leading. In one of his letters, Paul instructs Timothy: "What you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tm 2:2). Paul was frequently "seeing beyond Timothy" to those Timothy was investing in, and to those being reached beyond them. As you walk with others, your conversations and investment in others should not just be focused on the two of you but also on the mission entrusted to you and how you are entrusting it to others.

DISCUSS

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What are some practical ways you can share life with the people in whom you are investing? What intentional formation do you think Jesus wants them to receive next? What could you learn by going out on mission with someone else alongside you? How will you ensure that your discipleship relationship is not just focused inward on the two of you but remains looking outward at those in whom you are investing?

PITFALLS TO INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

While this article (and previous ones) have given you a vision for how best to lead others in discipleship, you might still need to practice, to make mistakes, and to learn from them. As you are learning to walk with others in discipleship, here are three pitfalls to avoid:

- ***Buddy:*** Be careful not to let your time together slip into just being "buddies" while letting intentional formation fall to the wayside. Your conversations might begin with what's going on in your lives, but your conversations should center around mission and your next steps in evangelization.
- ***Counselor:*** Your role for those you are accompanying is not to be a counselor or a spiritual director. If the person you are walking with does need more substantial spiritual, mental, or emotional guidance, help them seek out a priest, a good counselor, a spiritual director, or other helpful resources!
- ***Boss:*** Be aware not to let your discipleship relationship be reduced to nothing more than a weekly meeting or discussions solely about goals, progress, and accountability. Falling into the "boss" mentality leaves out the one who's really in charge of mission: Jesus himself! Your role is more like a mentor, one

> *What you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.*
> — *2 Timothy 2:2*

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who encourages, listens, guides, coaches, and helps someone else progress in their mission and toward heaven.

DISCUSS

Which of these three pitfalls do you imagine yourself falling into more easily? What kind of accountability will you need to keep your discipleship intentional and authentic?

TAKE ACTION

Now that you know the elements of intentional discipleship, it's time to start preparing and living it out. As you plan and prepare to invest in others, follow these four steps:

- ***Pray:*** Take time each week to pray for the people in whom you are investing. Let Jesus guide you to the next conversation you need to have or the next skill the person in whom you are investing is ready to learn and practice.

- ***Prepare:*** Based on your prayer, decide what you would like to teach, discuss, or do in your next intentional meeting time. If you decide to discuss a Discipleship Article, take time to read and prepare the article (see Introduction article). If you are practicing some mission skill, take time to think through how you will coach the person or group(s) you're leading and offer feedback.

- ***Teach and Learn:*** During your meeting, use what you prepared to create an authentic conversation and mission experience. Ask good questions and feel free to depart from what you had planned, if the Holy Spirit leads. One way to structure your time together looks like this:

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- 5 – 10 mins: Open in prayer (*Lectio Divina*, intercessory prayer, spontaneous prayer, etc.)
- 30 – 40 mins: Intentional formation or mission practice (discussing a Discipleship Article, reading or listening to a supplemental resource from an article, going out and practicing a mission skill, problem-solving to overcome an obstacle in mission, etc.)
- 10 – 15 mins: Debrief and discuss next steps

Please note: This is not a required structure, but rather a guide to help you ensure that you are incorporating the various pieces of discipleship in your time together. Feel free to adapt this as necessary.

Next Steps: At the end of your meeting, discuss any takeaways and decide what next steps you both need to take to practice and grow in mission. This is where the vision and the ideas from your conversation become a lived habit that can transform your life.

Using these four steps, plan 2–3 weeks of formation and investment for someone in whom you are investing. Consider: How will you intentionally form them to help them grow in their walk of faith? In what ways will you share life with them, in addition to the times of formation? How will you pursue the habits of Acts 2:42 together?

KEY CONCEPTS

Seeing Beyond Timothy: We must ensure that the people we are leading will faithfully entrust the vision and mission of evangelization to those whom they are leading, according to 2 Tm 2:2: "What you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

Notes

[1] Scott Hahn, "Timothy," *Catholic Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 2009), 914.

[2] *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: New Testament, Revised Standard Version (2nd ed.)*, comp. Curtis Mitch, ed. Scott Hahn (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2001), 395.