

The Key to Our Church's Future **2 Timothy**

Part 4 – Discipleship: Providing Life-changing Relationships

Discipleship is the key to our church's future. Why?

First, because discipleship is God's way of passing our faith along

Second, because discipleship is God's way of growing new Christians

Third, because discipleship is God's way of distributing the work of the ministry

Fourth, because discipleship is God's way of providing accountability to the believer

1. Because of the discipleship relationship of Paul and Timothy, Timothy was a spiritual son to Paul. 1:2, 2:1
2. This provided young Timothy with much-needed accountability. Notice some of the areas:
 - His spiritual gifts – 1:6
 - His personal Bible study – 2:15
 - His personal purity – 2:22
 - His ministry for the Lord – 4:1
3. Timothy's accountability to Paul produced growth in his life.
4. You cannot make disciples without accountability. To try to do so is like trying to raise children without discipline or without parents... to run a business without leaders and supervisors... to run a school without teachers... to lead an army without authority... to have a team without a coach.
 - It will not work in the spiritual realm either.
5. What exactly is accountability? It is submitting yourself to the spiritual authority of another person for the purpose of spiritual growth and development in your life.
6. This idea of accountability is not popular today. Very few people want to be told they are accountable and will be held responsible for their own attitudes and actions.
 - People will accept it at work because there is remuneration for the job that is done. They love the paycheck at the end of the week.
 - But outside of the workplace, people don't want to be held accountable or responsible for anything. Yet we desperately need it.
7. But Jesus practiced the principle of accountability with His disciples.
 - Jesus trained them, equipped them, sent them out, and had them report back.
 - Why did He do this? He knew this would motivate them to accomplish all of God's will. Jesus used accountability (not to instill fear in His followers), but as a catalyst to bring growth and fruit in the lives of His disciples.

8. Did you know the Bible teaches that you need spiritual accountability in your life? Hebrews 13:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14; Ephesians 5:21 (“*submitting*” – to arrange under or to obey)
 - Accountability is like train tracks. The tracks are there so the train doesn’t get off course. God desires for us to have mentoring relationships in our lives to provide us with loving direction (like those train tracks).
 - If not, we can easily get off track, and our lives can end up like a train wreck.
9. God did not make you to be a solitary individual. We are called to be a community of people – submitting to one another, teaching one another, fellowshiping with one another, and exhorting one another.
 - A Japanese proverb says, “A single arrow is easily broken, but not ten in a bundle.”
 - Every disciple needs three types of relationships in his life. He needs a Paul who can mentor him and challenge him. He needs a Barnabas who can come alongside and encourage him. And he needs a Timothy that he can pour his life into.
 - We all need spiritual accountability like Paul gave to Timothy.
 - **Illustration of a football team:** A football team whose members won’t listen to the coach, learn the plays, and work hard to perfect their game is destined to lose. A Christian who will not submit to the spiritual authority of another, learn the foundational truths of the Christian faith, and practice those principles will also fail to live a victorious Christian life.
10. Let me give you some practical suggestions:
 - Become a member of a local church. You need desperately to find a church where you are being taught God’s Word, and join that local assembly. This will provide a level of accountability.
 - Join one of our LIFE Groups at 8:30, 9:30, or 11 AM. You will form close friendships, be fed God’s Word, and form relationships that will help you stay accountable.
 - L – learning, I – involvement, F – friendship, E – encouragement
 - Join a “Wednesday Equipped for Life” Bible Study group.
11. This principle of accountability is so crucial, but it happens in small groups and close friendships – in face-to-face relationships. All of us are capable of getting off track.
 - Just like Timothy had Paul, we need a Paul in our life.
 - If you simply come and sit in one of the worship services, you are greatly limiting your growth potential.
12. God has a place for you to serve. Christian growth is exciting. There is nothing more joyous than seeing spiritual growth in your life and knowing that God is using you to impact others’ lives.
13. Growing and changing is what it is all about, but remember, it will not happen without accountability in your life. Ephesians 5:21

Discipleship – it truly is the key to our church’s future!