

Northwest Community Evangelical Free Church

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Sermon manuscript

Sermon Series: Next Steps

Disciples Making Disciples

(2 Timothy 2:1-6; Matthew 28:18-20)

Study #2

Introduction: Mentoring...

Maybe you watched *The March of the Penguins*, a documentary narrated by Morgan Freeman (2005) that tells the story of how the Emperor Penguin thrives in earth's harshest environment - the Antarctic - and, incredibly, builds a family there. (and, as Morgan Freeman anthropomorphically says, "*Love finds a way*")

The March of the Penguins describes how the female and the male work together to provide for, protect, and guide their young so that they survive to adulthood. Without the help of the adult penguins, the eggs and chicks perish quickly at -60, Fahrenheit.

There are other of examples of nurture and provision in the animal kingdom, although not all species are so protective and helpful of their young.

For instance, pandas. Adult pandas are adorable and cuddly, but they are also notoriously negligent of their babies. Panda moms commonly bear twins, but usually care for only one of the twins. (to which I, a twin, say, "*Ouch!*")

Through the years I have seen mostly penguin parents here at our church. You nurture and guide and protect and provide for your sons and daughters and it is a beautiful thing to behold.

As they grow, you teach them to feed themselves and to walk and talk, to pick up after themselves and to be responsible. You mentor your kids. This is all critical. Without intentional mentoring, the next generation literally doesn't know what to do.

The world works because of the magic of mentoring. One person grows and then helps someone else grow. That's the way families thrive. It also is how businesses, sports teams and schools thrive.

My parents mentored me in basic life skills. Then, as an adult I was mentored by a couple of men here at Northwest in how to garden (Ned Dreyer and Harold Turner). My father-in-law mentored me in auto mechanics.

A physical therapist guides and mentors a patient recovering from surgery as he re-learns walking. A sponsor mentors the man struggling with an addiction. The coach mentors a player who is learning a new position on the team. The boss helps the new employee learn the ropes in a new job.

In every arena of life, mentoring is crucial.

So, for the next few minutes, consider our church a recovery center, a team, a hospital, a home, where we each make progress in Jesus and then lend a hand where we can to help someone else.

Review...

Here at the beginning, let's review our Mission Statement.

We help you take next steps with Jesus...

...so that you can help others take next steps with Jesus.

That statement consists of two parts. There is part one: YOU take next steps with Jesus.

You commit to regular, consistent exposure to Scripture and to prayer. You share Jesus with a friend. You say "*Done!*" to involvement with pornography. Stuff like that.

And you just might need a mentor in Jesus if...

...you don't know how to begin in prayer or Bible reading.
 ...you don't know how to share your faith in Jesus.
 ...you have tried and failed to stop sexual sin.

Getting help from a mentor to is a normal part of maturing in Jesus. It is wisdom to recognize that you need a mentor to help you take next steps. If that's you, please let me or any of the staff or elders know where you'd like some help. It's why we're here!

So, that's part one. Here's the Statement's part two: YOU help someone else take next steps

The mission isn't accomplished until you are on the giving end. Jesus calls you to establish mentoring relationships - at both ends of the spectrum.

Today, we'll look at a mentor/mentee relationship described in the New Testament that points the way forward for us, who want the same. In this relationship, the Apostle Paul is the mentor and Timothy is the mentee.

Timothy

What we know about Timothy

We know that Timothy lived in the Galatian city of Lystra (Acts 16:1-3) and that the Apostle Paul met Timothy when he, Paul, was traveling through Galatia on a missionary trip.¹

When they met, Timothy was a very young man.² Paul was very much impressed by this much younger man. Timothy was a solid guy and a strong Christian with a good reputation.

¹ I think it likely that this was on the First Missionary Journey, but it could have been on the Second.

² They first started working and traveling together on the Second Missionary Journey. Fifteen years later, Paul wrote to Timothy to let no one look down on him

Timothy's father was a Greek, who was probably not a Christian. But Timothy's mother was a Jewish Christian who brought Timothy up to know Jesus. His grandmother, Lois, was also a Christian.

Early on, Timothy's spiritual giftedness had been recognized by church leaders, Paul, and others. Prophetic utterances had been spoken over him (1 Timothy 1:18; 4:14). Affirming hands were laid on him.

We know a good deal about Timothy. And what we know of him, we know because of his long relationship with Paul.

Timothy's relationship with Paul

From the start of the second missionary journey forward, Timothy was one of Paul's most constant companions.³

He traveled with Paul nearly everywhere he went with the gospel. They were together in Philippi⁴ and Corinth and Ephesus and Rome and Jerusalem.

Timothy was with Paul when the apostle wrote letters (Some think that he was a co-author.) to the Philippians and to the Colossians and to a leader in the church at Colossae, Philemon.

Timothy also had an active ministry in several churches, including pastoral stints at Corinth and Ephesus. And, of course, we have two personal letters that Paul wrote to Timothy that highlight Paul's mentoring role in Timothy's life.

The first letter (1 Timothy) was primarily to instruct the younger man in what was involved in serving a church. Paul wrote the

because of his youthfulness (1 Timothy 4:12), implying that he must have been *really* young when he started out with Paul.

³ Early on, Paul had Timothy circumcised for the sake of the Jews, so that he would not be a stumbling block to them since he was, after all, half Jewish.

⁴ The assumption is that while Timothy was in Philippi with Paul and Silas, he was not imprisoned as they were because of his youth.

second letter (2 Timothy) from a Roman dungeon⁵ and we believe it was shortly before Paul was martyred for his faith.

While he hoped that his friend, Timothy, would be able to visit him in Rome before he died, we don't know if he ever made it. So, what we read in 2 Timothy can be read as Paul's final charge to his son in the faith, the passing of the torch of the faith from mentor to mentee, from discipler to disciple.

Our primary focus today is on a few verses in 2 Timothy, chapter 2. Paul begins with a strong exhortation to Timothy to move forward in his own personal walk with God. He wants Timothy to be always taking next steps with Jesus.

Take Next Steps (2:1)

[1] You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Paul wanted Timothy to grow in character - in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity (1 Timothy 4:12; 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:20-26) - and he wants the younger man to grow in his areas of giftedness. (1 Timothy 4:14-16; 2 Timothy 1:6-7, 14)

He urged Timothy to both pray and to promote prayer (1 Timothy 2:1-8), to discipline himself for godliness (1 Timothy 4:7-8), and to fight the good fight of faith. (1 Timothy 1:19; 6:12)

Paul told him to be bold, not timid (2 Timothy 1:8), to teach and preach biblical truth, (1 Timothy 1:3-4; 4:3; 2 Timothy 2:14-19; 4:1-2), and to do the work of an evangelist. (2 Timothy 4:5)

Timothy was to deal appropriately with older and younger men and women (1 Timothy 5:1-16), to honor and to hold elders accountable (1 Timothy 3; 5:17-22).

He was to promote the enjoyment of every good thing for the gift of God it is (1 Timothy 4:1-6), and to instruct wealthy people to store up treasure in heaven and to be generous. (1 Timothy 6:17-19)

By constantly taking next steps in these directions, Timothy will be walking into the epic journey of being ***“strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”***

In the next verse, though, it's clear that Paul also wanted Timothy to help others take their own next steps.

Help Others Take Next Steps

The Next-Step STRATEGY

[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.

Multiplication

Timothy's story

The Apostle Paul spoke to witnesses. These witnesses were numerous and they included Timothy. Timothy is to pass on what he has heard from Paul to ***“faithful men.”*** (presumably, the other witnesses were to do the same) and then, these multiplied faithful men were to pass on what they learned to ***“others.”***

We see four generations of Christ-followers in this one verse.

Now, specifically, what is in view here is equipping teachers to teach sound doctrine in a church and to lead a congregation into maturity and health by feeding them truth. It would be hard to overstate how important this is.

However, more broadly, most who look at this passage see Paul describing HOW the torch of the faith is to be passed from one Christ-follower to another. Or, as we are saying it here, how to help others take a next step with Jesus.

⁵ This is not the “house arrest” in Rome that is mentioned at the end of Acts.

Paul poured into Timothy. This happened as they traveled from place to place on missionary journeys, served together, corresponded through letters, and as they prayed. Paul didn't simply pour knowledge into Timothy's head. He poured his life into Timothy's life.

Theirs was an intensely personal "next step" relationship. All genuine and God-honoring next step relationships are intensely personal. And, as Paul had invested in Timothy's life, so Timothy was to invest in the lives of others.

This model played out in my early life with Jesus. Very soon after I came to faith, God brought into my life a group of "Pauls" who poured into me.

My story

I trusted Christ when I was in High School and the church youth group I was a part of was led by a good group of men and women. Three men in particular - Bob Livesay, Dwain Camp, and Bob Hendricks - made personal investments in me and the other guys in the group.

It was from that group that I learned something about Jesus-centered community, the joy of sharing my faith, the importance of Scripture and Scripture memory, and so much more.

In particular, Bob Livesay met with me on a regular basis for some intentional discipling. He mentored me in wise living, sexual purity, basic beliefs, guidance in relationships, and training in how to serve. We read the Bible together and we prayed together. It was intensely personal. Bob helped me to grow in Christ.

In addition, Bob urged me - a year-and-a-half old Christian in high school - to help some of the younger guys in the youth group to grow in Christ, too. At his urging, I approached a couple of the younger guys and started to meet with them.

So, Timothy was Paul's "Timothy." I was one of Bob's "Timothys". And that's the way it's been in the Jesus movement for the last two thousand years. One Christ-follower pours into another, who pours into another.

At various stages in my life, lots of others have provided me with more mentoring in God-honoring life skills, marriage and parenting, counseling, preaching, generosity.

I'll bet you can name people who have made a difference in your life, for Jesus' sake.

Your story

Well today, on the strength of 2 Timothy 2:2, I believe God is calling you to start thinking of yourself as a Timothy, a disciple in need of some help, AND as a Paul, a disciple who has something to offer.

You need mentoring AND you can mentor. You are to be a disciple AND a disciple-maker. You have next steps to take AND there are people who need you to help them take next steps.

And it isn't much of a leap to move from our passage this morning to Jesus' Great Commission. I read it last week. Here it is again.

Exponential (Matthew 28:18-20 AND 2 Timothy 2:12)

[18] "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. [19] Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."⁶

Both passages are addressed to disciples / Jesus-followers. Both call disciples to pass the torch to others. Both provide a vision for how the world will be reached for Jesus.

⁶ It is important to note that Jesus' Great Commission was not a command that we evangelize, and it was not a mandate to plant churches. It was a command to make disciples. The assumption of the Great Commission is, I believe, that disciples in a given area will gather in groups. We call those groups "churches", and a church in any given area will organize itself to do mission in ways that make sense to the people who are a part of that group. Thus, I see the New Testament pictures of churches as less *prescriptive*, and more *descriptive*. Planting a church of a particular organizational scheme is not a bad thing at all. But the irreducible minimum of the Great Commission is to make disciples.

When I was a young Christian, this was all laid out for me as a strategy for reaching my high school for Christ

There were about twenty-four hundred students at Warren Travis White High School in Dallas and there were five of us attending a Bible study at school. So, the guy who was leading that study showed us that...

- ..if each of us in that Bible study made four disciples from among our classmates, at the end of the year there would be twenty-five disciples;
- ...the next year, if each of those twenty-five disciples made four disciples, there would be one hundred and twenty-five disciples;
- ...and if, during the third year, each of those one hundred and twenty-five disciples made four disciples each, there would be six hundred and twenty-five disciples of Jesus by the end of May.

Obviously, the fourth year would be “Mission: Accomplished.” If all six hundred and twenty-five disciples each made four disciples during that year, all the students, plus the janitorial staff, the principals, counselors, teachers, and coaches would be following Jesus.

That’s inspiring stuff. And no, the whole school wasn’t evangelized. There’s more than math involved in making disciples.

But it is nevertheless true that if each disciple took Matthew 28 and 2 Timothy 2:2 seriously, it wouldn’t be long before Jesus’ Great Commission would be Mission: Over and Done.

Now, here’s where I want to possibly stretch your thinking about disciple-making.⁷

⁷ What follows is the outworking of what has come to be known as “The Engels Scale” (from James Engels, a student of missions), a helpful way of looking at a person’s movement from unbeliever, by stages, to disciple-maker. The Engels Scale provides a vision for each person moving toward maturity in Christ, recognizing that people move to maturity *by stages*. It encourages us to think in terms of how to help people make progress with activities, training, and service opportunities appropriate for each stage.

Who is in view?

People are at all stages of spiritual development

The people you know are at every imaginable place in their spiritual journey. Some are Christians, and some are not.

Of those who are Christians, some are vibrant and growing, some are brand-new to the faith, some are mature in the faith, and some are stuck.

Of those who don’t know Jesus, some are interested in finding out about Him, some rarely ever think about God, some belong to other faiths, and some may be unfriendly to Christianity.

Which of these people don’t need to learn or to learn more about Jesus? Which of these people should we not tell about Jesus? Who among your friends should you not help take a next step with Jesus?

Right. Everybody can take a next step with Jesus. And, in the circles in which you run, guess what? *“Tag. You’re it.”*

All can take a next step with Jesus

Let’s take, for example, someone you know who has not yet come to know Jesus and, in fact, doesn’t know very much about Jesus. Can you help this friend take a next step with Jesus?

Sure. You can tell him what a difference Jesus is making in your life. You can pray for him. You can tell him what you know of Jesus and of Jesus’ commands.

He might even take some of those commands of Jesus to heart. He might start following Jesus.

Every “step” he takes toward Jesus - learning about Him, even obeying His commands - is a step into discipleship.

Now, he still hasn't come to know Christ as Savior. He still hasn't placed his faith in Jesus to receive the free gift of eternal life. But, just like the first disciples, he's learning about Jesus. He's following before entrusting himself to Jesus.

These steps he is taking don't give him "brownie points" with God. But they are good for him. He begins to discover that following Jesus is a good thing. He begins to see that Jesus is trustworthy and that Jesus loves him.

And, as he sees more and more of the goodness of Jesus by learning more about Him and even seeing the fruit of following Him, he may - and you pray that he will!!! - soon take the all-important next step of placing faith in Jesus for eternal life.⁸

And, of course, after coming to faith, every step he takes toward maturity is a further step into discipleship.

When disciples like you are making disciples of the people you know, pouring your life into them for Jesus' sake, the purposes of God move forward in the world.

A disciple-filled pipeline

And here's some images to fill your mind of what life looks like when those of us here are on mission for Jesus' Great Commission.

PRAYER

More and more, we will be depending on God to do what only He can do when we ask Him. Prayer will become our shared language, inside and outside of Sunday morning church. Our eyes will be opened to see God at work.

BIBLE

We and the people into whose lives we are pressing Jesus will love and live the Bible's truths. Our understanding of Scripture will deepen as it travels the critical eighteen inches from head to heart. Our lives and the

lives of others will be changed by the transforming power of God's truth.

HOME

Homes will be places of spiritual nurture and growth. Marriages will increasingly be loving, supportive, respectful things. Children will know they are loved and will know of God's love. Hospitality will flourish.

I read the following from Duane Miller's Facebook page this past week. We support Duane and Sharon Miller in Madrid, Spain, as missionaries.

Duane writes,
 "The other day our son, David (13), was chatting with another student in class. The teacher asked if they were done and the student said, "Yes. And David prays." And all the kids in his class laughed at him. It was a wonderful, teachable moment. "We are Christians," I told him that night before praying, "Our way of life has been handed down from generation to generation for almost 2,000 years now. We do not live like the world. You are being ridiculed because you are a Christian and this is what Jesus, the founder of this movement, said would happen. David, it is a great honor that you have been humiliated for your allegiance to Jesus Christ."

GENUINENESS

Your relationships will become more genuine as you realize that life is about Jesus. The masks come off. There is deep connection between you and the people you know and in the context of this transparency, lives are changed.

GENEROSITY

We will be learning the grace of generosity with time, talent, and treasure. Our generosity will be contagious.

WITNESS

⁸ This is referred to as "discipling to conversion." It's what the apostles did, and it is what the Great Commission assumes we will do.

We'll be praying for our friends who don't know our Jesus. We'll be lovingly engaging with them, talking with them, befriending them, serving them, pursuing them for love's sake.

All of that and more is what we have to look forward to as more and more of us become disciples who make disciples.

When you first started following Jesus, you were at the end of a long line of disciple-making disciples. Someone had poured their life into the life of that person who poured into the life of the person who poured into you.

Now, it is your turn to invest in someone, point them to Jesus, help a friend take a next step with Jesus.

Just think about how exciting it will be when you hear that the person into whose life you poured is now investing in someone else. Your "Timothy" has become someone else's "Paul"!

So, Paul has laid out the strategy for the progress of the faith in the first two verses of 2 Timothy 2. Take next steps. Help others take next steps.

The passage concludes with a call to a certain way of thinking as we move forward. We are to adopt the mentality of a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer.

First, the soldier.

The Next-Step Mentality

Pleasing Jesus

***[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.***

My father and my grandfather served in the US Army, but I have never served in the military. I have, though, served in San Antonio

for a long time. During these years I have come to greatly appreciate the military and its culture by living in "Military City, USA."

You don't have to attend very many promotion or retirement ceremonies to see that there is something very special about serving in uniform.

Those who serve consider it an honor to do so. Military personnel live by a code. Hear the mottos of some of the services.

Army: *"This we'll defend"*

Navy: *"Not self, but country"*

Marines: *"Semper Fidelis"* (Always faithful)

Air Force: *"Aim High...Fly, Fight, Win"*

Coast Guard: *"Always Prepared"*

Soldiers understand loyalty in the service of country and cause. They understand that their service will often lead to suffering.

Paul writes to Timothy and calls him to be willing to endure hardship in serving Jesus and His Great Commission. That call goes out to all us Timothys here today, too.

Paul knows of what he speaks, having suffered tremendously in serving Jesus. We believe that he was put to death by Rome shortly after this letter was sent.

Nothing meant more to Paul than pleasing his Savior. Jesus went to the cross for him. Jesus saved his eternal soul. He willingly suffered for Jesus.

And to adopt the mentality of a soldier is to live to please our Commander. We don't often use militaristic language to describe following Jesus these days. We don't want to be misunderstood.

Jesus' soldiers aren't out to steal, kill, and destroy. We are called to do battle with evil and to fight for the souls of those who don't know our Jesus.

As you take next steps, some of those next steps will be painful and will cost you. So be it.

As you pour your life into another for Jesus' sake, know that it won't always turn out well. Some of the seed you sow will fall on rocky ground and some will get choked out by weeds. Stay the course. Steady.

Keep sowing, keep investing, keep pouring your life and Jesus into the lives of your friends, keep helping those around you take next steps. Jesus smiles when you do.

Soldier on. Next, Paul tells us to adopt the mentality of an athlete.

Compete to win the prize

[5] Also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules.

With the Winter Olympics set to start in PyeongChang, Korea, on February 9, we're hoping that sport will overshadow politics for a couple of weeks.

The athletes will compete in sports for which they have been training for years and will have to compete according to the rules of the game, be the "game" skiing or hockey, speed or figure skating, luge or curling. They have to follow the rules, or they will be disqualified.

Christians, too, must live as Jesus calls us to live in the "game" of being a disciple and making disciples.

And then, Paul speaks of the farmer.

Work to receive a harvest

The faithful, hard-working, persevering mentality of a farmer

[6] The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops.

Picture a farmer. He's plowing his field, fertilizing it with good manure, planting seed, pulling weeds, harvesting a crop.

I've got a garden, which I thoroughly enjoy. But if things don't pan out in my garden, I've also got H-E-B.

But the farmer Paul imagines here feeds his family by his wise stewardship of the land and by his hard-work, patience, and perseverance.

Imitate the farmer. Serve Jesus with diligence. Be patient for the crop. Learn to hate the weeds of sin. Be ruthless with them. Be the disciple Jesus saved you to be and make disciples of those around you.

Conclusion:

This morning marks a "first" for me. This is the first time I have ever spoken from 2 Timothy 2:1-6 at Northwest. But it's not the first time I have spoken from this passage.

The first message I ever delivered was when I was a High School senior at Grace Bible Church's annual Sunday evening "Youth service." I spoke from 2 Timothy 2:1-6. (FYI, 1974)

I was captured by what Paul had to say then, because others had poured their lives into me - Bob, Dwain, Bob, and others - and so I spoke about the blessing discipleship had been in my life.

And that's where I want to end this morning.

It's not hard to see what was the "point" of the first image. When Paul commends the mentality of a soldier, he's urging us to a sober commitment to please Jesus, who gave Himself to us.

But the "point" of the last two images is different.

Yes, the athlete must compete according to the rules - but that is only so she can win the prize. And, yes, the farmer is a hard-worker, patient guy - but he works hard to receive his share of the crops.

Paul wants you and me to think about the athlete and the farmer to drive home the ideas of reward and benefit that come our way when we invest in others for Jesus' sake.

And, again, for the second week in a row, we see that there is no life like the life that is given to Jesus' mission.

APPENDIX

***Looking for how to help your friend take a next step with Jesus? Consider these possibilities, depending on where your friend is on her or his spiritual journey.

COMMITTED ATHEIST; UNFRIENDLY TO THE FAITH

***Pray for your friend who is far from God to come near.
 ***Relationally connect. Build a solid friendship.
 ***Tell your friend about your faith in Jesus.

NOT INTERESTED OR KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT THE FAITH

***Pray for your friend who is far from God to come near.
 ***Relationally connect. Build a solid friendship.
 ***Study the Bible with him or her.
 ***Learn about how to lead an Forum series or a Discovery Bible Study.
 (Ask me about Open Forums; For Discovery Bible studies, see <http://worldmissionsevangelism.com/discovery-bible-studies/>)

INTERESTED NON-CHRISTIAN; FRIENDLY TO THE FAITH

***Pray for your friend who is far from God to come near.
 ***Relationally connect. Build a solid friendship.
 ***Study the Bible with him or her.
 ***Invite to involvement in a Care Group and/or ABF.

NEW CONVERT

***Urge your friend to baptism
 ***Invite your friend to involvement in a Care Group and/or ABF.
 ***Invite the new Christian to participate (and to invite friends) in an Open Forum or Discovery Bible study.

GROWING CHRISTIAN -

***Instill a vision for the growing Christian to be a disciple maker
 ***Challenge and train to serve in the church.
 ***Challenge and cast vision to serve outside the church.
 ***Invite to involvement in a Care Group and/or ABF
 ***Leads a Discovery Bible study
 ***Equip to serve Jesus in the marketplace

DISCIPLE-MAKER/SERVANT-LEADER

***Invite to leadership training.
 ***Challenge to serve in a leadership role in the church.
 ***Challenge to initiate a ministry outside the structure of the church.
 ***Equip in ministry skills.