

GBs in The Bible: Timothy, Paul's Protege

My introduction to this series of posts about GBs in the Bible explained that a God Buddy relationship is built on a solid biblical foundation of Christ-like characteristics that helps transform people for God's bigger purposes in the world.

My last post about the Apostle Paul (a mentor) and Barnabas (a peer) was some of the Three Relationships Every Man Needs. The next example from that same post is that of Timothy, Paul's young protege.

Investing in the Next Generation



I believe that everyone needs role models – typically someone ahead of where you are in life’s journey.

I also believe everyone needs to mentor someone just behind them in the journey – in order to develop the next generation of leaders, Christian and responsible men.

I’ve had the honor to partner with my wife in raising three boys, who are now fine young men that make me proud of them every day.

I’ve also had the pleasure to sponsor a few teenagers through our church’s Confirmation class. When I was an assistant Scoutmaster in our local Boy Scout Troop, I saw many boys grow up into fine young gentlemen. Based on comments from some guys I know about being “their Paul”, I’m very humbled to be an influence in other’ lives, even if its in the smallest degree.

Timothy’s relationship with the Apostle Paul demonstrates two more important aspects of God Buddy relationships: the need to develop trust and the investing of your time. From Timothy’s perspective, he found the perfect role model in Paul, who was a “wise and trusted counselor or teacher; an influential senior sponsor or supporter.” (according toDictionary.com)

Biblical Background

Timothy is mentioned as being with Paul in several New Testament letters: 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and Philemon. In Paul’s first letter to Timothy, he gave him instructions and advice about leading the

church. He exhorted Timothy not to let others look down upon him due to his youth, but to set an example for other believers “in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12).

We first read about his young protégé , as Paul was journeying to Derbe and Lystra: “And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek. He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium.” (Acts 16:1-2)

From an early age, Timothy had faith in the Lord presumably due to teachings by his mother and grandmother since. Later, Paul speaks highly of both ladies writing that he was “...filled with joy, when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also” (2 Timothy 1:3-5).

Paul heard of young Timothy and was determined to take him on his missionary journeys. Since Timothy’s father was a gentile and not a believer, Paul referred to Timothy his “true son in the faith. Since his mother was Jewish, Paul had the young man circumcised (Acts 16:3) so Timothy could identify to the Greeks and also be welcomed as a circumcised Jew.

Paul was training Timothy on how to strengthen the churches in the faith. Timothy began as a companion to Paul in his travels but soon served as a pastor as the congregations increased in their number daily (Acts 16:4-5). Paul urged Timothy to remain in Ephesus to oversee the congregation there and entrusted him to maintain the gospel message so that the congregation would not deviate from God’s truth in any way.

In the years that followed, Timothy became one of Paul's most trusted partners in addressing congregational problems, especially those in Corinth. By the time Paul began his third missionary journey, Timothy had been associated with him for about seven years. Paul had invested a significant amount of time developing Timothy, perhaps having seen the advantages of the Barnabas-Paul-Mark relationship so he was looking to complete another trio involving himself, Silas and Timothy.

Timothy's spiritual life and ministry were Paul's constant concern so he wanted the protégé to give undivided attention to spreading the gospel. Over the years, Paul taught Timothy many truths and urged him to remain faithful to those truths. He had given sound instructions, but now was ready to release Timothy to his ministry to uphold the gospel in the midst of the many false teachings that grew within some churches. Timothy's confidence and ability remained strong throughout due to teachings of a trustworthy minister like Paul. Throughout the remainder of Timothy's life, he never wavered as a disciple of Jesus even when he was imprisoned for a time (possibly at Rome) and until the time he was martyred for his faith in 97 A.D.

The GB Lesson

The lesson and principles for being a good God Buddy is that the mentor and mentee need to establish trust and invest time together. Spiritual and personal growth occurs over time, through a variety of circumstances, and involving numerous people. Over time, the trust and commitment to the common goal allows the mentor to release the mentee which completes them to carry on the mission.



It took several years for Timothy to mature and become an effective leader. He gained in confidence and developed a level of trust with Paul as they spent time together. The lessons gained and passed down helped the two remain committed to their friendship and common goal. For Paul, this with Timothy relationship gave him purpose and endurance throughout his many imprisonments.

Who are are you mentoring in your life?

Are there other lessons from this story?

If so, feel free to comment below.