Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Essentials of Discipleship
Scripture: 1 Corinthians 4:1-21
Code: 80-361

I want you to open your Bible to 1 Corinthians 4, for those who are visiting with us, we are kind of looking at some of the key chapters of 1 Corinthians. I really hadn't intended to look at this fourth chapter, but it was just laid on my heart which happens sometimes when I have an experience that stirs me up. There is a lot of discussion today about what we call flat-screen church where you go to a building, an event, and you see a preacher on a flat screen. This is called multi-site church, you have one person speaking in one place and then you have flat-screen representation of him in other places, sometimes near and sometimes thousands of miles away.

I listened to a discussion on the virtues of multi-site church and flat-screen event kind of ministry and all I could think about was how different that was than the Scripture, and what the Scripture expects of a pastor, of one who feeds his flock, of one who is responsible for his sheep, very different.

And I began to look at the Scripture and just think about that and I want to eventually land on 1 Corinthians chapter 4 but in getting us there, maybe some landing lights along the way. I want to remind you that when the Apostle Peter gave instruction to elders, to pastors, 1 Peter 5, he said this, "Shepherd, or literally feed the flock of God in your midst. Feed the flock of God in your midst, not the flock of God at a vast distance, in your midst, exercising oversight, that is being responsible for the details of their lives, not under compulsion but voluntarily according to the will of God and not for money, sordid gain, but with eagerness, not as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock."

The responsibility to pastor here is pretty clear...shepherd the flock of God that is among you, those allotted to your charge. Yes, you feed them, but you exercise authority, oversight, over them and you prove to be a living example to them. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory." The reward that the Chief Shepherd gives to faithful pastors is based not just on their preaching, but on their oversight and on their shepherding and on their example to the flock. This speaks of a real relationship. This speaks unmistakably of being involved in people's lives at a very intimate level.

Even the Apostle Paul who crisscrossed Asia Minor would say in Galatians 4:19 that "I have birth pangs until Christ is fully formed in you." He had come to such a personal knowledge of the people that he was responsible for that his own heart ached over their spiritual immaturity and their spiritual imperfections. In fact, in writing to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians chapter 11, he says, "Who is weak

without my being weak and who sins without my intense concern." This is a man intimately involved with the people in his life.

Another look at ministry responsibility comes in Ephesians 4 where given to the church are apostles and prophets and they are followed them by evangelists and teaching pastors for the perfecting of the saints...for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry until they all mature in to the very likeness of Christ. To the Colossians, Paul says that he labors, that he works, that he literally exhausts himself, spends himself laboring mightily, admonishing every man, teaching every man with all wisdom that we may present every man complete in Christ.

These verses never came up in the discussion that I listened to about multi-site, flat-screen event-type ministry, but these are the things that define biblical ministry. In Acts 20 when Paul met with the Ephesian elders, he said that he had not failed to declare unto them the whole counsel of God. In his time there with those at Ephesus, he had discharged a full understanding of revealed gospel truth. He held nothing back. He had testified of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. He says, "I am innocent of the blood of all men for I didn't shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God." Then he speaks to all who are shepherds and pastors, "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers."

To be a pastor is not to be a flat-screen preacher. It is to be a personal shepherd. That is clear in Scripture. You are to shepherd the church of God, among you the flock over which the Lord has made you overseers. Paul is so intimately involved in that, he says that remembering night and day for a period of three years, I didn't cease to admonish each one with tears...each one with tears. It was he, back in verse 20 of Acts 20, who said, "I didn't shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, teaching you publicly and from house to house." This is a genuine approach to pastoral ministry. It is limited. It is narrow. It is to shepherd the flock in which you live and with whom you live. And in the midst of that flock, you exercise oversight over them and you are the living example they are to follow. As Paul told the Corinthians, "Be ye followers of me as I am of Christ."

We have been given the responsibility to shepherd the flock of God. We are to be sanctifying influences, sanctifying shepherds. Now how do we do this? And that's what takes us to 1 Corinthians 4 if you were wandering with me a little bit, go back there. How do we do this? And this is just a very practical message for you. These are things that come out of the experience and the pen of the Apostle Paul but things which have been vindicated and proven to be valid and true throughout many, many years of my ministry. How do you actually, effectively7 shepherd someone in to Christ's likeness? How do you fulfill the role of a pastor which is a model for how we are all to behave? I don't want you to think that being a discipler of men, being a shepherd of others is something that belongs only to the pastor. The pastor is to do this because he sets the example for all to follow. That is what it tells us in Hebrews 13, that those who are over you in the Lord, again the idea of oversight of certain people in your care, follow their faith, Hebrews 13 says. Obey them for they watch over your

souls as those will give an account.

We have much more to give an account for than the sermon we deliver on a flat screen. We have much more to give an account for than the message whether the quality of the message was better than most can do, it is not that message alone which will be used to evaluate our effectiveness, it is our whole life commitment to the flock that the Lord has placed in our care and how we discharge both teaching, preaching, oversight, ministry and example in their midst so that they were increasingly conformed to the image of Christ, so that they were moving from one level of glory to the next.

Now how can we do this? How can I do this? How can I make an effort to do this? And how can you follow my example and be a spiritual disciple and a spiritual disciple maker yourself? Well let's begin where Paul begins at the beginning of the chapter. And we're not going to go through the whole thing, but I do want to point out a foundational reality. Verse 1, "Let a man regard us in this manner, as ministers of Christ, servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God." I'm afraid that one of the things that happens in flat-screen event kind of multi-site preaching environments is that the face on the screen becomes enamored with itself and you lose the sense of perspective as if you had to be imported from other places because no one could possibly come up to your own standard. This strikes a blow against that because it says, "Let us be regarded as servants of Christ...servants of Christ."

There are a number of possibilities for the word "servant" as you now know. *Doulos* isn't one of them, that means slave. There are words for servants, there are six of them in the New Testament and all of them describe a function. They all describe a function, *doulos* describes a relationship, slave. This word is *huperetes*. *Huper* is the preposition meaning under and *retes* has to do with rowing. So what this means is a third-level galley slave, somebody who rowed at the bottom of what was called a trireme.

And by the way, if you have a little recreational time on your hands, I would commend a book to you that I am reading and it's a very interesting book called *The History of the Athenian Navy...the History of the Athenian Navy*. It describes the massive ships that were built by the Athenians five hundred years before Christ and how those ships were used in great battles in the Mediterranean. And in the book, it describes what it was to be a third-level rower in one of these triremes with three levels of oars as they went up, becoming longer to stretch out beyond the ones that were below.

Here the Apostle Paul sees himself as a third-level galley slave, someone who pulls an oar in total obscurity at the lowest level of a massive, massive ship that would have hundreds of men doing the very same thing. Paul says this is how I view myself, and this is how I intend other people to view me. "Let a man regard us in this manner, as under-rowers, galley slaves of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God, responsible for the stewardship of truth. This is the identity of any minister, by the way, any minister is nothing more than a servant, nothing more than one who pulls the oar, doesn't

steer the ship and doesn't carry the full responsibility of moving it through the water by himself.

If you go back to chapter 3 and verse 5, "What then is Apollos, and what is Paul? Servants through whom you believe, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth, so then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything but God gives the growth. That's what's behind this. We're simply servants, nothing more than that. We pull our oar and God does the work.

In chapter 9, Paul says in verse 16, "If I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of. If I pull my oar, if I'm faithful to the stewardship of the mysteries of God, the unfolding New Testament revelation of the gospel, woe is me if I don't preach the gospel for if I do this voluntarily I have a reward, but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me." And that's part of this idea. As a third-level galley slave, you were not a volunteer and you didn't pull your oar when you felt like it. You pulled it when everybody else pulled it. You're under compulsion. Woe if you didn't do it. "What then is my reward that when I preach the gospel I may offer the gospel without charge so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel." He's simply saying I am a servant, I am a slave, I pull my oar, nothing beyond that.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 6, he has an understanding that he is a servant of God again in verse 4, 2 Corinthians 6:4, and he describes his life not as a life of exaltation, but as a life of humiliation, endurance, affliction, hardship, distress, beatings, imprisonment, tumults, labors, sleeplessness, hunger, these are the kinds of things he experienced and if you follow down a little bit, verse 8, he talks about dishonor, evil report, regarded as a deceiver, unknown, even punished but not put to death, sorrowful but always rejoicing, poor yet making many rich. It was not an elevating experience, it was a very, very belittling experience for him, a very belittling experience for him.

As far as the world was concerned, those who preached the gospel were nothing...nothing. In fact, if you drop down to verse 13, he says...of 1 Corinthians 4, "When we were slandered, we try to conciliate. We have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things until now." That's how low he is in the perception of people outside the gospel.

In verse 10 he says, and this is sarcasm, "We are fools for Christ's sake. We are weak. We are without honor." Verse 11, "We hunger and thirst, are poorly clothed, roughly treated, are homeless. We toil, working with our hands. When we are reviled, we bless. When we are persecuted, we endure."

So Paul identifies himself as a servant in the lowest sense possible who has no option but must do what he has been assigned to do. And it is insignificant in the big picture in his mind. He's just another rower on the lowest level.

Now with that in mind, go back to chapter 4. Since this is who we are as believers, this is who I am and who you are, and we have been given a stewardship, that is responsibility for the dispensing of the mysteries of God which is the New Testament gospel, it is required of stewards that one be found faithful, or trustworthy. That's the whole issue. All the Lord wants out of us is that we would be faithful, that we would discharge the trust that is given to us. And he says in verse 3, "It's a very small thing to be examined by you, you Corinthians who are sitting in judgment on me." We found that in chapter 3, right? In verse 4, "Some are saying, 'I am of Paul.' Another saying, 'I am of Apollos.' Some are saying, 'I'm of Cephas.' Some are saying, 'I'm of Christ.'" Some are sitting in judgment of Paul's inferiority therefore and Paul says it is a small thing to me to be examined by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even examine myself.

Why? Because, "When I am conscious of nothing against myself, even when I look at my life and think everything is okay, I realize that I'm biased in my own favor. And so I'm not by this acquitted, but the one who examines me is the Lord. Therefore, do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives is men's hearts and then each man's praise will come to him from God."

We are under orders. We have a stewardship, I do and you do, that is to be discharged. We are to feed the flock of God, shepherd the flock of God, live an exemplary life, train them in ministry, edify them so they can grow to the fullness of the stature of Christ.

To put it in great commission language, Matthew 28:19 and 20 which is, of course, is familiar to all students of the Bible, this is the Great Commission. "Go, make disciples of all the nations." That's our responsibility. That is for all of us, "Baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I command you for low I am with you always even to the end of the age." We have been all called to the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Pastors are the ones who show you the way to do that. We're the examples of a responsibility we all possess.

Now, to understand the components of doing this, just a little bit of a study, drop down to verse 14...drop down to verse 14, we'll actually start one verse in it, verse 15, but we're going to look at verses 14 to 21 in this wonderful chapter and I'm going to show you the components that are essential in making a disciple. This is what it is to exercise the responsibility of gospel ministry, gospel stewardship in the life of someone else. This is what it means to be a spiritual father.

Now drop down to verse 15 . Paul says, "For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel." This is where discipleship begins. It begins with understanding that we are spiritual fathers to others. We have already seen the picture of slaves and servants and stewards, and now we are seeing the unveiling of a new spiritual metaphor, we are to be engaged in spiritual fatherhood, true spiritual

fathers. You remember in Matthew 23 Jesus condemned the leaders of Israel because they wanted to be called “Father.” And they were only fathering sons of hell. Jesus says, “You make them more sons of hell than you yourselves.” That is the result of false spiritual leadership. But here we’re talking about being a true spiritual father.

Now what are the components of that? Number one, he begets...number one, he begets. This is what defines a father. He has children, or he adopts children. That is to say he recognizes that he has direct personal care for his spiritual children, whether he himself was there at their birth, or whether he adopted them somewhere along the way. In the case of the Corinthians, of course, the Apostle Paul was their spiritual father. He says, “You could have many *paidagogos*, countless. You could have ten thousand tutors. This is...this *paidagogos* is what we get the word pedagogue from. These would be tutors or instructors that families would hire and these would help the children do their homework and they would walk the children to school and tutor them as they went and be there when they came out and tutor them as they came home. Paul says you might have a whole lot of tutors, you might have countless, unnumbered tutors, but you only have one who is spiritually responsible for you. Paul calls the Galatians, for example, in Galatians 4:19, “My little children in whom I have birth pains until Christ is fully formed in you.”

Now back in Acts 18, we read the history of how Paul became the father of the people who came to Christ in Corinth. He left Athens, he went to Corinth. He found there a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome, he came to them, he was of the same trade as they were, leather worker, tent maker. He stayed with them. They were in the same trade, making tents. He was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath trying to persuade Jews and Greeks and it goes on to tell the story of the impact that he had. Verse 8, Crispus, the leader of the synagogue believed in the Lord with all his household. Many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized and the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, “Don’t be afraid any longer, go on speaking, do not be silent, I am with you. No man will attack you in order to harm you for I have many people in this city, and he settled there a year and six months teaching the Word of God among them.” This is when he fathered the believers in Corinth. He is a spiritual father.

He refers to Onesimus, the runaway slave. You remember, Onesimus ran away from Philemon’s house in Colossae and ran to Rome because he was in danger of losing his life as a runaway slave. And in Rome he ran into Paul and Paul led Onesimus to Christ and then sent him back to Philemon and wrote that wonderful letter, as well. But Paul says about Onesimus, “He is my son, begotten in my chains.”

He also called Timothy his son in the faith and Titus his son. And so he says of the Corinthians, “I have become your father through the gospel. The *ego* is emphatic here, “I...I have fathered you.” This is so very, very, very important. Somebody has to be the instrument. You may be a woman but you

become a spiritual father when you are the agent that God uses to give life to someone who up to that point has been engulfed in spiritual deadness. This is part of what ministry is. This is evangelism. This is where it starts. We don't get the credit. James 1:18, "In the exercise of His will, He brought us forth by the Word of truth." It is the work of God but we can be the human instrument.

How? By preaching the gospel. Go back to verse 15. "I became your father through the gospel...through the gospel." No salvation without the gospel, without the testimony concerning Jesus Christ. Paul came to Corinth, he preached the gospel. God saved many people because He had many people in that city to be saved. Paul was the human instrument of their salvation.

The convicting work, according to John 16, is done by the Holy Spirit. The regenerating work according to 1 Peter is done by the Holy Spirit. But it's always through the truth, through the Word, through the gospel, "I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ," Romans 1, "because it's the power of God unto salvation." So if you want to discharge your responsibility as a spiritual father, you must proclaim the gospel. That's why we emphasize the gospel so much. You begin to raise a spiritual child by begetting a spiritual child, or occasionally, this has happened a lot in my life, picking up a child that has been begotten by someone else's influence and then left as an orphan. We as a church have gathered in lots of spiritual orphans who have been converted somewhere, but we're not being followed up and nurtured in the things that pertain to spiritual growth.

So, this is the responsibility, it's a very personal ministry of bringing people to salvation through the gospel. That's the first thing that a discipler does, a spiritual father. He begets.

Secondly, he loves...he loves. This is not going to happen in a flat-screen environment. This is not going to happen on a radio program or a television program either. This is not part of that. He loves. And you see that here. Verse 14, "I do not write these things to shame you." And he's been very hard on them already. He has spoken to them with dripping sarcasm. Verse 10, when he said, "We are fools and you're wise, we are weak and you're strong, and you're distinguished and we're without honor." This is mocking their pride, mocking their pride. That's cutting stuff, but he says, "I don't write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children," *agapeta*, I love you and he uses the form of the Greek verb *agape,* or *agapao*, the verb form, which means to love ultimately, to love purely, to love sacrificially. He loves the people to whom he ministers, those in his charge and in his care.

He says this so often to the Corinthians, reminding them of his love. He says in chapter 6 verse 11, "Our mouth has spoken openly to you, or freely, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide, you're not restrained by us but you are restrained in your own affection. Now in a like exchange I speak as to children, 'Open wide to us also.'" I love you so much that I have opened my heart wide to you, even though you don't return that love.

Later in chapter 11, verse 11, the question comes up, “Why is Paul hammering on all these issues?” He says in verse 11, “Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do.” I heard that speech from my father so many times when I was a little kid. He would say to me, “I’m doing this because I love you.” I didn’t buy it, but it was true and I found that out when I became a father and heard the same moans and groans from my own kids. It’s an act of love to restrain sin.

In chapter 12 of 2 Corinthians verse 15, “I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls.” Wow. I will give my life for your souls. If I love you more, am I to be loved less? How can you be treating me, he says to the Corinthians, the way you’re treating me? I’m your spiritual father. I came in out of nowhere, as recorded in Acts 18, I gave you the gospel. The Spirit of God opened your hearts, you believed, you were born again, you were redeemed. And now you turn on me. How can you do that?

He loved them. He defines that love as sacrificial love. I spend and am spent for you. Or as I quoted earlier to the Colossians, “I labor to the point of sweat and exhaustion for your benefit.

Ultimately, of course, he gave his life as a martyr in this way because of the love that he had for the people in his life. He learned that from our Lord who gave His life for those He loved. He learned it from our Lord’s incident in John 13 where He washed the disciples feet while they were all arguing about which of them is the greatest, Jesus got down and did the dirty work of the lowest slave, washing filthy feet, humbling himself. And then He said to His disciples, “By this shall all men know that you’re My disciples if you have love one for another.” What kind of love? “This kind of humble condescending love toward one another.”

There’s another way to look at Paul’s love in 1 Thessalonians 2 and verse 7. We prove to be gentle among you as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her children, having so fond an affection for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives because you had become so very dear to us. That’s what a pastor does. He doesn’t show up on a flat screen, he gives up his life for his flock. For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.

The goal is in verse 12, “We wanted you to walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own Kingdom and His own glory.” You can trace this yourself through the New Testament with regard to the love that Peter talks about, that John talks about. First John chapter 4 has a whole section on love, five reasons why we love are laid out there because it’s the essence of God, because it was manifested by Christ, because it is essential to our testimony, because it grants us assurance and confidence as we face judgment and because it is right and reasonable. John lays out all of that.

There's a third thing the spiritual father does, and this again is a very important aspect of spiritual ministry, he admonishes...he admonishes. Back to verse 14, "I do not write these things to shame you, but to warn you, or admonish you," *noutheteo* which has been Anglicized by the Christian Counseling Movement to be spoken of as "nouthetic" counseling. That's just an Anglicized form of the verb *noutheteo* which means to warn...to warn. It actually has the idea of blaming someone for sin. It is loving criticism. It is loving confrontation. It presupposes a problem, this word *noutheteo*, something is wrong...something is wrong.

You would recognize an illustration of its use in Galatians chapter 2 in the situation where Paul opposes Peter to his face because he stood condemned. Peter's duplicity, his hypocrisy had to be confronted. And the Apostle Paul did that.

Now please notice here, he says, "I don't write these things to shame you." Shame is not the goal. Shame is the means to the goal..the goal is to change you, to change your behavior. And that requires direct confrontation.

Listen to an illustration of it in 2 Thessalonians 3:10. "Even when we were with you, we used to give you this order. If anyone is not willing to work, then he's not to eat either. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life doing no work at all but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort...there's our word...in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread." And verse 14 adds, "If anyone doesn't obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person, don't associate with him so that he will be put to shame, yet do not regard him as an enemy but admonish him, *noutheteo,* as a brother."

The idea is to warn about the consequence of sin. Part of a father's ministry, we said that a minute ago, right?, the illustration of disciplining a child, sin is a fact in people's lives, it's a reality in all of our lives and it affects our relationship to the Lord and our relationship to the church and it affects our own souls and it needs to be dealt with. And the purpose of it is not to shame a person, but the purpose is to lead a person to righteousness, to lead a person to holiness, to lead a person to repentance and sanctification.

The model for this kind of confrontation is found in Galatians 6, I think. This is a very important portion from Paul. "If anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness." So the objective here is not just shame, it is restoration. And you look to yourself because you too cannot escape temptation. Bear one another's burdens and thereby fulfill the Law of Christ, the law of Christ is the law of love. So you show your love by confronting the person in their sin in order that you might bring them out of that sin in a spirit of meekness, realizing your own sinfulness. You carry the burden of their temptation and their failure with them and thus you extend to them the love of Christ.

That's exactly what we do. We find somebody in a sin and we pick them up and then we bear the burden and we express our love and we call them back. And this is part of what it means to admonish. This is really where this whole concept of nouthetic counseling came from. The bottom line in what goes on in nouthetic counseling is you hold the person to whom you speak responsible for the problems in that person's life because they are related to that person's sinful choices, not because when they were three years old their mother stuck them in a closet with a dozen bananas and left them there for four hours. That didn't do it. It's not what happened to them, it's what's wrong in them. And the only way you will ever get a solution to a problem is to have people understand that they are the problem. It's not something on the outside that defiles the person, it's what comes from the inside. And if you're going to disciple someone then, what are the components up to this point? You beget, you love and you admonish.

Now for the sake of time, we'll jump to number four. The fourth element in this is setting an example. And this is critical from a pastor on down. Your life needs to be visible. Go down to verse 16. "Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me." That's scary, isn't it? Be imitators of me, *mimeti* from which we get mimics. What makes a really effective discipler? Example. We read that in 1 Peter 5:3, "Be an example to the flock," and that is repeated throughout Paul's letters. He...he made a continual issue out of this idea of example. "Brethren," Philippians 3:17, "join in following my example." Join in following my example. He said it to the Thessalonians a couple of times. He said it to Timothy, "Be an example to the believer in word and deed." He said it to Titus, Titus 2:7, the writer of Hebrews says, "Follow their faith, they have to give an account."

There can be no real discharge, I don't think, of a true, effective, discipling ministry from a pastor to his flock, or from a flock member to those that that person is discipling without an open life that people can look at and say, "I want to follow that life."

It was at Antioch, wasn't it, that the believers were first called Christians, that means "little Christs." What a compliment. They meant it as some kind of a mockery but it was a compliment. And again, 1 Corinthians, "Be followers of me as I am of Christ." You need to be able to say to people, "Follow my life, see what I do, see how I talk, see how I act in my most public and my most private moments and all in between. My life is an open book." This is what integrity is. This is when every aspect of your life touches every other aspect of your life and there is no hypocrisy. Spiritual father has to live a model life. And one of the sad things that happens in this whole process of discipling in a family is parents who tell their children that they need Christ and they need to go to church but model something different than a godly life and a godly marriage. That is a disaster and it is a particular disaster if it happens in a pastor's family because the stakes are elevated because the pastor shows up every week and preaches the Bible and exalts Christ and tells the people how to live. And if he goes home and lives differently than he tells other people to live, the children see this kind of hypocrisy in bold relief. An open life with no compromise, that's critical in being an example. You need to be among the

people, with the people, in and around the people. You don't live an isolated privatized life, you let them see the work of Christ in you in every aspect of life.

So, a spiritual father..one who disciples others, begets and loves and admonishes and sets an example. And number five, finally, teaches...teaches...teaches. Verse 17, "For this reason I have sent Timothy who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ," and here's what I want you to notice, "just as I teach everywhere in every church." Take the last phrase first and then we'll go back to the other part.

"I teach in every church." This is absolutely critical. That is why there is only one function in the list of requirements for a pastor. It doesn't say he has to be a CEO. It doesn't say he has to be a great organizer. And there's a lot of that floating around. I read a book the other day and it said you can pick the kind of pastor you want to be. You have to kind of look at yourself and see where your gifts are and maybe you're a kind of call it a king pastor, which is a kind of CEO type guy. Or maybe you're a priest pastor which is a kind of a compassionate type guy. Or maybe you're a prophet type pastor, somebody who speaks and teaches the truth.

There aren't those different kinds of pastors. There's only one kind given all the rest of the things we've said and that is the one who teaches because the only gift that is identified in the list of qualifications for a pastor is *didaktikos*, skilled in teaching...skilled in teaching. We all are to teach the same truth.

This book that I was reading was very disturbing because another line in it was, "As you develop your own style of ministry," which scares me, "as you get in touch with yourself, you need to be developing your own theology." Really? Really! That would be a statement that could be interpreted as flatly heretical. The last thing you want to do is develop your own theology as if somehow stylized ministry built around you was the issue. You're not the issue, Christ is. Truth is. And you teach the truth and the more faithful you are, the more you will sound like every other faithful person, not the less.

So if you hear somebody that sounds like absolutely nobody else, and says things that you never hear anybody else say, go somewhere else. It's not about developing your own style, your own sort of tweaked approach to it, and please, Lord, your own theology...the faithful teachers all sound the same..they all sound the same. They're saying the same thing. They're standing in the great line of faithful teachers of the truth of God and they're content to be part of that long line of faithful men, They don't need to have a ministry that features them.

That is one of the problems we have in churches today because they're personality driven and they're being fed this. This movement is getting fuel to move faster, to stylize your ministry around yourself. That is not exactly a third-level galley slave mentality, not even close.

The priority, Paul says, is I teach the same thing everywhere in every church. He had no concern about the difference between a church in Antioch or a church in Corinth, or a church on Cypress, or a church in Galatia, or a church anywhere else. They taught the same thing. This is what we do, we teach the Word of God and that's all we have. And you need to do the same thing. You disciple your children as you disciple other people. You teach them the truth. Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Peter said. He said, "As babes desire the pure milk of the Word that you may grow thereby," 1 Peter 2:2. Find every possible means you can to get sound teaching into the hands of people you're discipling. You can't live out what you don't know, right?

You need to have the mind of Christ, the mind of Christ, 1 Corinthians 2:16, you need to know what Christ thinks and is revealed in Scripture. You need to have a renewed mind, renewed by the truth. You need to know the truth, embrace the truth, love the truth, be transformed by the truth. That's why Paul says to Timothy, "Look, give your attention to your own life and your doctrine, your teaching.

So, discipling somebody, shepherding somebody, pastoring somebody involves all these kinds of things. And I might add just one more...just one more. Discipline...discipline, verse 18, "Now some have become arrogant as though I were not coming to you." You know, that's so childish, isn't it? The teacher left the room so let's all misbehave. Do you remember that in the third grade? I remember when my teacher one year, I didn't hear her but she was coming down the hall in her rubber orthopedic wedges and I couldn't hear her and when she stepped in the door, I was standing on the desk doing something outrageous. But we all, and I was dealt with, I'll put it that way...not by her, but by my father. We all understand what it is to be irresponsible when the authority figure isn't there. And Paul is saying, "Look, because I'm not there and you think I'm not going to come, you're now becoming arrogant and behaving in ways that express your selfishness. But I will come to you soon. I will come, if the Lord wills, and I'll find out not the words of those who are arrogant, but their power.

Now when I come, I'm going to find out if you've got any spiritual power, or any truth, or whether you're just blowing smoke for the Kingdom of God doesn't consist in words. I'm not going to come and hear what you say. I'm going to come and see the power of your life. So take your choice, what do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod? Or with love in a spirit of gentleness?

That's pretty strong language, isn't it? Shall I come with a rod? Or a spirit of gentleness? I'll take out the rod if I need to. And he says at the end of 2 Corinthians, "When I get there, mark it down. We're going to confirm all you sinners, we're going to confront all of you and then we're going to deal with you with two or three witnesses and we're going to clean this place out. It's important. Discipline, the first instruction the Lord gave to the church is if you know somebody in sin, go to the person and follow it up, tell it to the church, put them out if they don't respond. Those are the components that make up discipling. And you can see them. They all kind of work in a family, don't they? You beget children, you love them, you set an example, you admonish them, you teach them and you discipline

them. This is the model that is fit for the spiritual world as well, for the life of the church.

Now the capper to all of this is what I really love in this passage. Go back to verse 17, because this just sets it all in place. Verse 17, “For this reason, because of everything I’ve said, because I am your father, because I want you to be imitators of me, because I have all these concerns, for this reason I have sent you Timothy.”

Now you might stop and say, “Wait a minute....wait a minute. If you’re so concerned about us, why don’t you come yourself?” And they criticized him for that. What do you mean send Timothy? Why don’t you just come yourself?

But he says, “I’ve sent to you Timothy who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ.”

Listen, friend, you know you’ve discipled someone when in the most serious situation you can send your disciple and know he’s a duplicate of yourself. That’s what makes this passage live. Paul has these massive concerns about this church and he can send a duplicate, Timothy.

Now that is the joy of ministry, to say “I can’t come, I can’t come. But I can send someone who will bring you into remembrance of all my ways which are in Christ.” See, that’s the point. The point of ministry is to be as much like Christ as possible, not as individual as possible. To be able to say, “Look, I can’t come there. You don’t need my face on the flat screen, I can’t come but I have someone who is sound in the truth, godly in life and I will send him and he’ll bring you in to remembrance of all my ways which are in Christ Jesus and he will teach you the same thing that I teach. It’s not stylized stuff, it’s the truth of Scripture. You know that you’ve really discipled someone when you can send that someone to the most serious ministry with complete confidence.

Father, we thank You tonight that You’ve given us this time to look over these things that are basic to our Christian life and discipleship. I pray, Lord, that You will raise the level of our devotion to disciple others. And we pray, Lord, that You will use us even to be the instruments through whom You beget people by the gospel, that we would love them and admonish them and teach them and discipline them so that we might see them come to the fullness of the measure of the stature of Christ, so that we can literally multiply our own lives. I can’t go everywhere and none of us can. But, Lord, give us disciples like Timothy of whom we can say I’m sending him because he will remind you of me and he will teach the same things I teach...the Word of the Lord. He will show you Christ and His Word. May we all enjoy the blessing and the joy of such discipleship. Thank You for the privilege in Your Son’s name. Amen.

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