

Role Models for Faithful Christian Living

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Date: 28 March 2021

Preacher: Fred Stone

[0 : 00] Who are some of your role models? Think about it. Who are some of your role models?

Now, obviously, children and teenagers, they need good role models to show them what it means to be what? A loving husband, a loving wife.

A loving father or mother. In this church, young people, teenagers, children, they need to see and have good role models for what it means to be a faithful and active Christian church member.

Outside, in this community, our children, young people, they need to have good, healthy role models to show them what it looks like to make a positive contribution to the community.

But don't we as adults, don't we need role models to help us prepare for the next stage of our life?

[1 : 13] That's before us. At various stages, as adults, we need good role models. You know, some of you may be in your 30s.

You may need to look for some good role models that show you, I can survive the teenage years and keep my sanity.

Right? Because sometimes you wonder. Some of you may be in your 40s, maybe 50s. You need some good, healthy role models to show you how to be the good in-law or the helpful grandparent.

You know, I have seen good role models in this church for how to be concerned about and take care of aging parents and a spouse that is going through declining health.

We need role models for how to be good old people. I'm serious. Ellen Brown back there, she is a great role model for how to be an old person.

[2 : 32] She's old as the hills, but she's happy. She's positive. And if, I wouldn't be surprised she didn't stand up and give it back to me. That's the kind of old person I want to be when I'm 110 like her.

Now, role models, I'm trying to, I'm serious now. Role models are important throughout our lives if you just think about it this way.

And role models are important for us as Christians. That's why Paul, we're going to be in Philippians chapter 2 beginning in verse 19. Paul seems to interrupt his flow of thought about how to live a faithful Christian life by pointing out some things about Timothy and Epaphroditus.

But what we're going to say this morning is it's not an interruption. Paul is being intentional in pointing out two role models for all Christians when it comes to living a faithful Christian life.

Now, Pastor Kent Hughes in his commentary on Philippians, he clearly shows this is Paul's intention. What we're going to read this morning is not an interruption.

[3 : 58] It's not a change of subject. It's a flow. Hughes says this, The Apostle Paul's brief references to Timothy and then Epaphroditus here in Philippians are not casual, but rather are meant to capture our attention and top off Paul's train of thought that began in chapter 1 verse 27, Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ.

Now in verses 19 through 30, Paul gives flesh and blood examples of the selfless conduct to which he is calling the Philippian church. Here are men who live lives worthy of the gospel.

Let's read about them. We're in Philippians chapter 2 beginning in verse 19. I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon so that I too may be cheered by news of you.

For I have no one like him who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

But you know Timothy's proven worth. How as a son with a father, he has served with me in the gospel. I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me.

[5 : 20] And I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also. I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier and your messenger and minister to my need.

For he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him. And not only on him but also on me, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. I am the more eager to send him therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again and that I may be less anxious. So receive him and the Lord with all joy and honor such men. For he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service. Paul is explaining his plan. As soon as I can, I'm gonna send Timothy to you. But now I'm gonna send Epaphroditus.

[6 : 29] Now what I want us to see is, this is a lot more than him explaining travel plans. He's holding these men up as role models for every Christian who wants to live a faithful Christian life.

I wanna emphasize, they are role models for every Christian who desires to live a faithful Christian life. Let's look at some of the qualities that they model for us.

First, faithful Christians genuinely care about other people. Timothy showed a genuine interest in these Philippian Christians. It says, for I have no one like him who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare.

Timothy was genuinely concerned about what was going on in these people's lives because he knew them. He had been with Paul. It's recorded in Acts chapter 16. He had been with Paul when the church was started.

I mean, Timothy was there from the get-go. He saw some of these people come to faith in Jesus. He saw how they were growing. He knew some of them by name. He had a personal interest in them and what was going on.

[7 : 44] Well, Paul planned to send him back and help them deal with some of the problems we've been looking at. The main thing, their lack of unity. It's a good church. They're not about to just implode and fall apart, but there are some problems.

We've already looked at some. We'll see more later. But Paul had confidence in Timothy's ability to do that because he cared about them. You see, Paul is Timothy's mentor.

He's trained him well. Timothy knows exactly what to do to take care of the problem, but more importantly, Timothy knows how to work with people. He knows how to deal with people in a positive way to help them see the need and want to cooperate with him.

When it comes to dealing with issues that involve people in every realm of life, it's not enough just to know what to do. We need to know how to relate to people.

As the old saying goes, people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. And that applies to just about every kind of relationship in this world.

[9 : 01] You want to have a more healthy home? Love one another. Work on, develop, develop having good, healthy relationships.

You know, sometimes at home, you got to deal with some touchy situations. Sometimes husbands and wives. You got to talk about some things that's going to make at least one of you uncomfortable.

And with those teenagers I was mentioning a while ago, there's a lot of issues. Children too. But you know, it makes a difference when Lisa points out some one or two flaws from time to time because I know that she really cares about me.

She's trying to help me, for example, not make a fool of myself and some of the things I might do in preaching. So I listen to her. You know, kids, teenagers, most every one of you, if not every one of you, you have parents and grandparents and people in your lives who truly love you and care about you.

And when they correct you, they point out some things. It's not to make your life miserable. It's to help you, believe it or not. And so if we'll work on in our home, our relationships, having healthy relationships, let people know that you live with, that you really do love them.

[10 : 36] It will help when it comes time to say some hard things. That applies across the board. That applies here at church. It applies to work.

Some of you who are young adults, you know, just sort of getting started well in your business, in your profession, out in the world. You may think it's all about what you know or who you know, all about the nuts and bolts.

And certainly competence is a necessity. But the way you treat people will go a long way in determining how successful you are. You may be a genius at what you do, but if you mistreat

people, if you act like a fool, if you try to just run over people, bulldoze people, you're gonna fail. And it may be that some people in this room, maybe the lights come on. It seems that everywhere you go in life, you have trouble. You have trouble getting along with people. And to this point, you may think to yourself, it's those people. It's him. It's her. If it happens over and over and over again, it's you. Relationships matter.

[11 : 51] Relationships matter everywhere. And Paul, the apostle, who had real authority and could tell them what to do, because he was speaking the word of God, he thought it was very important to send Timothy for this reason.

He loved those people. He took a genuine interest in those people, which meant he would deal with them in the most positive, get the job done way possible.

One thing that prevents us from being genuinely concerned about others is that we're too genuinely concerned about just us. That's why Paul gave this command back in chapter two, verses three and four.

Look at it. He told this to the whole church. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility, count others more significant than yourselves. That each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Paul doesn't say, don't care, don't take care of your own affairs. No, we have responsibility. It's part of our Christian responsibility to be good managers of our lives, our homes, everything.

[13 : 06] We've got to look out for our own interests as part of our Christian stewardship. But not just our own interests. Look at it. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

But here in verses 20 and 21, I want you to see that Paul is saying something that at least to me is very surprising. Look at this.

For I have no one like him who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare, for they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

Who is they all? Who's Paul referring to? Well, let's recall something we've learned in a previous study as we've been going through Philippians.

Paul is writing from Rome where he is a prisoner awaiting trial before Caesar, but he's under house arrest. He's allowed to live in his own rented home, and people are free to come and go for him to teach, for them to bring him food and other necessities.

[14 : 17] You can read about that at the very end of the book of Acts, at the end of Acts chapter 28. Paul also wrote letters to the church at Ephesus and Colossae, Ephesians and Colossians, and the letter to the man Philemon while he was imprisoned here in Rome.

Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon. They're the four prison letters of Paul that he wrote from Rome. So, when Paul says, he has no one like Timothy, because they all seek their own interests, he can only be referring to two groups of people.

First, he's talking about the leaders for sure, and most likely other members of the church at Rome. He's under house arrest.

People can come and go. They do. Who will be taking care of Paul in Rome? The church at Rome. Obviously. Who else could it be? Well, it may be he's referring to some of his associates.

He named some of them at the end of his letter to Philemon. Look at this. At the very end, Philemon is just one chapter, so there's only verses. He says, Epaphras, that's not Epaphroditus.

[15 : 44] Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, and so do Mark, the writer of the gospel, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, another writer of the gospel, my fellow workers.

Now, Paul is in prison in Rome under house arrest for two years or more, it says in the book of Acts. These individuals, and there would be more, they would have come and gone.

It says Aristarchus, or Epaphras, is my fellow prisoner, but most of them had the freedom to come and go. We can automatically eliminate Mark and Luke as being selfish, so selfish he couldn't send them to Philippi, because they were faithful to the end of Paul's life, according to Paul's last letter. Look at this. It's in 2 Timothy 4. Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry. 2 Timothy is his last letter.

He's in prison another time. He's in a real dungeon-type prison this time. He's awaiting execution. He knows the end's here. This is where he said, I fought a good fight, I finished the course, I've kept the faith.

[17:06] He knows he's gonna die. And there with him at the very end is Luke, and he wants Mark to come, because he's useful to me.

But there's one of those guys, that's listed at the end of Philemon, who might have been one of the selfish ones that Paul didn't have any confidence in.

His name was Demas. He eventually quit on Paul. Look at this. Again, at the end of 2 Timothy. For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.

Paul's at the end of his life. He's needing friends. He's wanting friends. Luke's there with him. He wants Mark to come. And one of the guys that he trusted, that he invested in, that he thought was his friend, Demas, he took off.

Deserted him. Paul knew what it was like to have somebody turn their, to have someone just turn their back on him, to betray him, to desert him. Here's the point we need to understand.

[18:13] Paul had no one to send to the Philippian church except Timothy and Epaphroditus, as we'll see in a moment, because he knew that no one else cared about that church enough to go and help them the right way.

And the only people Paul can be talking about are Christians in the church at Rome and some of his own personal assistants.

Now think about that. Doesn't that really just show us how hard it is for most Christians, most of us, to overcome our self-centered ways?

It's just so ingrained in us. I'm going to take care of me, mine, mine. It's just contrary to human nature to take a genuine interest in other people's welfare and actually, with compassion, do something to help them.

How can we overcome such selfishness, you and me? Well, Paul tells us the first step, it's in verse 21, look at this. For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

[19:35] Timothy was the self-giving person that he was because he was more concerned about pleasing the Lord than pleasing himself. As Timothy thought about, you know, why he was on earth, what his purpose was, he really wanted to know and do God's will before just doing his own will.

That's the key for us as well. We will never take a genuine interest in other people until we first have a genuine interest in our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the book of 1 John, the fourth chapter, John makes several statements to try to help us understand that if we really love God, we'll love God's people.

I want you to look at an example in 1 John chapter 4, verses 7 and 8. I said John 1 on the screen is 4, okay. Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God.

And whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God because God is love.

[20:59] John's helping us see that a love for God, a love for our Lord is a prerequisite for developing the kind of love that will really help us take an interest in other people.

So let's think about it. If you are, let's just be, and let's be honest, you'll be honest with you. If you're just basically a selfish person, and some people are, you know it's not good, but you're just basically a selfish person.

If you know that, and the truth is, you don't have a whole lot of concern for the well-being of other people. And you're even less interested in going out of your way to serve other people.

If that's you, selfish, just not all that concerned about, don't even notice people that much. And you're really not going to go too far out of your way to help anyone.

Your greatest problems in your personal relationship with God because if you really had the relationship with Him where you loved Him, you'd love other people.

[22:20] That's what John is saying. So if that describes you, talk to God about it if it bothers you. If you know there is sin in your life that you need to confess about that selfishness, confess it.

Change your mind. Draw close to the Lord and renew your commitment to Him to follow, to obey Him.

It might be that you need to just ask God to help you to help you to see people more. I don't mean actually literally see them, but the people in your home that you live with, people that you work with, people you go to school with, to notice when something's not quite right.

You can see it in their face. You can hear it in the tone of their voice. They're acting a little bit odd. Notice, care enough to inquire what's going on.

Is there a problem? And listen. And if you can help them, do it. Even if it means interrupting your plans, inconveniencing yourself, and as you think about this, always the first place to begin is in your home.

[23 : 42] Learn to see in your family members needs. Take an interest in them. Forget yourself and focus on how can I meet my spouse, my child, my parents' need.

Faithful Christians genuinely care about other people. Also, faithful Christians display proven character. Faithful Christians display consistent character.

Growing, developing character. Look at verse 22. But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel.

The emphasis here is on how Timothy proved his worth to Paul over time by the way that he worked with him like a child with his father.

Now, as parents, and for some of us in here, we've got to think a long ways back, but as parents, with children living at home, sometimes we ask them to help us do some things.

[24 : 51] Maybe to help us work in the yard, clean the house, look after a little brother or sister. If you're a child, you tell them to do that, you ask them to do that, they fuss, they gripe, they complain the whole time.

You get no joy out of it, do you? You don't want to, you don't only want to work with them like that, you don't want to be around them. And boys and girls and teenagers, you may not understand that, but when you act like a jerk, your parents really don't want to be around you.

That's a fact. Some of them are too nice to tell you that, but I'm telling you that, that's how they feel. It's true.

And if that's how they are, you certainly are not proud of them for acting that way. In fact, you'd be ashamed for somebody to come by and see, know how, that they're that selfish, they're that lazy, or they're that disrespectful.

But if you ask your child to help you with something, and they work, they're pleasant, they got a good attitude, you get a lot of joy out of just being around them.

[26 : 11] And you're proud of them. You're proud to say that your son or daughter helps you this way, and it just means more than you'll, boys and girls, teenagers, it means more than you'll ever know.

Paul was a proud spiritual father because of the way Timothy worked with him and demonstrated a real Christ-like attitude as he went about his work.

Now, if we're all honest, we've got to admit we've got a long way to go to develop true Christ-like character. No Christian, no Christian in this world arrives at fully mature Christ-like character as long as they're alive.

We're all in some state of process. But you know, don't worry about that. Christ-like character is a lifelong process for every single Christian in this world, including Timothy.

Timothy's character development, it began young. Here's the good thing, it began young. Paul tells us, again in 2 Timothy, first part of the first chapter, that Timothy had a Christian mother and grandmother who influenced him.

[27 : 35] Timothy had a good start to life. He grew up in a Christian home. Now, it doesn't say anything about a father or grandfather, but his mother was a Christian, his grandmother was a Christian, and they had great influence on him.

They got him started off right. Let's just pause here and say, every Christian parent and grandparent in this room, we need to take note of how Timothy got to where he was by having such a good start in life.

The most important thing we can do for our children or grandchildren is to teach and model for them what it means to live a faithful Christian life. Now, I know as parents and grandparents, there's a lot of things we need and want to teach our children, and that's true.

But there's nothing more important for us as parents and grandparents to teach and then to back it up by the way that we live, how to live as a faithful Christian in this world.

You know, Timothy was like us in that he didn't always live up to what he knew. Isn't that true for you? Do you live up to all you know to live as a Christian?

[28 : 48] Don't look at me like, you know, you don't know. You know. You know a whole lot more than you're living right now. You and me, everybody does. And Timothy, he didn't, he wasn't always the model guy.

He had to be encouraged. He had to be prodded at times by Paul. We learned from Paul's letters that Timothy needed to be challenged, encouraged, because he had a tendency to be shy, hesitant, afraid even.

Look at this. Here's a good example of how Timothy didn't live up to everything he knew to do and he had to be prodded. Look at this. For this reason, I remind you to fan and to flame the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

If the flame was always burning brightly, he wouldn't have been told that. For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and control. Sometimes he didn't have that so he needed to hear that.

Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord nor of me as prisoner. What did he do? How had he acted? How had he sort of cowed down somewhere?

[30 : 03] But share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God. Timothy was in some ways unique, but in most ways he was just like us. He had the unique privilege of learning from the apostle Paul.

What a privilege. But he was like us in that he had to be involved in the personal spiritual disciplines that God uses to develop Christlike character in every Christian. He had to pray. He had to spend time with God in prayer.

He had to read the scriptures that he had and listen to Paul as he taught what we call the New Testament. He had to worship. He had to be involved in ministry. He needed fellowship with other Christians.

If you're serious about wanting to grow, to develop true Christlike character, then cooperate with God as he works in you, giving you the desired ability to do that.

Spend time with him every day in prayer. Talk to him. Read his word. Listen to him. Get involved in the life of our church. Be involved in worshipping God and participate.

[31 : 09] Prepare before you come. Put your heart into it. Get to know people. Develop relationships. Experience Christian fellowship. Get involved in some kind of ministry.

Use what God's given you to serve other people. Faithful Christian living or faithful Christians display growing, overall consistent, proven character.

faithful Christians are willing to sacrificially serve in ministry. Epaphroditus, he was involved in active service to the Lord and to Paul.

Look what it says in verse 25. I have thought it necessary to send to you, Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need. He was a messenger from the Philippian church.

I mean, he was from Philippi. He was saved, grew up as a Christian in that church, and they sent him to Rome with a gift of money to meet Paul's needs.

[32 : 13] It talks about it in chapter 4, verse 18, and then to stay there and help Paul in whatever he needed help doing. Well, he served sacrificially almost to the point of death in doing that.

Look at this, verse 30. For he nearly died for the work of Christ. Somewhere along the way, he became sick. He almost died. But the way Paul describes this, he didn't use his sickness as severe as it was.

He didn't use it as an excuse to quit. Once he got well, he was back at it. And Paul was going to send him home and carry this letter to the Philippians with him.

Paul also holds Epaphroditus Epaphroditus as a model of a faithful Christian who deserves to be honored. Look at this. So receive him and the Lord with all joy and honor such men.

If we were looking to send someone from our church on a mission trip to deliver money and supplies to a certain missionary somewhere in South America, say, and we want you to take the stuff and we want you to stay there for a week to 10 days because these missionaries we're sending you to, they've got a project that they really need your help and it's going to really take, you know, you've got to put your whole heart, soul, mind, energy into it.

[33 : 43] They really need your help. We've got a missions development council to try to coordinate all this kind of stuff. If we got that request and they're in their meeting and they're thinking who could we send would your name come up?

Some of you, your name would come up because you're a faithful Christian and they would automatically think of you. But if your name wouldn't come up, do you want it to?

I know some people say, nope, I don't. But for those of you who would say, I want it to. What would you have to change?

What needs to happen in your life for you to start being the faithful Christian that would cause people to think you'd be the one to represent our church and serve like that?

I want to close by changing the subject now. What will be said in your obituary about the way you lived as a Christian? When we die, somebody, probably somebody in your family, at least they're going to help, but when you die, an obituary is going to be written.

[34 : 57] Now, I want you to understand something. It's none of my business what kind of obituary you have. If you've got the money and it costs over \$5 per column line in Greenville News, if you want to spend \$10,000, but two pages about your entire life as an obituary, good for you.

I think your family is dumb as dirt to do something like that, but good for you. But of all the things they're going to say about you, here's my point. What are they going to say about how you lived as a Christian in this world?

Here's how I and the other members of my family 100% agreed. here's how I described my mother's Christian life in her obituary.

I cut and pasted it. Dot was a member of La France First Baptist Church where she had served as a Sunday school teacher and assistant treasurer for many years.

She demonstrated a true servant's spirit as she always put others before herself and tirelessly sought to meet the needs of her family and others in the community.

[36 : 11] Dot had a special gift of lovingly and patiently caring for several members, several family members over the years who suffered from Alzheimer's. People in her church, people around that community, everybody in my family, 100% of the people who knew her would read that and would agree to every word.

Everybody who knew her knew she was a sinful person like everybody else. She had her flaws, don't misunderstand. But she lived a faithful Christian life. And this is just how we described it in her obituary.

How do you want to be described in your obituary in terms of the kind of Christian life you lived?

Well, since you're alive right now, regardless of what's happened in the past, you can, from this day forward, you can finish well and have a description of being a faithful Christian put in your obituary.

I want to encourage you right now. Do you think about how you have and are living as a Christian? Ask God to either help you continue to be faithful or get more serious about living a faithful life.

[37 : 42] Christian life. Or if necessary, call upon Jesus to save you and ask him to help you to start living a Christian life. But bottom line, faithful Christian living does involve showing genuine concern for other people, demonstrating consistent Christian character over time, and serving the Lord and other people in in self-giving sacrificial ministry.

Let's pray together. Father, show us now how we should respond so that we can leave here knowing that by your grace, we're on the path of living as faithful Christians.

Let's just, in an attitude of prayer, listen to the Lord and respond to him.