

# Partners in Ministry

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning. I'm going to try this without these on and see if I can handle that. Wow, you sure look a lot prettier this way. My goodness. Handsome. It's a blessing for Sarah and I and our son Joshua to be here today. And I know Joseph and Audrey miss you. They'll be back this week, but I'm glad they were able to get away and spend some family time together. And he's doing a wedding in Texas this weekend.

And I saw that stool over there. I thought I might have to sit on the stool to preach. To be honest with you, we were in a wreck last Friday night, a week ago. Somebody rear-ended us and then they drove away. People are just crazy nowadays, aren't they? But thankfully, I'm a little better today. I think I'm able to get through this in a way that will honor God. You'll hear what God wants you to hear today.

We're so thankful to see what God's doing here at First Baptist. And although through the years, I didn't know, have a personal contact here until in the 1980s when I met a young man at seminary named Tim McGeehy who happened to come from here.

And I know his mother is right here with us today. And Tim and I actually pastored the same church. He followed us at the first church that we both pastored in North Texas.

So it's a blessing. As a matter of fact, Joseph told me, he said, Dad, I'm going to be out of town. Would you be able to preach for me? I said, Well, I'd love to. He said, Just to be honest, I want to let you know, I did ask Brother Tim McGeehy first, and he's not able to come.

[ 1 : 42 ] So you are playing second fiddle, and I don't mind that a bit. I'd be second place to Tim's in honor. But what a joy again. Thank you for the way you're treating our family, Joseph and Audrey and Jack and little baby on the way.

They all love you very, very much. Well, we're going to pick up today right where Joseph left off last week. So open your Bibles, if you would, to Philippians chapter 2. And I appreciate whoever it was in the church, secretary, someone who printed these notes out for you.

It looks like you've got maybe two copies, so make sure, I guess, you write answers in one of them, and then you test somebody else in the other. But I really do want to encourage you to take the notes out and get a pen or a pencil and follow along with me.

And the reason for that is because as God speaks to us when we study His Word in various ways, including as we study His Word in a worship service like this, sometimes we sense that God's telling us something, He's leading us towards something, but we don't write it down, and then we forget it. And we'll go back later and think, I wonder what was it God was trying to teach me through that passage? And I'm hoping that if you'll take some notes today, God will be able to give you some clear principles to help you as you grow in your walk with Christ.

[ 3 : 02 ] Our message is titled Partners in Ministry, from Philippians 2, verses 19 through 30. And I don't know if y'all always do this or not, but I'm going to ask you, if you would, to stand with me in the honor of reading God's Word.

This is a little bit longer passage than what Joseph has been preaching each week, but it's a passage that fits together, so we're going to keep it all together as one message. Beginning in verse 19. Now I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I also may be encouraged when I hear news about you.

For I have no one else like-minded who will genuinely care about your interests. All seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know His proven character, because He has served with me in the gospel ministry like a son with a father.

Therefore, I hope to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. I am convinced in the Lord that I myself will also come quickly.

But I considered it necessary to send you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker, and fellow soldier, as well as your messenger and minister to my need, since he has been longing for all of you and was distressed because you heard that he was sick.

[ 4 : 16 ] Indeed, he was so sick that he dearly died. However, God had mercy on him, and not only on him but also on me, so that I would not have one grief on top of another.

For this reason, I am very eager to send him so that you may rejoice when you see him again, and I may be less anxious. Therefore, welcome him in the Lord with all joy and hold men like him in honor, because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up what was lacking in your ministry to me.

Would you bow your heads with me, please? Father, as we read here in your word this incredible passage from chapter 2 in Philippians, as we see, dear Father, how you have used Paul and Timothy and Epaphroditus, Father, we pray that you will also use us in our lives to be the men and women you've called us to be, to be the servants you've called us to be.

And Father, may we all be partners in ministry together. Every single person who's here at First Baptist Lewisburg, oh Father, may they understand the need they have to partner together and reach the lost for Christ and minister to those who are hurting.

In Jesus' name we pray, amen. Paul faithfully served the Lord. He was dedicated. He was known, he is known even to this day, as one of the greatest Christians that ever walked the earth.

[ 5 : 57 ] Now, that would be a foreign thing for him to hear because he thought he was the lowliest of all. But his faith was so sincere.

He was so dedicated. And he had someone like Timothy in his life. He had someone like Epaphroditus in his life. And together, they partnered to serve the Lord.

They literally, Timothy and Epaphroditus, literally came alongside Paul and ministered to him while he was actually, at this point, in a prison. But his ministry continued through writing and through prayer.

So I want you to understand, it doesn't matter where you are. It doesn't matter the circumstances of your life. God wants you still to this day to partner in ministry with your pastor and other leaders that God places here at First Baptist Church.

The first six years following my brain injury, I spent 18 to 20 hours a day in bed. And I really wasn't able to do anything. And a vast majority of that time, I spent praying.

[ 7 : 06 ] And God developed in me a love, more of a love and a commitment for prayer than even than I had had while I was pastoring for all those years. And I want you to understand, listen to me.

Even if you say, well, pastor, I can't go do all the things I used to do. I understand that, and God understands that. But you know what? You can still partner in ministry.

You can still pray. And there's still other ways that you can plug in and be a part of what God's doing here at First Baptist Church. Now, I know there's a lot of blanks, but trust me, this is going to be very, very easy to follow along.

I want us to look at some of the key characteristics that God points out about, first about Timothy, then about Epaphroditus, and how these can relate to you and me as well.

Now, back in verse 19, Paul said, Now, I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I also may be encouraged when I hear news about you. So Paul's setting the stage here, letting the church back at Philippi know that as soon as I'm able to, I'm going to send Timothy to you.

[ 8 : 08 ] And then he begins to describe Timothy. He says in verse 20, For I have no one else like-minded. Write that in, like-minded. We need to be like-minded. Like-minded with who?

Well, first, like-minded with Christ. We need to have the mind of Christ. And then Paul actually says in one part of the Scripture that you should imitate me. In other words, Paul said, Imitate me as I imitate Christ.

Now, this phrase like-minded, in the Greek it means having the same character, affections, and especially mindset of someone else, to be sincere and true.

Paul is saying to the church back at Philippi, Timothy, his heart, his mind, his focus, is just like mine as we are seeking after Christ.

Can it be said of you that you are like-minded with your pastor and other members of First Baptist Church, other leaders, that you are all like-minded, focused on having the mind and heart of Christ.

[ 9 : 16 ] But then Paul goes on. He says not only is he like-minded, he says, I have no one else who genuinely care about your interest. Timothy was one who genuinely cared.

He had a deep burden for the people of Philippi. The phrase about caring, genuinely caring, that's literally a person of dependable and proven character whose focus is on the concern of other people.

So Paul's saying, Timothy, although he's with me in the flesh right now, his heart is still with you. He cares about you. He hurts when he knows you're hurting. And he wants to see your needs met. Today, listen, friends, we need churches filled with men and women and young people who genuinely care about each other.

I see some of these disaster relief buckets that many of you have brought already to help with, it is just horrific, the devastation that's taken place the last few weeks.

[ 10 : 26 ] But I'm so glad to see you do that. That's a way you can demonstrate care for others. But you know what? You can demonstrate care for each other every day right here in Lewisburg. As you meet each other's needs and care about each other and pray for each other.

As you're there, sometimes not even to say a word, but literally just to be there for someone else. Timothy was one who cared about the interest of those in Philippi.

And then Paul continues. He said, All seek their own interest, in verse 21, not those of Jesus Christ. In other words, Paul said, Everybody else seeks their own interest. Everybody else is focused on themselves.

But Timothy seeks the interest of Jesus Christ. Is it a safe statement, do you think, to say that most people in our country today are self-centered?

Most people, their biggest concern is me. It's what's best for me. How does this affect me? Even in churches, I hate to say that, but even in churches today, we have so many members who their only concern is that they get what they want.

[ 11 : 45 ] God said Timothy was living his life trying to meet the needs of other people because he genuinely cared for them and he was seeking Jesus Christ, not his own betterment.

Instead of being self-centered, we need to be Christ-centered. Instead of just making sure our needs are met, we need to go out of our way to make sure her needs are met and his needs are met.

And we do that when we seek the heart of Jesus Christ. Now, I started in the ministry in Murfreesboro, Tennessee in 1984, began pastoring in Texas in 1986.

And I can tell you, I've been a part of some meetings where church members acted worse than the, what's that, WWF, the wrestling? I've seen people just go, you know what it's normally been about? Silly little things like, I don't like this color carpet, I want the other color carpet. Why can't we have the old lights we used to have? I like those better. Why does it always have to be so cold in the auditorium?

[ 12 : 58 ] Or I was sweating to death again today. Why is it always so hot? I mean, if it's not one thing, it's another. Some people in the church are just so zeroed in on them and their interest that they've forgotten all about Jesus Christ and His interest and His desire and what He wants us to be about.

You know, a lot of Christians today, or they really, I hate to say it, but a lot of them really, I hear from people who just complain. Here's the funny thing. You go to the same service and you thought it was a wonderful service, but this group over here says, well, we did this too much.

I don't like doing that. This group over here says, well, we did this too much. I don't like doing that. And in reality, it was really a wonderful service, but they just didn't like it because it wasn't what they wanted most.

If you're more concerned about the songs you sing or the color of the carpet or what your classroom design is, if you're more concerned about all that than you are about seeking Jesus Christ and making disciples for Christ, you are completely missing the boat of Christianity because God's given us a commission.

Jesus Himself, God the Son, before He ascended back to the Father after His death, burial, and resurrection, He said, go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

[ 14 : 36 ] He even goes on to say, and don't you worry, even though I'm going to be gone, the Holy Spirit's going to be with you. Therefore, I'll be with you through the Holy Spirit until the end of time.

And time never ends with God. So we have a commission, a great commission. We have a mandate. We have an order. It's to go make disciples of all nations.

First Baptist Church of Lewisburg, your main purpose shouldn't be to make sure that all of you are happy with the way everything is done.

Your main concern should be, what can we do better to reach more unsaved people in Marshall County for the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you believe that?

That's what Christ has told us to do. And Paul's saying, Timothy, he has that same interest that I have, seeking Jesus Christ. And then he says, look at this.

[15:34] He says, he's also a son in the ministry to me. Verse 22, but you know his proven character because he served with me in the gospel ministry like a son with a father.

Paul said, Timothy, he's just like my son. He's my spiritual son. This reference literally means a spiritual child. But not just a spiritual child, a spiritual child who honors, obeys, and imitates his father.

We are to be, because if you're a believer in Jesus Christ, you are one of God's children. Amen? And if we're one of God's children, then we need to honor God.

We need to love God. And we need to obey God. And Paul wasn't trying to put himself above other Christians or other people.

Paul was simply saying, Timothy understands how much I'm seeking after God and how my focus is on Jesus Christ. And he said, Timothy has now shown that he's a true son in the ministry to me.

[16:47] And he loves me. And he honors me. And he even obeys me as I give him directions and instructions about what to do. So here's something I want you to think about.

If you're a man, I want you to begin thinking in terms and praying about who can I help mentor who could be my Timothy, my son in the ministry.

And then ladies, I want you to pray and ask God, who can I begin to mentor and help that could be my daughter? In the ministry. Every adult man needs to have a spiritual son.

Every adult woman needs to have a spiritual daughter. And we need to realize that it's important for us because by doing that, by seeing that, we understand that we can help develop the next generation.

And that's how we do it. That's how we grow stronger. I hear people say all the time, well, young people in the church, they just don't understand the importance of giving. They don't understand the importance of participating in worship and Bible study.

[17:54] They don't get it. Well, guess what, friends? The best way to help them get it is to walk with them through it. Mentor them. And Paul said, Timothy's like a son in the ministry to me.

But then notice this. Paul then says, I want to also explain to you about Epaphroditus. And he picks up in verse 25, but I consider it necessary to send you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker, and fellow soldier, as well as your messenger and minister to my need, since he's been longing for all of you and was distressed because you heard that he was sick.

And Paul says, indeed, he was very sick. Matter of fact, he almost died serving me, but God spared him. God had mercy on him. God healed him. And he said, it wasn't just a blessing for Epaphroditus. It was a blessing for me because I would have had grief upon grief if I'd lost him.

So Paul said, I can't send Timothy right now, but I am going to send Epaphroditus back to you. And you might wonder, well, why does God go to the trouble to have Paul write a letter to the Philippians that God wants to put into his holy word, the Bible, that we, 2,000 plus years later, would be reading and studying about?

Because God wants us to understand just like we should follow in the footsteps of Timothy, we should also follow in the footsteps of Epaphroditus. So who was he?

[19:15] Well, look first. It says, verse 25, I consider it necessary to send you Epaphroditus, my brother. He was a brother. He was a brother to Paul in the ministry.

Now, Timothy was like a son. Epaphroditus might have been more Paul's age. He called him a brother. Barnabas in the scripture is one that we often associate with a brother in the faith.

Barnabas was one who served alongside Paul as well. I told you a minute ago, men need to have a spiritual son. Women need to have a spiritual daughter. And we all need to have brothers and sisters in Christ that we partner with.

In the Greek, that phrase, brother, it means being part of the same family. And God wants us to understand, if we're believers in Jesus Christ, we're part of the same family.

Now, you know, some families look perfect on Facebook, but I got news for you. Facebook's fake. They put all the good pictures. They put all the happy pictures.

[ 20 : 21 ] They don't put the pictures about how they spent ten minutes griping about having to take the picture to put on Facebook. So, our families aren't perfect. We understand that. But we are a family.

And some of us mess up. You know what? Every family, they say, has a crazy uncle or a crazy aunt. And if you can't figure out who that is in your family, it's probably you. Think about that one. Boy, that's scary. Well, Paul said, Epaphroditus is a brother.

He's one who's faithfully serving God right by my side. And then look at verse 25, contiguous. Not only is he my brother, he said, he's my co-worker. My co-worker.

Now, co-worker indicates a person who participates in the same activity as someone else. I used to work back in the 1980s.

One summer, I worked for Hawkins Brothers Contractors in Hendersonville, Tennessee. My buddy, Jeff Joyce, and I worked together. Now, a lot of people worked for Hawkins Brothers. But that summer, two people worked the, I don't know if you even know what I'm talking about, the handheld jackhammers.

[ 21 : 24 ] We had to jackhammer all the rock that was beneath the ground in Hendersonville. Nobody else was doing that. Jeff and I were. We had to shovel the gravel to fill in the water and sewer lines that we were digging before we laid the pipe.

Everybody else was setting up in that big equipment or in an office somewhere, but we were down there shoveling, shoving all that gravel, trying to get everything smoothed out.

Jeff and I understood that we had the same job. We were truly co-workers. And Paul's saying, in the church, as you join together with your brothers and sisters in Christ, I want you to understand you need to do it to be co-workers who are working for the kingdom of God.

Ask yourself, am I striving to help build the kingdom of God? Am I committed to making new disciples? Am I committed to discipling those who are already Christians?

Am I committed to serving as God wants me to serve? Paul said, Epaphroditus, he's my brother, my co-worker, and then he said, he's my fellow soldier.

[ 22 : 42 ] All of that's in verse 25. Now, fellow soldier references a person who serves in the same army as another, but it especially pertains to the relationship of trust and friendship that has developed between those soldiers.

I've had a lot of family members who served in the military. I know several of you have, and I thank God for you and appreciate your service. I've never talked to one of my relatives or one of my friends who served, especially those who served in combat, I've never talked to them without them bringing up the brotherhood they had with their fellow soldiers because they were literally on the front lines together.

They were fighting. They were bleeding. They were sweating together as they were trying to serve this nation. Paul says, Epaphroditus, he's been fighting the good fight with me.

He's been striving, fighting what the devil's trying to do. He's been helping me fight against that. So quick question again.

Can it be said of you that you're a faithful soldier? That you're faithfully fighting for Christ? I don't mean that you take up arms and go try to kill non-Christians.

[ 24 : 07 ] That's not what it's about, folks. Listen, non-Christians are people that Jesus Christ has put us here to help reach. It's easy, it's tempting, I know, to complain about how awful and sinful our world is, our country.

I'll be 61 if I wake up tomorrow morning. I'll be 61 tomorrow. And in my 61 years on this earth, I've seen things happen that I never dreamed would happen in the United States of America.

And some of you, I'm not saying you look older than 61, but some of you are older than me. And so you've seen even more than I've seen. But listen, God didn't put us here so we could get together and gripe about the non-Christians.

He put us here so we could help them understand that He loves them, that He sent His Son to save them, and that just as He saved us, He wants to bring them into a relationship with Himself.

And that takes a spiritual battle mindset, because if you don't have that mindset, then you'll get out here in the world and you'll get so disgusted and get so tired, you'll just want to give up.

[ 25 : 31 ] But God said, Epaphroditus, he was a faithful fellow soldier alongside me. And then He goes on, verse 25, He says, as well as your messenger.

Epaphroditus was now going to be the messenger to the church at Philippi for Paul. But more than that, he was being used by God to bring God's message back to those at Philippi who may not yet have heard.

The word messenger there means someone sent on a mission. Someone who is taking a message having been sent on a mission.

I told you a minute ago, the Great Commission, that's our mission. You've been sent on a mission. If you're a Christian, you've been sent on a mission to go make disciples of all nations. And then as you do that, you'll be sharing the message of the gospel.

And you don't have to read a 400-page book to know the message of the gospel. The message of the gospel is what I said a minute ago. God loves you, but because of your sin, you're separated from Him. But He sent His Son, who is perfect and holy and righteous, Son of God, to die for you to pay the penalty that you and I owed for our sin.

[ 26 : 50 ] And Jesus didn't just die for us. He was buried and after He was buried three days later, He rose again. He overcame sin. He overcame death. He overcame the grave.

And He lives today and He wants to invite us to be in relationship with Him. That's the message that God wants you to send. That's the message of Epaphroditus.

In addition, to give an update on Paul, Epaphroditus was going to take that message back to those at Philippi who hadn't yet heard the gospel message. And then it finishes in verse 25, and minister to my need.

Paul said, Epaphroditus is ministering to my need. He was a person who understood his call to be in the service of God.

So here's the question for you. Yes, it makes sense. Okay, I understand a pastor and a music minister, a youth minister, I understand they're called by God. They're to minister. Okay, our deacons, I understand that.

[ 27 : 50 ] They're called by God to be servant leaders in our church, okay? So they're ministering. But what about me? I'm, in your mind, you might say, I'm just a church member.

That's not, you're not just a church member. Listen, if you're a Christian, you're a child of God. You're special. Yet Paul is saying, however, there are some who God has called out to work uniquely in this area of vocational ministry.

And Epaphroditus has been one who's come alongside me to help out. And then look at verse 26. Since he's been longing for all of you and was distressed because you heard that he was sick.

Epaphroditus had a heart for other people. He was heartbroken because he knew the people back in Philippi who knew him had heard he was sick and he was worried that they might not know what happened to him and they may think that he died.

We have to remember, they didn't have cell phones like we have. They didn't have email, FaceTime. Epaphroditus couldn't FaceTime from Rome back to Philippi and say, hey, I'm okay.

[ 29 : 02 ] God healed me. He knew they were concerned about him and this just demonstrated how much he had a heart for them because he desperately wanted to get back home.

And let them know he was okay. If someone introduced, or let me put it this way, if someone was telling someone else about you, I've got a friend, her name is such and such, his name is such and such.

And if that person was then describing you, would you be described described as a person who has a heart for other people?

God says that we should live in that way. And then we're going to close out with this last major point here. Honor is due to those who serve in the ministry.

Verse 29 says, Therefore, welcome him in the Lord with all joy and hold men like him in honor because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up what was lacking in your ministry to me.

[ 30 : 14 ] So Paul says, consider, consider this man. Hold men like him. Men like who? Men like Epaphroditus. But you could also say men like Timothy.

And you could also say men like Paul. Hold men like this in honor. Years ago, I had the privilege to speak at a number of conferences across Tennessee, Texas, across the entire country, spoken to church leaders from all over the world, actually.

I wrote a book years ago called How to Minister to Your Ministers. And it was just something we self-published and we gave out at conferences and churches where we led some retreats and had

some big events.

But it's, God just put on my heart six things that church members can do to help minister to their ministers. And so, listen, I never dreamed I would be able, I never dreamed I would have a son in the ministry and I would be able to preach in his absence at his church.

I'm so thankful, it's humbling to do. And the fact that October, y'all probably know this October is Pastor Appreciation Month. and that's a great thing just to help remind people.

[ 31 : 28 ] But I want you to write down these six things that you can do to minister to your pastor and to your other ministers. And I promise you, if you'll implement these, it'll change your life, their life, and the church's life.

The first way you can honor them and minister to them is to pray for them. Pray. I encourage you to write down Joseph, Audrey, Jack, and baby on the way. Write them down and pray.

Brother Jim and his family and Clint, youth minister, write them down, write their family members down. Pray for them. Pray for them. Pray for health.

Pray for protection. Pray for guidance. Secondly, love them. Love them. And that should be, it should go without saying, right? Love your, you know, love your pastor. Love your ministers.

It should go without saying, but unfortunately, it has to be said a lot of times. Let me tell you the difference in loving someone and not loving someone. All right? Let's just, let's just pick somebody out here.

[ 32 : 27 ] All right, Miss McGee, I forget your last name now. Is it Roberts or Robertson? Robinson. Okay, so I know Mrs. Robinson, Miss Robinson.

I know her, and so I love her. As a matter of fact, she doesn't know this, but she's been on my prayer list for years, because of Tim, my relationship with Tim. So, if someone comes to tell me something bad about her, you think I'm going to believe it just because someone said it?

No, I love her. I believe the best about her. When you love someone, you assume the best about them. Now, I'm not going to point somebody else out, but let's say there's somebody else in here that I don't really love that much, and somebody comes up and tells me something about them.

Do you know what my human natural tendency is? It doesn't surprise me a bit to hear that about them. Why? Because you don't really love them.

You're not assuming the best about them. When we choose to love someone, we assume the best about them, and we're there for them, and we're willing to help them.

[ 33 : 40 ] And yes, at times when they need to be told, I think you kind of messed up there, we do that in love, and we help them. Pray for your pastor, your ministers, pray for their families, love them, love their families, and then thirdly, encourage them.

Encourage. When I wrote this book, I found something out that I should have realized years before, because I was a grown adult when I wrote it, and it never dawned on me before. Real quick little grammar lesson.

The word encourage is made up of two parts. The prefix in, e-n. That means to put into or upon something. The word courage, which means the ability to accomplish what one needs to accomplish.

If you encourage someone, you're helping, being used by God to help encourage them, to put courage into them, to put the ability into them, for them to do what God's called them to do.

In other words, as you come up and pat them on the back, as you tell them how much you appreciate them, as you say, what a great job you did with this, as you come up and encourage them, or write a note to them, send a card to them, as you encourage them, you're being used by God to put into them the ability to complete the task God's called them to complete.

[ 34 : 54 ] But there's another word much like encourage, but it starts with the prefix D-I-S, discourage. And they're exact opposites. The prefix D-I-S means take away from or remove.

When you discourage someone with the words you use or the actions that you perform, you're being used by Satan to remove from them the courage they need to do what they need to do.

If anything is said about you at First Baptist Lewisburg, let it be said that you encourage people, not discourage people. So love your pastor, pray for your pastor, encourage your pastor, and then participate with your pastor.

Participate. What does that mean? It means team up with ministry. You can't be a part of every single ministry, but there is at least a ministry you can be a part of, maybe a couple.

