

Weekly Reflection – Is your “why” valuable enough?

Would you walk barefoot for one mile, through the snow, for \$5? How about for \$100? \$10,000? Before we are willing to do something we need to have a purpose for doing it, a “why” for doing it. And the more difficult or dangerous or inconvenient the task, the bigger or more valuable the purpose or why needs to be.

Listen to Paul as he describes his lifestyle: Multiple imprisonments, countless beatings, often near death, whipped, beaten with rods, stoned, shipwrecked three times, adrift at sea for a night and a day, constant danger, sleepless nights, hungry and thirsty and often without food, cold and exposure, daily pressure and anxiety for all of the churches. (2 Corinthians 11:23-28) Why was Paul willing to suffer so much? What was his “why” for choosing to live this way? Paul must have had a purpose, a why, that was big enough, valuable enough to sustain him and motivate him to keep going despite all this suffering. Too often we can spend most of our time focused on the “what” and the “how” to the exclusion of the “why.” But, if the “why” isn’t there and valuable enough it’s very likely that after a bit the “what” and the “how” suffer. If we don’t have a why that is big enough, strong enough, then when the obstacles come, the inconveniences come, the suffering comes, we will have the tendency to throw in the towel. The “why” or the purpose is like the fuel for the “what” and the “how.” If you have no “why” you have no fuel. If the “why” is not valuable enough you run out of fuel. But, if you happen to have a divine “why,” a God given “why,” you have connected your life to an endless supply of high-octane fuel.

2 Timothy 2:1-13

“You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus,” (2 Timothy 2:1 ESV) We can tell from this verse what Paul is wanting for Timothy. Paul is writing this letter to help Timothy to be strengthened by the grace of Christ Jesus. Paul is telling Timothy, and us, that the “how” is the grace of Christ Jesus. **“and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.” (2 Timothy 2:2 ESV)** This is the “what” we are called to, make disciples who make disciples, share the gospel, be witnesses of Jesus. **“Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 2:3 ESV)** It’s clear that this “what”, this disciple-making is going to result in suffering of some sort (see 2 Timothy 1:8-9) Why would Paul, Timothy and now you and I intentionally choose a way of life that will result in some suffering?

In 2 Timothy 2:8-13 we see that Paul points Timothy and us to the why, the why that is big enough and valuable enough to keep us going in the face of suffering and inconvenience. The arguments and the reasons that Paul gives Timothy for why he should embrace his suffering in the service of the gospel instead of running from it, and why he should press on confidently and courageously in his work, are the same arguments and the same reasons that you should embrace your suffering in the path of obedience and not run from it, why you should press on confidently and courageously in your work.

Remember Jesus

The first thing Paul tells Timothy to do in order to encourage faithfulness is to remember Jesus Christ. **“Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel,” (2 Timothy 2:8 ESV)** “Timothy, never let Jesus Christ be far from your mind. Think about Him enough and think enough about Him.” And he mentions two specific ways to remember Jesus. Remember Him as risen from the dead. And remember Him as the offspring of David. Why these two things about Jesus?

If Jesus is risen from the dead, He is alive and triumphant over sin and death. ***“If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.” (Romans 8:11 ESV)*** This means that no matter how serious the suffering becomes, the worst that it can do on this earth is kill you. And Jesus has taken the sting out of that enemy (1 Corinthians 15:50-58). He is alive. And you will be alive. ***“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.” (Matthew 10:28 ESV)***

Why does Paul say, “offspring of David?” Because every Jewish person knew what that meant. It meant that Jesus is the Messiah. And that meant that this resurrection was not a random resurrection, but the resurrection of an everlasting King. Listen to the words of the angel to Mary, Jesus’s mother: ***“And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” (Luke 1:31-33 ESV)*** Remember Jesus, He is alive and He will reign forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end. No matter what they do to you, you do not need to be afraid.

The Word of God is not bound

“for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound!” (2 Timothy 2:9 ESV) Paul pulls no punches here. He doesn’t whitewash what Timothy may have to endure. He says: Look, we both serve the same gospel. And here is what it has cost me, I am suffering, I am in chains, and I am accused of being a criminal (an evildoer deserving death). That, Timothy, is what you may have to endure. And then he gives the foundation for Timothy’s courage and confidence (at the end of verse 9): ***“The word of God is not bound!”*** “I am bound. But the word of God is not bound. Timothy, if you ever have to sit in prison; if you ever feel beaten down and alone, and wonder if the cause you lived for was being defeated, remember, the word of God is not bound.”

The enemies of the gospel can imprison the preachers of the gospel. But they cannot imprison the gospel. In fact, even the imprisonment of the preachers serves the advance of the gospel: ***“I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.” (Philippians 1:12-14 ESV)*** Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. He is alive. And He is king. And He cannot be stopped. He promised, ***“And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” (Matthew 24:14 ESV)*** Chains or no chains, the word of God is not bound. And it cannot be defeated but only advanced by the suffering of His servants.

That they also may obtain the salvation

Why was Paul willing to endure so much? ***“Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” (2 Timothy 2:10 ESV)***

There seems to be two ways we could read this and I think both ways are right. One way is that Paul endures everything for those who are already God’s people, to help them grow and bear fruit, and to

encourage them. The other way to read this is that Paul endures everything for the sake of those who are not yet saved, for those who God is going to save. Knowing that God uses us to accomplish His plan of saving people and helping people grow and mature, should motivate us to faithfulness. ***“But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you.” (2 Corinthians 4:7-12 ESV)*** Our suffering, affliction, inconveniences, and even death will produce life in others. What kind of sacrifices are you willing to make so that others can be saved and grow and mature in Jesus.

God remains faithful

“The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself.” (2 Timothy 2:11-13 ESV) This saying has two halves, the first half contains promises for those who are in Christ and the second half contains warnings for those who are not faithful to Christ. God is faithful, if you give your life to suffering for the advancement of the Gospel of Jesus, He has promised that you have eternal life and will reign with Him. God is faithful, if you deny Him and His purposes, He has promised that He will deny you. God is always faithful, He cannot deny Himself. This should be terrifying news for anyone who denies God. This is great news, encouraging news, compelling news for all who choose to follow Jesus into a life of suffering for the advance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Is this “why” valuable enough? Remember Jesus, the Word of God is not bound, that they also may obtain the salvation, and God remains faithful. I continue to invite you to pray and discern if God would have you join a small group for the purpose of disciple-making. Whether you are a “new” believer who desires to grow, mature, and learn the basic doctrines of following Jesus; an “old” believer who desires to help others grow, mature, and learn the basic doctrines of following Jesus; or, a “somewhere in between” believer who wants to both grow, mature, and learn the basic doctrines of following Jesus and also desire to help others grow, mature, and learn the basic doctrines of following Jesus, the small groups are for you. We invite children, youth, young adults, and old adults to participate. This is not simply a religious thing to do; this is who the church is, a group of people called out around Jesus Christ and His Gospel, called to fellowship together in the Word of God and prayer, called to make disciples who make disciples.

Following is a list of the small groups that will likely be happening:

- Sunday morning ladies group, 9 - 9:30AM (limited space, 10-12 ladies).
- Monday evening group or groups, 6:30 PM.
- Wednesday morning group, 10:00AM.
- Wednesday evening group or groups, 6:30PM.
- Thursday evenings, “Overcoming Depression”, starting 1/29/26 (6 sessions)
- Saturday morning group, 8AM.

Thank you for your patience as we discover what times and formats will work the best. We are hoping that groups will start in the beginning of February. Our goal is that we will be informing everyone by the end of next week when the groups will be starting along with any other details.