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**Easter 3B – April 14, 2024**

**“The Power to Make a Difference – PowerPoint of Life Series”**

**Read: Acts 16: 1 –5 and/or Memorize Acts 16: 5**

**“One hundred years from now it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, what kind of car I drove . . ., but the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child.” Forest Witcraft, Boy Scout executive.**

**George Barna, a Christian researcher, who for many years has been exploring the impact of faith and relationships recently did a study on the impact of one adult non-parent relationship on a young person between the ages 8 and 14. The parents of these children were asked if their children had integrated Biblical principles into their lives.**

**Of those whose child had a meaningful adult non-parent relationship, 64% said that was completely true. Of those who did not have such a relationship, only 24% said it was true. That’s the power of a relationship lived in faith. That may explain why a man named Paul, had such an impact on a young man named Timothy, many centuries ago.**

**Paul, the apostle of Jesus Christ, sailed the seas of the western Mediterranean, preaching the gospel and establishing churches. He debated with the finest philosophers in Athens, and wrote a good portion of the New Testament. But one of the best contributions he made was his investment in a young man from Lystra by the name of Timothy. Let's see if we can glean from Timothy's life some essential principles of forming others in the faith.**

**Timothy’s life was grounded in faith in Jesus Christ. Paul, wrote of Timothy in 2 Timothy 1: 5, "Your sincere faith first lived in your grandmother, Lois and your mother, Eunice . . ." Timothy's grandmother, Lois, was a strong believer in Jesus, who was not hesitant to share that faith. It has been said that God invented grandparenting as a reward for not killing your own kids, when they were teenagers.**

**As a proud grandparent, I love to be with and enjoy my grandkids, but not everyone is so happy about being a grandparent. In a culture that worships youth, I know some are reluctant about that role. There’s the mother, who explained one day, “How can I have a son 30 years old when I just recently turned 30 myself?” How silly we can be sometimes. If**

we can get over our pride and see the opportunity that grandparenting gives us, it opens a whole new world of joy.

For many, that privilege will last anywhere from 20 to 30 years. What better use of your time could there be than to help shape the spiritual life of the next generation? Perhaps, if your grandchildren don't live close by, you can kind of adopt some of the kids right here whose grandparents don't live nearby.

Remember the impact I shared with you just a few minutes ago of a meaningful, non-parent adult relationship? Many of you have done that by knowing the young people here and being involved in their lives. Many of you know the names of the young people. This is one other aspect of how we treat young people. 1. One key characteristic of Good Shepherd has been that we enable young people to be ministers, just as adults are.

Not only did Timothy find faith in his grandmother, he also found it in his mother, Eunice. There can be no substitute for godly parents. You can only give away what you have. So, here's my encouragement to each person in the room today: become a sincere believer yourself. Put faith into action! 2. Don't form an opinion about God, develop a relationship with Him, so that you can share it with someone, especially a younger person.

Seek God's wisdom. Accept God's guidance. Receive God's strength. Remember He is with you always, even when the kids are screaming and the bills need paying. For many parents, it can be a struggle. They are juggling outside careers, while, at the same time, seeking to be the best parents they can be. It is difficult to balance all that, so I want to commend you for your commitment.

I also want to take some pressure off you. You don't have to be perfect to be effective. Sometimes, the pictures of godly families that are portrayed in various media can be a little too sweet, seemingly too perfect, making some feel like you can't measure up.

If you grew up in a family like mine, you might have a sense of what it was like for Timothy. My mother was a Christian, who practiced her faith. My father was not very involved in the church. He learned that from his mother and father. Remember parents are often the first faith teachers. Timothy's household was just such a mixed bag. His mother was a Christian, his father a Greek, mostly likely a polytheist, believing in many different gods.

3. Whatever you do to help your children grow, invest in values that last, not fads that fade. If everybody's doing it, it's probably not that important. Your children outgrow toys, but truth endures. Here is a common thought about Timothy Paul shared in 2 Timothy 3: 15, "From infancy, you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for

salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ.” Here’s our lesson from that verse: introduce them to Jesus early!

We're not quite sure why, but one day, this itinerant preacher, Paul, came to Lystra. He took a liking to this young man, Timothy. However, it happened, Paul made a deal with mom that he would be able to take Timothy along on the journey he was on. That began a friendship that greatly benefited them both. Illustrating what some wise person said, “It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken adults.”

Paul took him under his wing and mentored him. A mentor is a wise advisor, teacher, coach, or encourager. They are someone that you can look up to; a person you can lean on. You don't need a degree to be a mentor, but you need a heart for children, or as a Christian mentor, a heart to help another learn and grow not in only in wisdom, but in the faith.

Mentors are not just for young people. Throughout my years of ministry, I have always sort out godly people who would help me grow in my faith and skills of leading the parish. Interestingly, some of them have been younger than me, but have been very qualified because of their great knowledge and love for the Lord. As a Christian mentor, that is probably the most important quality a mentor can have, that they love Jesus. 4. If you have a heart for Jesus, find people who want to grow in the faith and offer to help them do so.

Not only was Timothy a servant of Paul, he became a partner in the gospel. The time came when Paul would ask him to pastor a congregation. As a young pastor, he needed some good wisdom, and Paul gave it to him: "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young." Young people, hear that clearly. You also are God's child. To the cantankerous Church at Corinth, Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 16:10: "When Timothy comes, see to it that he has nothing to fear while he is with you, for he is carrying on the work of the Lord, just as I am." With such support, how could Timothy fail?

That young man grew in faith and love for Jesus to be a fine leader in the faith. As we look at Timothy, perhaps we want to question and ask what are the characteristics of a spiritual leader? We can talk about leaders in many ways, team leaders, charismatic leaders, dictatorial leaders and visionary leaders. But what is a spiritual leader? There's lots of books written about leadership, even within the church.

What are the qualities of a person who can engage others in the purposes of God for their lives? I don't have all the answers, but I've got some clues for you to look at, especially as we consider a future spiritual leader. A spiritual leader needs a heart for Jesus and for God's people. They must love the Lord, their God, with all their heart, mind and soul. Spiritual leaders need to have the mind of Christ.

As Paul wrote, "Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus, who being in the very nature of God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, . . . instead, he humbled Himself. He became obedient even unto death on a cross."

5. One of the things a spiritual leader does is, he or she invests in people, rather than plans. In Timothy's case, that investment paid off in a lifelong friendship and ministry together. In the closing words of 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy, Paul reveals his love of and need for Timothy in a time when he has been abandoned by many. He writes and asks Timothy, "do your best to come before winter," and by the way, bring the coat I forgot.

An evangelist preaching in a parking in Dublin once said: "The world has yet to see what God can do in and through and for one individual who is completely yielded to the Lord Jesus Christ." Dwight L Moody, a shoe salesman from Chicago, with a sixth-grade education, who loved to teach Sunday school, heard that evangelist and replied, "I want to be that man." The rest of the story, as they say, is history.

Moody became renowned as a preacher all over England and in the United States, and served the Lord until he died in 1899. You might say he was the Billy Graham of the late 1800's. Some people say over 1 million people were converted to faith in Jesus because of Moody's preaching. 6. Are you a person like Moody, who is willing to give yourself to Jesus, to accomplish the mission of bringing Christ to the nations? The only way you'll find out is if you surrender yourself to Jesus and let Him lead you.

Count me in: Will you seek out a person or situation, in which you can make a difference in their lives?

2<sup>nd</sup> Count me in: If you are an adult, will you seek to develop a meaningful relationship with a young person?