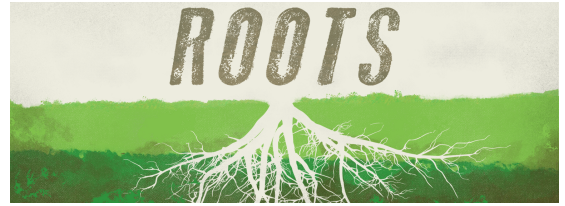


## DISCUSSION GUIDE :: WEEK 2

**ROOTS**  
**USING THE MENTORS GOD SENDS MY WAY**  
**PHILIPPIANS 2:19-24**  
**10/29/2017**



### MAIN POINT

God uses spiritual mentors to deepen the roots of our faith.

### INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What is one physical or character attribute you know you inherited from your parents?**

**If you have children, what is one characteristic of yourself that you see in them right now?**

All of us have inherited something from our parents. Most of these qualities are passed down unintentionally, simply by virtue of our relationship. But the pattern for spiritual growth God describes in Scripture includes intentionally passing down godly traits to others. In order to grow in our faith and our gospel impact, we must be willing to engage in this process of mentoring. We see several examples of this in the New Testament, from Jesus and His disciples, to Paul and Timothy and Paul and Mark. In Philippians 2 and 2 Timothy 1, we learn more about the mentor relationship between Paul and Timothy, and how Paul shaped Timothy's life and ministry.

### UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PHILIPPIANS 2:19-24.**

God wants us to surround ourselves with spiritual mentors. Our faith grows as we learn from the examples of those more spiritually mature than us. In this section of Philippians, Paul expressed hope for his immediate future. His intention was to send Timothy on a pastoral mission to Philippi. In these verses we get a glimpse of the relationship between these two men.

**What are two or three words you would use to describe Timothy and his ministry?**

**What was the relationship like between Paul and Timothy? How did the closeness of their relationship enhance their work for the gospel? When have you experienced this kind of mentor partnership?**

Acts 16 describes the time when Timothy joined Paul on his missionary journey. From several other parts of the New Testament (including this passage in Philippians 2 and 1 & 2 Timothy), we learn about the influence Paul had on Timothy.

The two became friends and ministry partners, and Paul looked on Timothy as a son. Most importantly, Timothy's faith grew as he spent time with Paul. Paul gave Timothy a great compliment when the apostle stated that Timothy was the kind of person who consistently put Christ's interests ahead of his own. We should be reminded that Christians who seek their churches' welfare ahead of their own are putting Christ's interests first and thereby demonstrating their commitment to Him.

**According to verse 22, what was the purpose of Timothy's mission? How was he a co-laborer with Paul?**

**Much of Timothy's spiritual growth happened by just spending time with Paul. Do you have (or have you had) a relationship like that? If so, share briefly about what that mentoring relationship looked like and how your faith was strengthened in that relationship.**

Later on in Timothy's life, he would be the recipient of a letter from Paul, his mentor and co-laborer for the gospel, that encouraged him to persevere in his missionary efforts. Paul was in prison in Rome approaching what would likely be his death. Paul's imprisonment and impending death weighed heavily on the churches where Paul had ministered and he wanted to encourage Timothy, like he had encouraged the Philippians.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 TIMOTHY 1:8-18.**

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**What additional insight do we gain into this mentoring relationship from these verses?**

**What are the things Paul was worried Timothy would be ashamed about? How would Paul's words have deepened the roots of Timothy's faith?**

Paul was afraid that Timothy and others would be ashamed of the testimony of Christ, and that they would be ashamed of Paul himself because he was in chains. Some may construe Paul's incarceration as a sign that he was giving up on the gospel, or that he did not believe that he needed to keep proclaiming the truth of Christ. Salvation is through Christ and so is the gospel, it was not about Paul.

Paul called Timothy to hold to the "pattern of sound teaching" or as some translate it "sound doctrine." The teaching to which Timothy was called came from Paul and was primarily about the faith and love that are in Christ. Paul urged Timothy to these things because churches and their leaders had turned away from Paul and sound teaching because Paul was in chains. Paul wanted Timothy to remain faithful to Christ so that he would receive mercy when he stood before the throne and gave an account of his ministry. Even when we do not have spiritual mentors present in our lives, we have access to the Divine mentor—God's Word and the characters included in it. Through the power of the Spirit, the people and events in Scripture can strengthen and root our faith as well as face-to-face relationships can.

**Describe a time when the Word of God had this affect in your life.**

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 CORINTHIANS 10:31.**

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One of the key lessons Paul taught Timothy (and everyone he ministered to) is that we are to see our earthly tasks as spiritually important. When we do, we are able to stand firmly rooted on Christ, regardless of what is going on around us (whether mundane or chaotic).

**How difficult is it for you to do all things—even the mundane—for the honor of God?**

**What is the connection between honoring God in all we do and being a witness or mentor to others (see v. 33)?**

**How should wanting to see others grow spiritually impact how we do everything else in our lives?**

Paul reminded his readers that the chief end of human beings is the glory of God; His honor should be the principle concern of those who love Him. We live in light of the gospel and honor Him by doing all we can to bring about the salvation and spiritual growth of others. Nothing should hinder the magnification of Christ in our lives.

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**Who has helped you grow in your understanding of Christianity? How have they done so?**

**In what ways can our group be a catalyst for mentoring relationships? What steps do we need to take toward that direction?**

## PRAY

Thank God for designing spiritual growth to happen in relationship with others. Pray for the opportunity to find a mentor in the coming months and be mentored by others.

## COMMENTARY

### PHILIPPIANS 2:19-24

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Paul offered Timothy, his younger coworker, as a second example of Christ's mind-set (vv. 19-20). The apostle felt confident he would be able to send Timothy to Philippi soon. Paul wanted to receive accurate, detailed news about the believers' circumstances and welfare. Also, Timothy would offer needed encouragement and guidance. Knowing the believers were remaining faithful to Christ and were united would encourage Paul. The Greek word translated encouraged carries the sense of comfort and cheer; a good report from Timothy would lift Paul's spirits.

Paul could not go to the Philippian believers, but he would send the best substitute available: Timothy. No one else was like-minded (literally, "equal-souled") with Paul. The apostle could have meant that of all his coworkers, Timothy most closely matched Paul's servant attitude or spirit. More likely, however, Paul meant that of all the people around him, Timothy shared most deeply Paul's love and concern for the Philippian Christians.

To whom did Paul refer with the inclusive term all (v. 21)? Did he mean that everyone around him was self-centered, consumed with their own interests? In 1:14-16, he had mentioned courageous believers in Rome who preached the gospel with love, the right motive. One interpretation is that Paul's statement was an aside, a sad reflection on the self-seeking of people in general. Thus Timothy was a rare person who could be entrusted with—and who would accept—the important mission of representing Paul to the Philippian believers. Timothy's interests were the interests of Jesus Christ—the welfare of His people.

The Philippian Christians had observed Timothy in action during the missionary party's stay in Philippi (v. 22; see Acts 16). They had firsthand knowledge of his proven character (literally, "the proof of him"). That is, he had been tested and found to be genuine. Paul's friends knew that Timothy had served (literally, "slaved") with Paul in his missionary endeavors. In 2:7, Paul pointed out that Christ chose to be a servant ("slave"); Timothy was following his Lord's example. Paul viewed Timothy as his spiritual son, whom the apostle mentored in the gospel ministry—the work of spreading the gospel.

Paul was awaiting trial before the emperor (vv. 23-24). When the verdict was in, he would send Timothy to Philippi. If Paul were found guilty, Timothy would represent him ably. Yet Paul was convinced in the Lord that he would be acquitted. When that happened, he quickly would arrange to visit the church.

### 2 TIMOTHY 1:8-18

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1:9-10 These verses summarize the gospel for which believers suffer. They serve as a reminder of the power of God on whom we rely. The use of exalted language suggests that Paul was also arguing that so glorious a message was worth suffering for.

1:12 The phrase these things refers to Paul's imprisonment and impending death. He was confident that God would protect either the gospel (what has been entrusted to me) or his own soul ("what I have entrusted to Him"; lit "my entrustment"). Either way, it was this confidence in God that prevented Paul from being ashamed. His boldness came not from self-confidence but from God-confidence.

1:14 That good thing entrusted to you was the gospel.

1:15 Asia was the name of the Roman province in which Ephesus was located. Key people who could have supported Paul had failed to do so. We know nothing about Phygelus and Hermogenes. This highlights the bleak situation in which Paul found himself. Perhaps this is one reason why Timothy, the faithful one, was such a source of joy for Paul at this time.

1:16-18 Onesiphorus was also an example of faithfulness, in contrast to those who had abandoned Paul. Verse 18 is an expression of Paul's desire that Onesiphorus persevere, continuing in faithfulness, not being pulled away by the false ways of others.

### **1 CORINTHIANS 10:31**

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He or she who wishes to do everything for God's glory cannot succeed if they act in disregard for others. Paul was always relinquishing his rights for the spiritual profit of others— that they may be saved.