

P.S. 2020 Lessons We're Learning
"We're Learning – It's Better to Build"
September 20, 2020

Overarching theme: In 2020, FUMC will be a **GO** church!

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. *The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.*

Core Point:

The past is the past. There is nothing that can be done about it. The past can only be used to gain wisdom for the future. What can change is the future. When we, as God's people, are willing to follow God in our daily lives, God will make a good way in the future. The way may be bumpy at times and have curves, but the process will be filled with God's love and grace.

2 Timothy:

The second epistle addressed to Paul's "beloved child" Timothy, despite its similarities in address and diction, has a more personal tone than the first. Less concerned with general church order and roles, here Paul is portrayed as near death, in testamentary fashion handing on to his spiritual heir, Timothy, the wisdom and truth he has accumulated through a life of mission, ministry and, above all, suffering for the gospel. The letter is set within a carefully scripted historical circumstance marked by Paul's imminent death and Timothy's bereavement, at a time of distortions to the *sound doctrine* or "healthy teaching" received from the apostle.

Timothy is known from Paul's letters as one of his most loyal disciples (Phil 2.19-22), who acts as a delegate to churches (1 Cor 4.17; 16.10) and co-sender of six of the Pauline epistles (2 Cor 1.1; Phil 1.1; Col 1.1; 1 Thess 1.1; 2 Thess 1.1; Philem1), as well as being the recipient of two. According to Acts 16, Timothy's mother was Jewish and his father Greek, which is why Paul circumcised him in the face of probable Jewish persecution (Acts 16.3, an event not corroborated by the epistles). This letter sketches Timothy's life only in broad strokes, from his early immersion in the scriptures (3.15) and matrilineal Christian pedigree (1.5), to his authorization for ministry by the laying on of Paul's hands (1.6), and his present ecclesiastical challenges. More prominent in the letter, however, is the detailed and passionate portrait of Paul, imprisoned for the gospel in Rome (1.8, 16-17; 2.9), and forsaken by even his close friends (1.15; 4.10,16), yet empowered by his Lord not only to endure suffering and death, but to celebrate them as the fitting culmination of his life of ministry and service (4.6-8, 17-18).

-adapted from the New Oxford NRSV study bible, p 357 NT

Reflect on this Scripture:

2 Timothy 2:23-26 NIV

²³ *Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. ²⁴ And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. ²⁵ Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, ²⁶ and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.*

Commentary:

Second Timothy is written from Paul's perspective at the end of his life. He offers himself as a model for Timothy to follow and identify with in suffering and in partnership with the gospel. Timothy is advised regarding teaching speech and how to handle opposition.

As in many of his letters, Paul is addressing conflict in the church. He urges Timothy to avoid harsh and harmful communication practices and to gently instruct opponents in such a way that builds them up and frees them from deception and destructive paths.

– adapted from The Common English Study Bible, p. 415 (NT)

This week – We're Learning that **It's better to build.** In perhaps the last of his letters, Paul passionately calls on his beloved protégé Timothy to address interpersonal church conflict in a Christ-like way. Paul's letters were not written to perfect people or perfect churches. They were written to address very human issues in the church. Even Paul's 'epistle of joy' (Philippians) includes a concluding appeal (4:2) for two leading women in the church to "*be of the same mind in the Lord.*" Interpersonal conflict, divisive tendencies and quarrels were ever present in the early Christian community, because the early Christian community was made up of people!

The Scriptures teach that people have been struggling with these destructive tendencies since Adam first blamed the forbidden fruit incident on Eve (Genesis 3:12). Throughout the story of Israel, we observe continual conflict between tribes, clans, families and individuals. And in the early Christian community, Paul has to remind Timothy to avoid "*foolish and stupid arguments.*" As God's servants, we are all called to be "*kind to everyone,*" understanding that "*opponents must be gently instructed.*"

What a different world it would be if Christians would follow the Biblical admonition to be "*quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger*" (James 1:19). It may well be easier to tear down, but it's far better to build.

Questions to Ponder for accountability in the group:

As you think about this passage, how can you respond to this Scripture:

1. When was the last time you were involved in a "*foolish and stupid argument?*" What did you learn from this experience that can help you avoid this pitfall in the future?
2. What about our current cultural climate makes it even more difficult to build bridges?
3. Re-read verse 24. What does Paul say about how the Lord's servant should communicate?
4. What are you learning about communication these days? What are some specific ways that you can be part of the solution rather than part of the problem?

Activity for the life of a disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMC.
2. Ponder and pray on this Scripture this week: 2 Timothy 2:23-24
²³ Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. ²⁴ And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. ²⁵
3. Consider the lessons that you are learning in this season, and choose to build a bridge toward someone this week.