

MINISTRY
COMPANIONS

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MINISTRY
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Lessons from the Lives of
Those Who Served with the Apostle Paul



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is not possible to complete a book like this without thinking of my own ministry companions. As I wrote each chapter, I was reminded of how blessed I am to have in my life ministry companions just as Paul did. This project would not be complete without taking the time to acknowledge them and the role they play in my life and ministry.

The first companion I must acknowledge is the *...friend that sticketh closer than a brother*, my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is an amazing thing to think that the King of kings is by my side. The greatest day of my life was when I called on Him to save me. Everything I do in the ministry is for Him, and I could not do it without Him.

At the writing of this book, my wife Heather has been by my side for more than twenty-five years. There is no one other than my Saviour who is more instrumental in my life and ministry than she. She is my best friend, and I absolutely love serving the Lord with her. God blessed me with my greatest ministry companion when He gave me her.

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I absolutely love serving the Lord and the people of the Immanuel Baptist Church while serving alongside my staff. There is not a more capable group of people in the ministry, but there is not a more humble group of people also. Most have served in our ministry for decades, proving their love for the Lord and proving their servant's heart. There is no way I could do what I do for the Lord without this team of ministry companions.

The great joy of my life is to serve the Lord in the capacity He has chosen for me. Serving as the pastor of the Immanuel Baptist Church is not only a calling but also a privilege. I look at these people not only as those God has placed under my pastoral care but also as my companions in the ministry. Together we serve with the goal of advancing the cause of Christ. I have my "Lukes," my "Timothys," my "Tychicuses," and my "Onesiphoruses"; but truthfully, I, like Paul, must acknowledge *...all the brethren*. My prayer and challenge to my congregation is to serve together as ministry companions until the trumpet sounds or God calls us home.

I must acknowledge also that I have my "Alexanders" and "Demases" as well. While we all will encounter those individuals who seek to do us evil and who love the world, we must heed the words of the Apostle Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians, *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.* (I Corinthians 15:58)

CHAPTER ONE

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II Timothy is the Apostle Paul's last letter. The end of the letter is often referred to as "Paul's Last Words."

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. (II Timothy 4:6-8)

While no one can deny the passion, power, and significance of these words, the chapter does not end there. The humanity of Paul is on display as he emotionally appeals to Timothy to come to him. The Holy Spirit undoubtedly impressed upon Paul a list of greetings and even some warnings for Timothy. As Paul knows he is awaiting death, it is interesting to find who was on his mind. This list consisted of people he had encountered in his life and ministry. Included in this list were the faithful and the unfaithful, friends and foes, and, most importantly, the

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faithful Saviour Who never left his side. In short, he writes of his ministry companions.

This book was born out of a love for the Pastoral Epistles. I have read I Timothy, II Timothy, and Titus literally hundreds of times; and, without fail, my heart is stirred and instructed by these inspired letters from the hand of the Apostle Paul. The fourth chapter of II Timothy is perhaps my favorite chapter in the whole Bible. If it is not my favorite, it is definitely one God has used to develop my convictions and to chart my course as a Christian and a preacher. In this chapter, I get a picture of the greatness of Paul through a yielded life to the Holy Spirit; and especially in this chapter, I sense the humanity of the Apostle Paul. However, I am almost embarrassed to admit that in all of my study of this book and this final chapter, I had missed, perhaps, the greatest strength of Paul outside of God's power. The Apostle Paul, while a greatly used man, was still just a man. He had a need for companionship and a need for help in the ministry. This book is written to reveal not only the teamwork of Paul and his companions but also the love they had for one another.

The *American Dictionary of the English Language* Webster's 1828 edition defines the word *companion* as "One who keeps company with another; one with whom a person frequently associates, and converses. A partner; an associate." This word, in my opinion, describes the relationship among Christians as we serve the Lord. Just as there were those with whom Paul kept company, there are those with whom we keep company. As there were those who partnered with Paul for the furtherance of the Gospel, there are those with whom we partner for the same purpose. As I considered these relationships, an Old Testament verse of Scripture came to mind. *Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: That they would*

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desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. (Daniel 2:17-18)

Upon learning of his life being in danger, Daniel went to his companions, often referred to as the three Hebrew children. Daniel had “prayer partners” on whom he could depend. Having ministry companions is nothing new. Sadly, it seems today that our ministry companions are often undervalued and overlooked. For me, the content in this book will forever prevent that.

As a final thought, we should be reminded that we **are** in the ministry. The ministry, as this book will remind us, is not just for those who pastor a church or have a title by their names. Every born-again believer is admonished to serve in and through the local New Testament church, advancing the cause of Christ. As I made a careful study of these relationships, I was amazed to find similarities between Paul and his ministry companions and me and my ministry companions. In fact, I believe readers of this book also will be aware of the similarities between Paul and his ministry companions and them and their ministry companions. My prayer is that the words of this book will open our eyes to the greatness of overlooked and practically unknown spiritual giants and to the ever-working hand of God.



CHAPTER TWO

Paul and the People He Encountered

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul often spoke of others in his writings. I had never noticed this until one year when I preached through the book of Acts. After preparing and preaching more than eighty sermons from Acts alone, I counted more than one hundred people of whom Paul spoke.

Paul had many types of relationships in his ministry. In these relationships, there are many lessons to be learned. Paul gives us insight into his ministry relationships by what he said about the different people whom he encountered. Paul's relationships fell into several categories. By studying Paul's relationships, we can find that his ministry relationships will fall into the same categories.

Paul had friends. I use the word *friend* not as it is used so frequently today. In the day of social media "friends," I am afraid we have lost the real meaning of the word. A friend is not someone who "likes" a post but one whose character and deeds reflect the truest definition. *Webster's 1828 Dictionary* defines *friend* as "One who is attached to another by affection; one who entertains for

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another sentiments of esteem, respect, and affection, which leads him to desire his company, and to seek to promote his happiness and prosperity; opposed to foe and enemy." A friendship is based not only on affection but also on respect. A friend is one who is concerned with our happiness. A friend is someone who does not abandon us when we are at our worst. So, no, we do not have thousands of friends on Facebook, and those "followers" with whom we pander on Twitter are not friends. Sadly, we live in a society and even serve in the ministry with many who want friends but fail to be a friend.

Paul was a friend to his friends. His letters expressed the fact that he remembered his friends and cared about their welfare. Paul was honest with his friends even when they needed to be rebuked. Paul's friendships were mutually beneficial. Paul benefited from the faithfulness of his friends as they benefited from his faithful friendship as well.

Paul's friends were important to him. They played a vital role in his life and ministry. I marvel at how Paul speaks of his friends with great warmth and affection. In Romans 16 alone, he speaks of more than thirty friends by name. Each friend of Paul played an important role in his life and ministry.

Paul's friends encouraged him. Imagine the life that Paul lived. Few Christians were persecuted as much as he was. Paul's friends encouraged him, and he allowed them to do so. When we serve in the ministry, we need friends who encourage us. Likewise, we also need to encourage our friends.

Paul's friends comforted him. Paul speaks of the comfort brought to him by many of his friends. Some of them were especially comforting to the man of God. Titus, in particular, comforted Paul. *For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled*

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on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; (II Corinthians 7:5-6) When we are going through a difficult time, friends can be a great comfort. We too should strive to be a comfort to our friends.

Paul's friends supported him. Paul's friends met his needs. They provided material as well as financial support. The Christians in Philippi supported Paul with gifts. *For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God. (Philippians 4:16-18)* Paul was gracious in receiving their gifts for their sakes more than his own.

Paul's friends ministered to him. Epaphroditus ministered not only to Paul's needs but also to his wants. *Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants. (Philippians 2:25)* Knowing this blesses me. Many times, I feel guilty when my church ministers not only to my needs but also to my wants. I am glad that Paul rejoiced when his friends went above and beyond for him. He did not ask nor pressure his friends to do such a thing, but he accepted it graciously.

Paul's friends interceded for him. Time and time again, a friend of Paul would deliver a message to a co-laborer or to a church. His friends were willing to be messengers for the purpose of interceding on his behalf.

Paul's friends labored with him. Paul worked with people who were his friends, and his friends were those who worked with him.

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Paul's friends brought joy to him. Paul enjoyed and appreciated time with his friends. *Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company.* (Romans 15:24) The ministry is a balance of social and solace. Those of us in the ministry must understand that alone time with God is vital, but fellowship with our ministry companions is crucial as well.

Paul took a personal interest in his friends. I am fascinated at how much Paul knew about the personal lives of his friends. It would seem that he made a point to know them more than just in a casual manner. Paul writes that Epaenetus was the first fruits of Achaia unto Christ; Erastus was the city steward at Corinth; Luke was a physician; Lydia was a seller of purple; and Tertius was the one Paul used to pen his letter to the Romans. Paul cared about his friends enough to have more than just a working relationship with them.

If the great Apostle Paul needed friends in the ministry, then so do we. Friendship, in fact, is the ministry. Having godly friends, as well as being a godly friend, is an important and necessary part of our service for God.

Paul had followers. Every Christian leader has followers. These are those who agree with us; therefore, they follow us. They are going in the same direction as we are; we just happen to be in front. There are some, though, who only follow us when we are experiencing our greatest successes. Their following is less about direction and destination and more about wanting to be a part of something that is going well. Paul's ministry illustrates that followers will fall into two different categories.

Faithful followers are those who follow a person because they believe what he believes. They do not follow him because of his personality or success, nor because he

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is popular. Paul had faithful followers. They believed what he believed. They followed his faithfulness to Christ. They may not have ever been close to him personally, but they connected with him spiritually, and therefore, faithfully followed him as he followed the Lord.

Paul did not want people to follow him because he had an ego or was building a kingdom. Paul wanted people to follow him as he followed Christ. When Paul asked the people to follow him, he was simply offering himself as an example. This idea is lost on so many in the ministry today. Perhaps, this is why some discourage it. They have no intention of being an example. This action was not an act of pride, but an act of humility. Paul was willing to be an example to the people of how to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. He was allowing himself to be scrutinized.

Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you. (Philippians 4:9)

Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. (I Corinthians 11:1)

Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (Philippians 3:17)

Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me. (I Corinthians 4:16)

Fickle followers are those who follow a person for their own benefits. They follow because it is convenient or, more specifically, because it makes them feel good. The moment they stop feeling good, they stop following. The moment it is no longer convenient, they stop following. I think of Paul's words *...no man stood with me,...* when speaking of his appearance in court answering the charges against him. Surely, when some saw the price to pay for following, they left the work. The Lord Jesus Christ had His share of fickle followers. From the rich young ruler

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to those who heard the “hard” truths, Jesus taught that many fled when posed with a deeper commitment. As was true with our Lord, it was certainly true with Paul.

Paul had forsakers. Every Christian leader who has followers will have forsakers also. They will forsake us because the road gets bumpy or because there is a price to pay that they did not anticipate or are unwilling to pay. We cannot serve God faithfully without encountering some who will forsake the cause. I have been in the ministry now for decades, and I have seen people not just forsake ministry companions but forsake their faith altogether. It is a bitter pill to swallow to think that some with whom we serve in the ministry today will forsake us in the future. Sometimes, they forsake because of fear; and other times, they forsake because of the flesh. Many forsook Paul throughout his ministry. Most of these forsook him out of fear; however, Demas forsook him out of greed. *For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica;...* (II Timothy 4:10) There are many examples in the Bible of those forsaking because of fear and those forsaking because of sin.

Paul had foes. Followers can become enemies of the one they had followed. Many times, these enemies are the worst kind of enemies. Occasionally, the Apostle Paul seemed to be harsh toward his enemies. It was Paul who instructed us on how to treat our enemies. While Paul was not afraid to tell others of his foes, he did so not to hurt them but in order to protect others who might fall prey to them. Paul was not vindictive as to seek to hurt his enemies. He set a good example for us as to how we should behave when we encounter foes in the ministry. Yes, we should absolutely warn others of enemies who are hindering the cause of Christ, yet we should show grace and mercy when they mistreat us. Paul teaches two aspects of how to deal with our enemies.

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First, we must deal with our foes personally.

Sometimes, the rebuke will seem harsh. We must be reminded that preaching the Gospel is the goal, and we need not coddle the enemies of the cause of Christ. Paul always spoke honestly about his foes. He was not hateful, nor was he trying to hurt these people. However, Paul was straightforward in exposing these adversaries. (*For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.*) (Philippians 3:18-19)

Second, we must deal with our foes spiritually.

No matter how badly they treat us, it is our responsibility to show grace and mercy to our enemies. *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.* (II Timothy 3:12-17)

Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather

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give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:14-21)

Paul had fellow workers. A Christian leader needs co-laborers in the ministry. Though Paul is often highlighted in his ministry, he mentions many others who ministered with him.

These co-laborers were all different. Some were young and some were old. There were men and women and Jews and Gentiles. The fact is, God used each of them in a specific way. Paul did not expect them to be or need them to be the same. God has made every one of us to be unique and with a designed purpose. These co-laborers of the early church remind us in today's church that God will use each of us, no matter how unlikely, to His purpose if we make ourselves available for the ministry.

These co-laborers were selfless. There is no use for ego in the ministry, and there is no eternal value in advancing our own agendas. Paul's co-laborers not only sacrificed for God but also sacrificed for one another. The standard has been set for selflessness by those who labored in the early church. Some opened their homes for the church. Others sold their goods for the advancement of the church. Then there were those who gave their lives for the work of God. Passing out the occasional church invite or giving our pocket change to missions does not meet the standard that has been set by these selfless individuals.

These co-laborers labored. This statement might seem redundant, but the point needs to be made that the ministry is work. Those on whom Paul depended were serious minded about the advancement of the cause of Christ, and their work reflected it. While I am certainly

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for getting an education in the ministry, a diploma never built a work for God. The willingness to put in long days and the investment of sweat and blood has built many works for God. Lazy Christians are a hindrance to the work. Paul accomplished much because of those who labored alongside him. God is capable of using ordinary people who miraculously have been saved. However, they must be willing to labor.

Paul was seldom alone. He was not an isolationist or a soloist. Paul worked well with others and understood that more got done together than separately. Paul had the unique ability to make others comfortable in the ministry with him. Likewise, Paul had the ability to be comfortable with others in the ministry.

And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me. (Colossians 4:11)

Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: (Romans 16:3)

Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. (Romans 16:9)

Timotheus my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you. (Romans 16:21)

Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellowhelper concerning you: or our brethren be enquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ. (II Corinthians 8:23)

Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants. (Philippians 2:25)

Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer, (Philemon 1:1)

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Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers. (Philemon 1:24)

For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. (I Corinthians 3:9)

We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth. (III John 1:8)

And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith: (I Thessalonians 3:2)

Some of Paul's fellow workers even went to jail or prison with him. *Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you... (Colossians 4:10)* Silas also went to prison with Paul. *And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. (Acts 16:25)*

There are many lessons to learn from Paul's encounters with others while serving our Lord. My prayer is that we learn not only from the doctrine found in Paul's letters but also from the relationships he had with his companions. This book is a result of a fascinating study of those who labored with Paul for Christ. The following chapters give insight into the lives of Paul's companions.