



Take the Lead Devotional



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Take the Lead

Reflections on Leadership from I & II Timothy

Some people want to excuse themselves from discussions of leadership because they are much more comfortable seeing themselves as a follower. While we might be wired more to be a follower for many situations, it doesn't change the fact that everyone at some point, in some place, has to step up and be a leader. If you are a parent, or part of a group that is starting to head in the wrong direction, your leadership is needed. If you are among friends where inappropriate things are being shared or debasing humor is being used, it is time to take the lead, whether it is at work or on the playground. And sometimes for things to move forward in any setting, someone has to step up and say, "Follow me." Our inclination to be followers does not give us a pass. Sometimes we have to step up.

But here is the thing: You don't want to wait until the moment is upon you to start experimenting with what it means to lead. While you can't prepare yourself for every situation, you can prepare your character to be ready. That is the purpose of this devotional...the preparation of character for the times in which we need to take the lead.

It may come as a comfort to find out that the Bible texts we are going to be using come from a letter in the Bible that was written to an insecure young man who probably saw himself as a follower, not a leader. I and II Timothy are full of the teaching from the Apostle Paul to prepare Timothy for the moments in which people were going to depend upon him. Over the next few weeks we'll examine five anchors in preparation. We think you will find that these principles will help you be a better parent, friend, co-worker, and follower of Christ. Take the time to ground yourself in leadership training.

Week 1: Take the Lead I Timothy 1:12-17
Remember Who You Are

Lots of people try to hide from their past, afraid that it will undercut the present and rob them of influence. But to be a Christ-like leader, we are asked to do just the opposite. As Paul tries to encourage young Timothy, he doesn't just put his best side forward. He rehearses where he came from and shares what he is probably most embarrassed about. In doing so, he is able to get Timothy to pay attention and not be intimidated. The question this week is what part has God played in your life to this point, regardless of how proud you are of it?

1. Read all of I Timothy 1. What are the themes you see?
2. What is the net effect of Paul's story of ignorance and wrong-headedness? What does it reflect about God?
3. How does this approach by Paul parallel what he wrote in II Corinthians 12:9?
4. How does the experience of Paul's conversion from *what he once was* provide power and focus for what he is trying to do now? What about you?

5. If Timothy was insecure and young, what do you suppose Paul might be encouraging him to draw upon out of his own upbringing? (see II Timothy 1:5-7)

6. Why is a “sense of who you are” necessary for the task of leadership? What is the downside of not being sure?

7. What were going to be the demands placed upon Timothy (who would eventually become the bishop of Ephesus)?

8. As you think through your own story, what experiences do you draw upon for strength? What weaknesses or failures in your own life have allowed the power of God to come through?

9. Who are the people in your life who count upon you to lead? What is it they see in you that makes them want to trust you?



5. What are some of the things that praying for people forces you to do? How does it affect your feelings, your appreciation, your anger, or your empathy?

6. How does praying for all people take us out of the prejudice (including political) that we sometimes find ourselves in?

7. How does praying for everyone prepare you to receive God's leading?

8. How does praying for everyone align us and our mission with God's purposes?

9. What are some leadership situations you are currently in? Have you been praying for all involved? What about your extended family? What about your fellow church members? What about the politicians from the other side of the aisle?



5. What is your current mindset about your finances and possessions?

6. How is vs. 10 misquoted the most? How does that differ from what it really means? Is this specific to rich or poor? Both?

7. How does Paul's teaching parallel that of Jesus in Matthew 6:25-34?

8. How does a sense of contentment and a healthy understanding of stewardship provide some foundation for being a leader? What does it help you avoid? What does it help you do? How does it shape your goals?

9. As you read vs. 17-21, how does your own life stack up? What adjustments do you need to make to bring your life into alignment with this scripture?



Week 4: Take the Lead II Timothy 1:1-14
White Hot Faith

There are a lot of people running around thinking of themselves as second-class Christians. Because they don't have a dramatic story of conversion, they live almost apologetically, afraid to step forward because their story doesn't seem to carry much weight. While it is true that most of the stories in the New Testament are about first time conversions (Christianity was new), there was one person whose story most resembles that of people who grew up in the faith...Timothy's. This week we will look at the key instruction Paul gives Timothy so that he doesn't see his faith story as a liability.

1. Read all of II Timothy, chapter 1. What are the themes that are included?
2. What is Timothy's religious heritage? Where does he fall in the Christian lineage? Is this like yours?
3. If Timothy had grown up in a Christian home, what was the purpose of the laying on of hands? What role did that play?
4. The actual translation of vs. 6 is "Keep at white heat..." What do you think Paul means by that?

5. If God didn't give us a spirit of fear and timidity, what kind of spirit did God give us? (vs. 7)

6. As you look at the rest of this chapter, how does Paul's focus and passion reflect what he is encouraging Timothy to do? How does Paul keep his sense of passion even though he is imprisoned at Ephesus?

7. How do you tell your own faith story? By recounting the churches you attended or by your relationship with God at various points? If you grew up in the Church, was there a time in your life when you can say you began to "own" your faith? If not, what would that take?

8. How do you think Paul meant for Timothy to "keep his faith at white heat?" What was he to do?

9. What are the steps you take to keep your faith at the white heat level? What is your current state? What role do Bible study and prayer and community play in your efforts?



Week 5: Take the Lead II Timothy 2:8-15
Dealing with Resistance

In the ideal world, our willingness to step up and lead would be met with gratefulness, appreciation, and admiration. But in the real world, there is nearly always some resistance to our efforts, no matter how noble. Sometimes it is from misunderstanding. Sometimes it is because other people have different agendas. And sometimes the resistance is simply evil. When that happens, our leadership becomes even more crucial because people “take their lead” from our demeanor, our willingness to suffer, and our conviction about following the will of God. Paul didn’t want Timothy to be naïve and unprepared for the resistance that was to come.

1. Read all of chapter 2. What are the themes that are included?
2. Why does Paul try to anchor Timothy in “remembering Jesus Christ?”
3. Why does Paul ask Timothy to remember not only that Paul is in chains at the moment but WHY he is in chains? What effect would that have?
4. In what ways are vs. 11-13 a helpful slogan or mantra for the faithful?

5. In what ways do disputes or quarreling, even about silly stuff, amount to resistance to the mission of the church?

6. In what ways does “keeping your way blameless” help you focus on the mission? (see vs. 15, 16, 21, 22)

7. What do you believe are the least effective ways of dealing with conflict? What kinds of choices make you exactly like those who might oppose the faith?

8. What role does persistence and refusal to give up play in being a good leader?

9. A modern term that is used about good leadership is “non-anxious presence.” What does that mean? How does this match with Paul’s teaching?

10. What resistance are you facing right now?
Are you ready to take the lead?



Next Steps

1. How has taking a look at your past helped you move forward in the last 6 weeks?
2. What impact has reading Paul's letter to Timothy had on you? How will your life be different having read these books?
4. What is one area of prayer that has changed because of this study?
5. How are you going to practice contentment?
6. If you haven't lately, spend some time writing out your faith story. What do you notice?
7. How will your interaction with others change after studying these letters to Timothy?