



Reflecting On A New Connection To The Body

Tuesday, February 19, 2008

Using Your Profession To Accomplish The Mission

In Pastor Harrell's message on Sunday, he took us to the Scripture to show us the importance of being "connected" with our brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ. Among many other things, we learned that God never intended for any of us to function in His Body "alone," or "disconnected" from the other members of the Body. We were designed by God to function with others in...

The fellowship of worship
The fellowship of ministry
The fellowship of the gospel, and
The fellowship of suffering

Interestingly enough, as Paul concludes his letter to the Church at Colossae, the Holy Spirit inspires him to give us a little glimpse of what it actually looks like to live with that vital "fellowship" and "connection" with others in the Body. In this final passage, Colossians 4:7-18, it's as if Paul includes a "snapshot" of the eight people who were with him in Rome as this letter was being written. The people that Paul mentions are those with whom he had entered into...

The fellowship of worship
The fellowship of ministry
The fellowship of the gospel, and
The fellowship of suffering

We have learned some incredible things from this passage, because under the "snapshot" of each of these members of his ministry team, he provides a very brief, but very telling description of them. We've already looked at six of these team members in verses 7-13. And then, in verse 14, Paul lists another man with whom he was very much "connected" in the Body. Paul says,

"Luke, the beloved physician...greet[s] you."

Obviously, by Paul's description, Luke was a medical doctor. In fact, he was Paul's physician. As you follow Paul on his first missionary journey, you find that he was sick just about the entire time. So, when he was about to embark on his second missionary journey, the Holy Spirit prompted him to include Luke on his team. You say, "Well, how do you know that?" Well, back in Acts 16, God helps us to make the connection.

As you are probably aware, Luke was the human author of the Book of Acts. And, as you make your way through this Book, you find that Luke writes in the third person. A great case in point is what you see in Acts 16...

And as THEY went through the cities, THEY delivered them the decrees to keep...(Acts 16:4)

Now when THEY had gone...(Acts 16:6)

After THEY were come to Mysia, THEY tried to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered THEM not. (Acts 16:7)

And THEY passing by Mysia came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; there stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us. (Acts 16:8-9)

And you can see how Luke repeatedly writes in the third person. But, watch what happens in the very next verse. Luke says,

And after HE (Paul) had seen the vision, immediately WE (Now, don't breeze over that! Not "THEY," but "WE"!) endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called US for to preach the gospel unto them (Acts 16:10).

And as you can see, it was at this point in the Book of Acts that Luke got connected with Paul's missionary team. And the thing I want you to notice in Colossians 4:14 from how Paul gives the "caption" under Luke's "photograph," as it were, is that though Luke served in a key capacity on Paul's missionary team, he never lost his identity as a physician. And that's a key lesson I think we can learn from Luke. I like to think of Luke as "THE MAN GOD USED THROUGH HIS PROFESSION."

And the reason I think that is so important, is that I have witnessed through the past 29 years of ministry, the tendency on the part of so many people to think that if they really want to get serious about God, or if they really want to be used to the max, they need to quit their job and become a pastor or a missionary. And what usually comes with that, is the thinking that if you're not a quote-unquote "full-time Christian worker," you're really just a second rate servant of the Lord.

In fact, years ago I think that most pastors and youth pastors determined how "successful" they were by how many people they could send off to Bible College. And, there was almost a mentality in a lot of churches, that if you love God, you'll go to Bible College and train for the ministry. And the sad thing is, a lot of young people who really did love God, went off to Bible College, only to find out that the ministry as a vocation wasn't what was in their heart. What they didn't realize, however, is the reason it wasn't in their heart wasn't because they were "backslidden," "unwilling," or "uncommitted." It wasn't in their heart for the very simple reason that God hadn't put it there! And rather than leaving Bible College, and experiencing victory because they were going to go do what God intended for them to do in the first place, many of those people are sitting around in churches feeling defeated, and "less than," because they didn't go on to do what somebody else did, or because they didn't do what somebody else thought they should do—and as a result, they've never really allowed God to use them through the profession He wanted them to have!

Listen folks, do you realize that God can use you just as mightily in the job he gave you, as He uses me in the job He gave me? I'm quite certain that there are a good number of folks who are reading this study today, who need to stop second guessing yourself about "the ministry," and start using your profession, or your skill "AS MINISTRY!" Get off the "guilt-trip," and all of that "not measuring up to everybody else's expectations" (even your own!), and get busy allowing God to use you where you are and what He has you doing. God can use you where He's placed you to reach people that Pastor Harrell and I could never reach! So, for God's glory's sake—reach them!

You see, Luke learned that God wanted to use him through the vehicle of his profession to “preach” the gospel. In the verse that I called to your attention a few minutes ago in Acts 16:10, Luke said that when Paul had seen the vision, “we” knew that God had called “us” to preach the gospel unto them. Luke wasn’t a “preacher” in the same way that Paul was a “preacher,” but Luke understood that all of us who know the Lord have been “put in trust with gospel” (1 Thess. 2:4), and have been called to “preach” it to those who have never heard (Rom. 10:14). Luke was a guy who never lost his identity as a doctor, but he was used of God in a mighty way to “preach” the gospel. And not only that, he went on to write 52 chapters of the New Testament—the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts! And you know why God gave him that unbelievable privilege? Because he took the job God gave him, and he gave it back to God to use for the Kingdom!

And, I ask you today—where has God placed you? How does God want to use your profession, or your job, to reach people for the Lord Jesus Christ? For whatever reason today, I feel that there are quite a few “Lukes” out there, and God wants you to know that He wants to use you right where you are for His Kingdom! And, He’ll use you in ways you never thought possible, if you’ll just be faithful to do what He’s called you to do, and that is, **USE YOUR JOB TO ACCOMPLISH THE MISSION THAT HE HAS GIVEN TO ALL OF US!** “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the church[es]” (Rev. 3:22).

And then, there’s one other guy that Paul lists in Colossians 4:14, that was with him in Rome, and “connected” to him as a part of his ministry team. Verse 14 says...

“And Demas, greet(s) you.”

Now, you’ll remember that all the way through this final section of Colossians, with each person that Paul has mentioned, he includes something about them. We’ve been able to glean some incredibly significant things by Paul’s identification of each one. But notice that when he comes to Demas, Paul simply mentions his name. I think in Demas’ case, we learn some incredibly significant things by what Paul **DOESN’T SAY!** We might could say, “**DEMAS IS THE MAN WHO IS HEADED FOR PROBLEMS.**”

I believe the reason Paul doesn’t say anything about Demas, is the simple fact that he didn’t have anything to say. I mean, Demas was just “there.” There was no real “testimony” to share about him, because at this point in his life, he didn’t have one.

Now, let’s put the brakes on here, and let’s just talk for a second. I ask you to genuinely allow the Spirit of God to search your heart. Let’s say that the Apostle Paul had spent the last 12 months at Northwest Bible Church, and he was going to write a letter to some church in another city, and just like he does here in Colossians, as he comes to the end of his letter, he’s going to give a little blurb about the people with him here in our church. What do you think Paul would say about you when he got to your name? Would he just list your name—that you were “here”? Is there anything that he could say with your name?

Now listen, I’m grinnin’ that you are “here”! Really, I am! But, oh, I hope that God has been stirring in your heart over the last week, about giving you “A New Connection To The Body.” Because you see, Demas was just “there” with Paul in Colossians 4:14. But listen, through his “disconnect,” it was a tell-tale sign he was headed for problems!

You say, “How do you know that?” Well, the next time you see Demas’ name show up in the New Testament, (and “coincidentally” enough, the next time you see it, it’s listed right along with Luke’s name again) is in 2 Timothy 4:10. And Paul says...

“For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica...only Luke is with me.” (2 Tim. 4:10-11a)

Old Luke stuck it out, man! Demas was no longer even "there." And you know, as I think about it, probably back when Paul was writing Colossians 4:14 when Demas was at least still "there," chances are good that he hadn't "fallen in love" with the world yet. At that point, he was probably just "flirting" with it. You see, many times, certainly not all, a "disconnect" from the body, is a symptom of the problem, and not the problem itself. And many times, certainly not all, when it is the problem, it's just a matter of time before other symptoms manifest themselves.

And listen, I'm not saying that to pass judgment on anybody. Not at all! I'm saying that because I think Colossians 4:14 connected with 2 Timothy 4:10, lets us know that there are tell-tale signs when our lives are headed for disaster, and I don't want anyone in our Fellowship to end up there! I'm saying to you, folks, having "A New Connection To The Body" isn't just a nice thing...it's VITAL!

May God help all of us to BE and STAY "connected"!

If you have questions and/or comments regarding today's study, please direct correspondence to mtrotter@nw bible.org