

40 Days Post #2:  
**Passion for the Long Haul**  
(2 Timothy 2:1-7)

November 20, 2005

Well, today we come to the end of a fall emphasis on the Bible—40 days of the Bible. We've been all over the map on this. We've read the New Testament in 40 days. We had the Walk Thru the Bible Old Testament seminar.

We started by asking, what's so important about the Bible. We looked at what the Bible itself is all about. We saw the big patterns of the Bible—creation, fall, redemption, the Abraham-Christ connection, and so forth.

And then we moved into application mode. Now this is so very critical. In a book I'm recommending to everyone, the book *The Church of Irresistible Influence*, Pastor Robert Lewis of Fellowship Bible Church of Little Rock, says,

*Brilliant ideas spill from thousands of pulpits every Sunday, destined for a quick, premature death. Why? Because only structure, well-thought-out structure, which effectively unleashes people with purpose, can get results.<sup>1</sup>*

We have to build a bridge, on this last Sunday of the 40 days study, from *knowledge of God's word to real-life, on-going application of God's word.*

Before we go any farther, let's hear what God's word itself says on the matter from 2 Timothy 2:1-7:

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<sup>1</sup> Page 76.

*1You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2**And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.** 3Endure hardship with us like a good **soldier** of Christ Jesus. 4No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs--he wants to please his commanding officer. 5Similarly, if anyone competes as an **athlete**, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules. 6The hardworking **farmer** should be the first to receive a share of the crops. 7Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.*

In 1972, as a High School freshman, I went from Ohio to Dallas Texas to attend a huge event that Campus Crusade sponsored called Explo '72. Man, were stoked when we came back. We were going to change the world.

What I didn't know then was that passion without a channel is simply an explosion.

But somebody who did was Paul and Janet Stone. They were a couple in the church that always seemed to take an interest in the teens. When we got back from Texas, I got involved in a Bible study at their home.

I didn't realize it at the time, but the Stones were doing 2 Timothy 2:2—to me!

That is, they were taking the time to open their lives and their homes to a small group of High School students to *disciple* or *mentor* us. And they did OK. I think there were eight or so of us in the group. Two of us became pastors. And one married a pastor. That is, she married *me*. So they did OK.

They shaped not only our lives, but also the lives of literally thousands of people that we would touch and transfer truth to. When I think about it, it's pretty amazing.

Passing it on is what I want to emphasize today. There are three big points I want to make:

1. There is incredible power in passing on the lifestyle Jesus taught in the context of a personal relationship
2. There are significant barriers to passing on that lifestyle, but they can be overcome
3. There is world-changing power as disciples not only apply their word of God to their lives, but to their community

**There is incredible power in passing on the lifestyle Jesus taught in the context of a personal relationship**

Jesus never ever said, "Win converts." What He always said was "Make disciples." There's a world of difference between the two.

A few months ago, I was involved in the ordination of a Vietnamese man named Andrew. He was raised as a Buddhist. Funny how we joke about "Christmas and Easter" Christians. Buddhists in Vietnam joke about Tet Buddhists. Tet is the Vietnamese New Year, and even the most indifferent Buddhists go to the temple at Tet.

For him, religion was a matter of mere adherence. He wasn't a Christian or a Hindu or an atheist, so he must be a Buddhist! (Does this sound strangely familiar?)

Then he met a Christian—a real bona fide, Bible-reading, Jesus-sharing, people-loving Christian—a Jesus-follower, as I like to say. Before he had become a Christian, this man had been a criminal. He'd robbed and he'd

beaten people, and he'd even murdered a man.

But now he was a changed man. Andrew was so impressed that within days he also decided to follow Jesus. The former bandit became his mentor. They read the Bible together and his mentor explained as much as he knew to him. Together they ministered to the underground church in Vietnam until Andrew came to the US. And together they were persecuted. By a real miracle, Andrew was able to apply for asylum here, and now he pastors a Vietnamese congregation in Orange County.

Josh McDowell says, "The Biblical pattern for passing on spiritual truth is always in the context of a personal relationship." The Stones did that for me; the former bandit did that for Andrew.

That's exactly the pattern that Paul speaks of in 2 Timothy 2:2:

***And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.***

Paul is saying, "Tim, remember all those late night Bible studies we did? We'd sit around till the wee hours, you and Barnabas and Titus and the others and share all about Jesus, and what it means to follow Him. Tim, buddy, do the same thing. Gather good people around you and pump them full of Biblical truth. And then equip them to do the same thing I did and you're doing, and we'll fill the earth with Xerox copies of the Jesus-changed life."

Let me tell you a story. In 1858, a Sunday school teacher in Chicago led a named D.L. Moody to Christ. Not only that, but also that man mentored little Dwight and helped him

become a fully devoted follower of Jesus. Moody went on to be one of the greatest evangelists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

He led a man named Fred Meyer to Christ. Fred also had a mentor and he grew in his faith and eventually Fred became a pastor in North Carolina.

One day Fred was preaching at a YMCA. That's right, back then YMCA still stood for Young Men's Christian Association, and rallies for evangelism there wasn't uncommon. That night a man named Wilbur Chapman became a believer. And Wilbur got into a discipleship group and grew in his faith.

Wilbur later hired a former baseball player named Billy Sunday to do a revival in North Carolina. That went so well they invited another evangelist of the time, Mordecai Ham.

At that second revival, a youth gangly North Carolina boy named William gave his life to Christ. That's William Franklin Graham—whose name is on my doctoral diploma—Billy Graham.

And it all traces back to a Sunday School teacher back in 1858 in Chicago. **There is incredible power in passing on the lifestyle Jesus taught in the context of a personal relationship.**

Second,

**There are significant barriers to passing on that lifestyle, but they can be overcome**

Paul expresses the nature of the barriers in what he says in 2 Timothy 2:3-7:

*<sup>3</sup>Endure hardship with us like a good **soldier** of Christ Jesus. <sup>4</sup>No one serving as a soldier*

*gets involved in civilian affairs--he wants to please his commanding officer. <sup>5</sup>Similarly, if anyone competes as an **athlete**, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules. <sup>6</sup>The hardworking **farmer** should be the first to receive a share of the crops. <sup>7</sup>Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.*

A **solider** has to be a person of discipline and focus. An **athlete** also has to work hard and compete by the rules. A **farmer** above all else has to be patient, and has to stick to it no matter what the weather is, and no matter how tired he is.

I am convinced that we are called to be people who pass on Biblical truth in the context of personal relationships, who will persevere no matter what, and will stick to it, because Jesus' way is not just to spray paint a little cross on people, or to get them to wear a WWJD bracelet, but to become fully formed, reproducing Jesus-followers, who love God above all else and who love people as much as they love themselves.

The solider, the athlete and the farmer all face obstacles. They are parallel to the obstacles we face if we as well want to be used by God to pass on Biblical truth.

Think about it: the soldier's primary enemy is **on the outside**. There's a guy with a roadside bomb that wants to get him. We also have external forces that are barriers to mentoring others. Number one on that list is **time**. We can't figure out where we're supposed to get the time. But an even bigger external enemy is **the devil**. He wants you to admire God from a distance—far enough from God and His word that you're "easy pickings."

The athlete's primary enemy is **on the inside**. He has to get up every morning and train like mad, eat the right food, and keep motivated. We're the same way. We hear that we're called to make disciples, but man, that sounds like a lot of work. There's the time problem again, and also well you know there's a lot of people who are so much smarter; let's leave it to the experts.

And what about the **farmer**? His primary enemy is just plain old **circumstance**. Will it rain enough? At the right time? Will prices be high enough to make a profit? I've known some farmers over the years, and let me tell you, they have to have nerves of steel and a little bit of a Vegas gambler to make it.

And does **circumstance** effect us as well—those of us who want to do the 2 Timothy 2:2 thing as well, to pass on what we're learned to others, who then can do the same. Sure it does. But haven't you noticed that circumstances tend to change when prayer is applied? I sure have.

The barriers can be overcome. They are overcome with discipline, prayer and persistence. And these all come to us from the Holy Spirit. You see, the Spirit, who inspired the word, delights in the spread of the word. Isaiah 55:10-11 says,

*10As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,  
11so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.*

And Habakkuk 2:14 says,

*For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.*

That's the vision; while the barriers are real, they can be overcome. They must be.

Third,

**There is world-changing power, as disciples not only apply their word of God to their lives, but to their community**

Being hearers only is dangerous. James 1:22 reminds us, "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."

Remember what Robert Lewis said about brilliant ideas that die for lack of structure. What would happen, I wonder, if all our small groups adopted a mission beyond ourselves, taking the principles of God's word into a real live ministry situation?

What if a class said, "We're going to mentor engaged couples and newlyweds." And what if another said, "We're going to offer an English language development Bible study." And other said, "We're going to help people in the community with budgeting and financial planning." And another said, "We're going to have a prayer ministry supporting area schools and teachers." And another said, "We're going to fix cars for single moms." Get the idea?

When I want to wash the car, I get out a bucket, the hose, soap and a couple of big sponges. After I hose it off, in go the sponges to soak up the sudsy water. Then I squeeze out the sponge on the car to clean it.

But what if the sponge said to me, "Whoa! Hey I'll get all dirty on that hunk of junk you're

driving. My mission is just to *soak in* all the suds I can."

If that happened, well, first of all, I could sell tickets to see a talking sponge! But second, I'd tell the sponge how it's supposed to be:

"You dumb sponge, you exist to get squeezed out and to clean things up, not just to soak up suds! You're useless to me if all you want to do is soak up suds. You're just a big fat sponge."

And if we think that it's all about us, then we're just big fat sponges that God's can't use. There we are—able to recite the Minor Prophets in order, but not changing our world—which is what we are designed for.

As we wrap up today, I want to give you an opportunity to respond to this message in a tangible way. There is an insert in the worship folder today about the next step God may be calling you to. Some of you today need to get going right away as a mentor, a One-to-One Trainer. Some of you just need some training, but with that you could be doing One-to-One discipleship. By one to one, that could be couple to couple or person to a couple as well.

We have a bunch of people who could benefit from that One to One relationship. And we're not talking about forever, but for a set period of between 6 and 12 meetings, as you and the person you're working with determine.

And now maybe you're thinking *this is what I need—to be on the receiving end!* Great! Use the Sponge Sheet to tell us that.

This may be the most exciting and fulfilling thing you've ever done. But remember: the goal is always to reproduce it for someone else, like Paul says here: take what you

learned from me, teach it to someone else,  
who can teach it to someone else, and so on.

So take a minute to mark that sheet. This is  
the REAL DEAL folks.

And remember, the goal isn't to get spiritually  
full. It's to get full and then to be squeezed  
out in the lives of others. What a great day to  
pass it on. Amen?

END  
PRAYER