

## LIFE: Making a Difference

*Making a Difference*

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**Bible Text:** 2 Timothy 2:1-5

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So today as we turn to 2 Timothy you and I who all along have been Timothy are about to be challenged to be Paul. And that name that you thought of, whatever name, whoever that was, they will now be the Timothy for the rest of this message.

In 2 Timothy chapter two beginning in verse one it says:

Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.<sup>1</sup>

Now the key component in this passage is verse 2, but we are going to work all of the verses that are around it, because what I want to share with you today is simply this. That name that you have on your heart or mind, that individual that you are going to reach out to this week and invite them to come to church with you next week, I want to talk about what is the strategy that you need to implement and what are the struggles that you are going to come up against. So whoever's name that you have on your heart and your mind I want you to filter the entire context of this message to that individual's life and their context as they are integral in your life.

The first part is this. What is the strategy or the strategies that we are to implement? It comes directly from verse 2.

“And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”<sup>2</sup>

The first strategy that we need to understand for reaching out to somebody this week is that the strategy is plural, not singular. It is plural.

Now if you have Matthew chapter 28 available I want you to turn there. This is a passage of Scripture where Jesus Christ has gone to the cross. He has risen from the dead. According to the book of Acts chapter one he has taught the apostles for many, many days. He is about to ascend on high. He is about to turn over the, “the keys of the church” to them and say, “Ok, guys, everything I have taught you, go and do.”

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Timothy 2:1-5.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Timothy 2:2.

I want you to notice—and we typically call this passage the Great Commission. This is in verse 18 of Matthew 28. It says:

All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.<sup>3</sup>

Now that passage, along with 2 Timothy 2 is very plural. It is plural on two accounts. Number one, it is plural on the person who will receive the message. It said, “Go into all nations,” plural, not one specific group, not one specific demographic. It said that all people, all nations, all backgrounds, all colors are to hear the message of Jesus Christ. We get that part. The hard part is the plural on our end. Jesus said, “Go ye.” Now do you know what ye means? Ye means you and me. He did not say, “Ok, Bartholomew, we have noticed over the last three years as we have hung out together you tend to be the best at talking to people one on one, you are to go and share with everybody and we re going to be behind you all the way, brother.” He didn’t even say, “You know, Peter, James and John, you guys are the most vocal. So why don’t you go out and tell everybody about me and the rest of the guys are just going to hang out and make sure everything is good.” No. He says, “All of you, ye, you, all of you. All of you are to go forth into all the nations.”

Now we turn back to 2 Timothy 2:2. The apostle Paul says, “The things you have heard of me, you turn around and tell somebody else.”

Timothy who was raised by Paul in the faith, I can imagine how many times in his life said, “Well, Paul that is your job. I mean, after all, you are better at this than I am. So I want you to talk to people.”

And he says, “You don’t understand. There is a day coming in just a few days I won’t be here anymore. And if you don’t go share with somebody, how are they ever going to know and how will they share with somebody else?”

The first strategy that we have got to understand about the application this week is that it is not just for the person sitting next to you. It is not, well, I know so and so. They are really vocal and they don’t have any problem talking to people. This is one of those applications that is really for them, no, not for me.

No. According to the Word of God this week’s application is for every single one of us. If we are believers in Jesus Christ then we have been commissioned according to Matthew 28 to go into all nations and to share the gospel. So the first thing is it is plural.

The second thing we need to know is that the strategy is personal. Notice in verse 2 he said people who would be faithful men, you go talk to them.

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<sup>3</sup> Matthew 28:18-20.

Now I want you to notice that he did not say, “Go and create a special environment to invite them to.” And I will address the service next week in just a moment. But I want to do a little interactive survey. I want to ask a question and when I say interact, you are going to have to raise your hand in just a moment. So don’t panic when I ask you to. The question is simply this. I want you to think back to the time and the place where you as a believer in Jesus Christ became a believer in Jesus Christ, the time in which you were saved, the moment in which you realized I am a sinner in need of saving. You cried out to Jesus to save you, ok? Think about it. Those of you who are believers, think back to that time in your life. If you made that decision while in a church service like this, raise your hand.

If you will see the hands that are up around there, don’t be scared. Come on, Baptists, be Pentecostal. Get it up. It is less than half. Keep your hands up.

Ok, here we go. Keep your hands up. If you look around, most people were not saved during an actual church event. My wife wasn’t saved in a church service. I wasn’t saved in a church service. None of our children was saved in a church service. But, yes, there are those that are.

Now keep your hands up, those of you who were saved in a church service. Keep them up. Be proud. It is ok to be Pentecostal today. You are good. Ok. You can put two hands up. I don’t care. Here we go. If you had your hand and up and your attending that church service was on your free volition and nobody invited you to go, keep your hand up. There are a few hands up. You go ahead and put them down. But I want you to notice that the overwhelming majority of people were not saved in a worship service and if they were, it is because somebody invited them to go with them.

So you may be thinking to yourself. Well, Jeff, then why would this week’s challenge or application be to invite somebody to actually come to the service, because you just said that most people won’t actually get saved in the service? But maybe next week will be their first introduction to the gospel. Maybe next week is that time where kind of that barrier, we are talking about spiritual things, can finally be addressed.

I had someone come and find me in a guest reception between services and I want to use her story because she shared that two years ago the last thing she ever thought she would be doing on a Sunday morning would be coming to church, much less enjoying it. And it is because somebody invited her to come that she came. And so I just want you to know that the overwhelming majority of people who will come to know Jesus as their Savior will do so because you personally reached out to them. You have a relationship with them. They trust you and will say, “Sure, I would love to go with you. Why not? This will be a good idea.”

So when we talk about strategy, when Paul tells Timothy, “You share this with faithful men and others also,” it is plural. It involves every one of us. The second thing is it is very personal.

But the third aspect of the strategy is this. It is perpetual. Let me share with you what I mean by the term perpetual. Perpetual means it continues to go.

Notice in verse 2 the chain of command here. There is Paul who has shared with Timothy who is to share with faithful men, who are to share with others also. There is a continuation and a perpetualness of the message of Jesus Christ. Let me show you in a picture what this looks like.

The picture I am about to show you comes from the nation of India. This is a group of men and you will see in this picture that the man who is at the very forefront—those who are listening on the radio or on the internet, just imagine a group of men who are standing like bowling pins, ok? The guy who is at the very front has the name Paul in front of him. This is based on 2 Timothy 2:2, not based on their actual names, ok? The second group of people behind him had the name Timothy. The group behind them had the name faithful men and the group behind them had the name others. Do you notice that as you go further back it actually becomes more populated?

Here is the thing that I want you to understand about this passage. I am grateful for this young man who is the Paul in this situation, because what you can see there is that every one of these people came to know Jesus as their Savior because he was faithful in reaching somebody. But I want you to look at the second line, the group of men who have the name of Timothy in front of them. I want you to realize that in this picture they are the Paul to the men behind them. Do you see how that works? And the people who have the term faithful men are the Paul to the people behind them. In other words, as the Timothy you understand that your knowing Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior is because somebody shared that message with you. That person in this verse would be Paul. You would be Timothy.

Now the challenge, the strategy that is being laid out in 2 Timothy 2 is the apostle Paul saying, “Ok, Timothy, this has been great, but now it is time for you to become Paul. It is now time for you to take what you possess and share it with somebody else.”

And a Paul then has a Timothy, then has faithful men and then has the others. This is the strategy that is laid out in verse two of 2 Timothy 2 that if we are going to reach the world, if we are going to make a difference in people’s lives, if we, as we have talked the last couple of weeks, if the Church of Jesus Christ is the only entity that actually has the message that can change the world, how do we do this? What is the strategy? It is you taking what you have in Jesus Christ and sharing it with somebody else. That is the strategy.

In other words, this week, you are being challenged to identify that person. You, as Paul, are being challenged to identify who is a Timothy in my life that I need to invite, that I need to talk with, that I need to reach out to. That is the strategy.

So what are the struggles? What are the things that are going to keep you from actually implementing this in your life? You show up next Sunday morning and have spoken to nobody. You have reached out to nobody. Let me share with you how this week can become you doing nothing with the challenge.

Back to 2 Timothy 2. I want you to look at the verses that are around verse two.

“Thou, therefore, my son...”<sup>4</sup>

This is verse one.

“...be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”<sup>5</sup>

Verse three.

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries...<sup>6</sup>

Do you notice the language that is being used? It is military in nature. And what you get the idea of is that the strategy of reaching out to somebody, sharing with them, inviting them just to come to church is couched in the context of an actual struggle.

Now Ephesians chapter 6 says we do not strive against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers and rulers in high places. And we are going to address that passage more specifically in just a moment, but what it is saying is that the actual implementation of this week’s challenge is going to be a struggle. It is not going to be easy. I don’t want you to walk away after the service saying, “This is no big deal. I will make a few phone calls. I will post some things on Facebook. Got this one covered.”

No. In fact, according to the verses around verse 2 this is warfare. This is a struggle. You have got to be strong. You have got to strive. This is a difficult application or challenge. So I want to share with you the struggles that are listed in these verses, the struggles that you are going to face, that you are going to come up against this week.

Now remember the name. Remember the person that you have on your heart, the person that you have written down. This is the person that I am going to reach out to over the next week. I am going to invite them to come to church.

Struggle number 1, there will be the struggle of temptation. You, my friend, are going to be tempted. Now I want you to understand that temptation is not to fall into deep gross

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<sup>4</sup> 2 Timothy 2:1.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> 2 Timothy 2:3-5.

sin, ok? It could happen. Let me share with you from verse 4 the temptation that is going to happen this week in your life.

“No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life.”<sup>7</sup>

Let me share with you what is going to happen over the course of the next couple of days and that could occur so that when next Sunday shows up you go, “Oh, my, I hadn't even thought about that person all week long.”

Are you ready? It is a four letter word, starts with L, ends with E, it is called life. Life happens. And the best intentions and the greatest aspirations are often skewed because life happens and things come up and we get busy and we get distracted. And the next thing we realize is that which we really meant to do never happens.

Now they say that confession is good for the soul so I want to share with you how this has happened in my life in the last week. I am going to show you a picture of an item that has been in my house for about a week. This is a laundry basket and inside of this laundry basket you will see that there is a craft type project. Now I will let you guess who in my house would be coming up with a craft project. There are five people and four of them are male. Yes, this is Traci's project, ok? She has this project. I don't even know what the end result is going to be. All I know is that there are items with metal in them that need to be cut. You will notice that she has got everything in a basket, and a variety of tools which could be used to cut the metal.

About a week ago she said, “Honey, can you help me with something?”

I said, “Sure, what do you need?”

She said, “I need your help cutting these items. They are made of metal. My hands are not strong enough. Would you be so kind to do so?”

What do you think I said? “Sure. I don't mind. I love you. This is no big deal. It won't take long. This is easy.”

That picture was taken last night. I still haven't done it. I will get it done tonight. I promise you, honey, I promise. But I want you to hear something very clearly. My not getting that project done for Traci has nothing to do with how much I do or do not love her. I did not fall into deep dark sin and that is why I didn't cut the craft project.

Let me tell you why it didn't happen. Are you ready? Here it is. Work, soccer, sleep, eating. I can not tell you how many times I walked past that laundry basket and said, “I will get to it tomorrow.”

Do you know what happens about tomorrow? It always shows up and you say, “I will do it tomorrow.”

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<sup>7</sup> 2 Timothy 2:4.

You know, the irony of this story is I came to Traci yesterday afternoon and I said, “Honey, I have got this illustration tomorrow. I want to talk about the things in life that you mean to do and you don’t do and you just put them off.” And it is not because you don’t want to do them, it is just life happens. I thought she would struggle coming up with something. She had a list of things and I chose only one.

The reason I share that with you, these projects have nothing to do with my love for her I want you to know if you have an undying passion and love for Jesus Christ, if you get caught up in the affairs of life this week and don’t talk to somebody, it is not because you don’t love Jesus. It is because you love Jesus enough that the enemy has allowed this stuff called life to come up. And I am going to tell you what is going to happen. Opportunities, adventures. There will be all kinds of things that creep up, problems, good things, indifferent things and all of the sudden you look up and say, “Wow, I never made the phone call. I never sent the text. I never made the visit.”

See, the first struggle that is going to come up is this thing in verse 4. It is called the affairs of this life. That is why I am loving the parable of the sower, Mark 4:19. There is a seed which has been sown. It grows up beautifully. It is bearing fruit and becomes unfruitful. In other words, it was really going well and then things went bad. What happened? Verse 19 of Mark 4 says it fell to the cares of this world. It just got so caught up in life it missed the whole objective.

So the first struggle is on your side of the equation. Life can keep up with you. So I want you to pay attention to that one. But here is the second struggle. I want you to notice that it says here in verse 3, “Endure hardness as a strong soldier.” Verse 4, “Be a soldier.”

There is this idea, this picture of a military struggle or a battle. And so the second struggle you are going to come up against is not just the temptation in your life, but I am going to use a word in quotes. It is the “territories” that you are going to run up against. Let me share with you what I mean, Ephesians 6. For our fight is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers. And it talks about that our battle is spiritual. It is against Satan and his minions and all the demons, all those entities. If you study the Bible in context, it makes it very clear that the enemy has what we call territories. That means there is that which is his, that which is in his possession. That is why Jesus in John chapter 10 talking to a bunch of religious guys said, “You want to know who your dad is? Your spiritual dad is the devil himself. He has ownership over you. He has rights over you and you are doing nothing but serving him.

Listen to me clearly. Those names that you thought of, that person who is burning on your heart or whose name you wrote down, you realize if they do not believe in Jesus Christ, if they are unchurched, you realize that they are in the devil’s territory.

What that means is that if you will resist the temptations and the affairs of this life, if you will begin to reach out to them, the person who is in possession of the territory, the enemy himself, the devil himself is not going to be thrilled with your presence. In fact,

what he is going to do is give this person all the excuses they have ever come up with, all the doubts they have ever considered and all the questions they have always wanted to have answered. I will give you a prediction and a promise. There are some of you who have a friend, a neighbor, a coworker whom you have this incredibly wonderful relationship with. Life is really good and you are thinking, Wow. This is a fish that is going to be easy to catch. And you are going to throw it out and say, “Hey, I got an idea. Next week, would you like to go to church with me?”

I will tell you where it came from. It is because the enemy, Satan himself, knows that you are about to come into his territory.

You know, one of the best examples from our own nation’s history took place about 20 years ago. There was a military exercise that did not go as smooth as everybody would have desired it to go. And in the process over in the Middle East there was a famous piece of equipment that crashed on the other side of the enemy’s lines. The book and the subsequent movie that came out were entitled *Black Hawk Down*. If you have seen that movie or you have read that book about that equipment and that information and those individuals who were American citizens that were on the other side you saw that, they were on the other territory, they were across enemy lines. Do you notice that when the American reconnaissance, when the United States military came up and said, “Hey, we would like that piece of equipment back,” the other side didn’t say “Sure, take it. It was yours to begin with.” They didn’t say, “You know what? That is a really good idea. It is really messing up the landscape. Please come and get it.”

No. As soon as they realized that they were in possession of something that rightfully belonged to the other side, they did everything they could to make sure it was not taken back. That is exactly what Satan desires in people’s lives. Why? Because if they are lost, if they do not know Jesus, they are his, his children, his possession. The last thing he wants is you getting in their lives and in their darkness and showing them some light. So be prepared to face some opposition. Be prepared for them to not be as thrilled with life as you are used to them being. And be prepared to get no for an answer.

Which leads to the third struggle. It is our temptation. It is the territories that we will be battling against and then there is going to be this tension. The tension is going to be between triumph and tragedy, meaning the possibility that they actually will engage and will come or the tragedy that there is absolute resistance at their core. And I will promise you, whether you act this afternoon or wait to the very last moment, there is going to be this tension. Very, very few of you will go and invite someone to church this week and they will say, “Sure, greatest idea I have ever heard.” You will hear excuses. I don’t know. What about this? I have got to talk to so and so. I don’t know what we have planned. Or how about this? The night before, after they have already said yes, they will come up with something so that they can say no.

This tension happens between either success or failure, between triumph or tragedy. And so the struggle that you are going to come up against isn’t just your own life. It is not just the territories of those whom you reach out to, but this persistent in struggling. Notice

what it says in here. It talks about being strong. It talks about striving, not giving up and not saying, “Well, I tried once. That is good enough.”

I think that to kind of tie all this together it would be beneficial for you to hear my story in light of this passage. I know some of you are thinking, well, Jeff, you have been here almost five years. We have heard your story so many times, so many ways. How could it be any different?

Let me share with you from this perspective. I was blessed to grow up in a home that we would call a Christian home. I had a mom and a dad that were both believers in Jesus Christ. Not only did they live it out at home and where they worked, but they took me to church all the time. And so from just a young perspective of life I heard about Jesus at home, heard about Jesus at church, had Sunday school teachers, had friends, my parents’ friends. There was just an environment of Christianity so it would not shock you that just before I was eight years of age I came to a personal understanding that I was a sinner in need of saving. Jesus was the answer. Ok? That doesn’t surprise you and you have probably heard that story at some time before. But, you know, in the process of being raised, not just physically, but spiritually there are some people who just have a greater influence on your life than others. Naturally just because of their relationship with you. And though my dad loves me dearly and though he had a very active part of my life both physically and spiritually, my mom, as with most people, had a greater impact on my life than my dad, Sunday school teachers or anybody else. Why? I spent the most time with her. She was the most nurturing. You know about that relationship.

Well, if were to take this dynamic back a generation and, my mom was a believer. My mom became a believer in Jesus Christ when she was a young girl. She was raised in a city called Duncan, Oklahoma. And there she was one night, their family had decided to pack a picnic basket and go down to the local city park for that evening there was going to be a special guest in town. His name was Homer Martinez. Homer Martinez is a Hispanic or a Latino evangelist and he was probably about 35, 40 years of age and gregarious and he was very entertaining. And that night while sitting on a blanket at a picnic at a public park my mother as a little girl heard the saving message of Jesus Christ and realized she was a sinner in need of saving.

So let’s back it up a generation. This man who encountered my mom in a very personal way in Duncan, Oklahoma, originally comes from San Antonio, Texas. And when he was young he grew up in a family that was very large and very religious, but had nothing to do with Jesus whatsoever. Down the street from their house was what we call a gospel mission. It was a place where they helped people with clothes and with food and various items of physical need. But every night they would have a worship service. They weren’t a part of this. It was nothing that was a part of their life, until one day his oldest brother—Homer was the youngest of all the children—his oldest sibling, his oldest brother by the name of Angel Martinez went down to the gospel mission, heard the message of Jesus Christ and was saved.

Now what happened there is that he was no longer welcomed back home. Angel was now

the, “black sheep” of the family. They didn't want any of his Jesus. They just had a little bit of religion in them. So he actually lived at the gospel mission. For five and a half to six months that is where he slept, where he ate, and where he lived life. About five and a half months after he was saved, he was 13 years of age, every night they had somebody come and preach. It was on a Sunday night. And most of the pastors in the area were going to be at the church that they pastored and the man who ran the gospel mission didn't have anybody to preach. He looked at this 13 year old child and said, “Well, you have been saved long enough. Why don't you get up and tell people how to be saved?”

According to his story, Angel Martinez, the oldest brother in the family, memorized a gospel tract and then shared it with the congregation. In the congregation that night was his youngest brother Homer who understood what it meant to be lost and need to be found, understood what it meant to be saved by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Jeff Meyers, Linda Meyers, Homer Martinez, Angel Martinez. If you wanted to get very literal with 2 Timothy 2:2 there was a Paul, Angel. There was a Timothy, Homer. There was a faithful man or woman, Linda and there were others, me. How did it start? How did that chain of sharing the gospel actually begin in all of our lives?

I mentioned it was a large family, religious in nature, but having nothing to do with Jesus. There was a woman that lived down the street and every week came and knocked on their door and invited them to church. Every week his mother said no and every week his dad said no. And they said, “We are not coming there. We are not going.”

But finally one day they decided to go. See, you as a Paul sharing with a Timothy, you going and reaching out to somebody, you actually going and engaging with somebody this week, listen. You might get told no a dozen times. But that person has the potential of being an Angel Martinez. That person has the potential of being the Paul and the Timothy in that story. And you will struggle with the business of your life. You will struggle with the resistance from the other side, but the greatest struggle will be the struggle just to say, “Not worth it. I quit. I tried.”

And according to that illustration, according to the Word of God, the apostle Paul is saying, “Do not quit. Hang in there. Keep asking. Keep reaching, because one day they might show up.” And, listen. Maybe next week will be that time.