

# Good Anxiety

Passionate Servanthood Part 3  
Philippians 2:19-21 6-5-2016

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Summary: The emphasis on character and the language used shows that the words about Timothy and Epaphroditus are intended as an example for us to follow. Only Timothy was qualified to go, because only he had proper anxiety for the spiritual interests of the Philippians. Anxiety is meant to motivate us to take action, but it goes bad when it is about things outside of our area of responsibility, or when earthly anxieties eclipse spiritual ones, so that we focus on the work rather than on Christ. Timothy's anxiety for the Philippians' spiritual interests came from his passion for Christ's interests.

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**Philippians 2:19 I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. 20 I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. 21 For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. 22 But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. 23 I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. 24 And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.**

## Introduction

### God's Design: Learn through Imitation

Most of what we learn, we learn through imitation. That is how you learned to talk, and to walk, and most everything else in life. Coaches don't usually teach players technique in a classroom. They are out there on the field or on the court. They explain the principle, then they say, "Here, let me show you..." A teenager says, "I want independence. I don't want to just accept everything mom and dad say anymore. I want to start thinking for myself and being my own person!" But most of the time what that ends up meaning is instead of copying mom and dad, now he is going to start copying his friends. He wants to be unique and different, so he copies someone he sees as unique and different. We can't help it – God designed us this way. God designed us to learn by imitation.

**1 Corinthians 4:16 Therefore I urge you to imitate me.**

**Hebrews 6:12 We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.**

## Hebrews 13:7 Remember your leaders ... and imitate their faith.

### 1 Corinthians 11:1 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

And we see that here in Philippians.

### Philippians 3:17 Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you.

Sometimes the question, “What would Jesus do?” is hard to answer. In some situations it’s obvious, but there are other times where we say, “I’m not sure exactly what Jesus would do here because there is no written record of Jesus ever being in a situation like this.” And when that happens, sometimes it really helps to just think of some really godly, spiritually mature person that you know who does especially well in these kinds of situations and ask, “What would he do if he were here?”

That is God’s design, and I say all that because of where we are in our study through the book of Philippians. If you are new here, we are working our way through the book, and we are in the second half of chapter 2 where Paul gives us three real-life examples of what he has been teaching.

He has been teaching all about unity in the church, and not being selfish – considering others’ interests ahead of our own. And now that he has explained it, he is like the coach on the field: “Here, let me show you,” and he gives these three examples. Some people think this section is just Paul getting the Philippians up to speed on his travel plans, and that’s all it is. I don’t buy that, because most of the words are not about his plans, but about these men’s character. If I asked Josiah to deliver a package to you, I wouldn’t call you up and say, “I’m sending Josiah over with the package, and I have no one else like him. He takes a genuine interest in your affairs. Everyone else is concerned only about their own affairs but you know Josiah has proved himself. Honor men like him...” There is a reason why Paul is going into all that detail about their character.

Plus, the wording Paul uses is the same wording he used earlier when he was teaching us the principle about unity and not being selfish.

Look back at verse 4.

### Philippians 2:4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Then look how he describes Timothy in verse 20: Here’s a real literal translation: **I have no one like him,<sup>1</sup> who genuinely has anxiety over your interests. 21 for everyone seeks his own interests and not the interests of Jesus Christ.** So Paul commands us to be a certain way, and then he says, “Let me tell you about Timothy...” and then describes how Timothy does that exact thing. So this is more than a report about travel plans.<sup>2</sup> These are examples laid out for us to follow.

So let’s see if we can get the hang of unity and selflessness from watching these real-life examples. Paul started with his own example in verses 16-18. We saw his passion – running and laboring and

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<sup>1</sup> Literally, “I have no one same-souled.” This is another example of Paul using language that would call to mind his earlier exhortations about unity. The first time he called them to be unified was in 1:27. And the word he uses there for unity is literally “one-souled.” *μιά ψυχή* - *mia* (one) *psuche* (soul). Then he uses a similar word in 2:2 where he calls them to be of one Spirit. The word there is literally “together-souled.” *σὺμψυχοι* - *sum* (together) *psuche* (soul). That is Paul’s way of referring to unity. Now, here in verse 20 he says this: The reason I am sending Timothy and not someone else is because, literally, “I have no one who is same-souled. *ἰσόψυχον* - *iso* (same) *psuche* (soul). This could mean “I have no one else who is like Timothy” or “I have no one, besides Timothy, who is like me.” Commentators are split on which is meant, but either way, the point is that Timothy is the only qualified candidate. My point here is simply to show that the similarity in language points back to the commands about unity. It is a different prefix each time, but you can see the similarity in the language. “I want you to be one-souled, here’s how you can become together-souled, and I’m sending Timothy, because he is same-souled.”

<sup>2</sup> It was normal, in a situation like this, if you send a messenger with a letter, to have a section in the letter commending the guy who is delivering the message. “Listen to this guy, because he’s a good guy.” Ephaphroditus is carrying this letter, so we might expect some words about him. But before talking about him, Paul commends Timothy, who isn’t even going yet. Why not wait until Timothy goes, and then write about him? Because the purpose isn’t commendation; it’s to give them some godly examples to follow. So he talks about Timothy’s character.

pouring himself out in ministry. So the first example we could call, “Paul, the passionate drink offering.” Now let’s look at the second example: Timothy.

## **Timothy Will Create the Good News**

At first, it does kind of sound like it’s just travel info.

**19 I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you.**

Epaphroditus is going to show up in Philippi with this letter - Timothy won’t be there, but Paul says, “I do hope to send Timothy soon as well. I can’t send him quite yet, but I hope to send him soon so that I also may be cheered when Timothy comes back to me with good news about you.” So Paul wants a report. And the reason he wants the report is so that he can be cheered up by the good news. Now here is my question – if Paul already knows that news is going to be good, why does he need a report? If he already knows it’s going to be, “Paul, they are doing great,” rather than, “They are going down the tubes” – if he already knows that, what does he need a report for?

And if the purpose is just to get some news, why does the messenger have to have such exemplary character – so that there is only one person in all of Rome qualified for the task? How hard is it to deliver some news? Why would it require someone who is totally selfless and who cares about others interests ahead of his own and who is a devoted disciple who has proved himself in ministry over the years?

I think the implication is that the reason it has to be Timothy, and the reason he is confident Timothy will come back with good news is because Timothy’s job is to see to it that it’s good news. Timothy’s assignment is, “Go there, work with them on the disunity and selfishness problem, then, when it’s fixed, come back and tell me the good news.”

## **Mission to the Mature**

So Paul wants to send Timothy as a missionary – to Philippi, one of the most spiritually mature, rock-solid churches in all of Asia Minor. Normally we only send missionaries for the sake of winning the lost, or to help a struggling church. How often do we send missionaries to minister to established, healthy, mature churches? Paul not only saw that as worthwhile, but it was so worthwhile that he was willing to give up his number one man for that purpose.

Did Paul care about reaching the lost? Absolutely – no one cared more. One time he even said he would be willing to go to hell, if, by doing so, the lost might be saved.<sup>3</sup> No one cared about winning the lost more than Paul, and yet when you read his writings, you see that his greatest concern was the health of the churches, and the spiritual well-being of the Christians in those churches. Because Paul understood that the only hope the lost have is strong churches.

I point that out because the church growth movement of our day has almost completely missed this. I was just listening to one of them the other day, and he said that in his church, whenever it’s a choice between doing something that would edify the saints or something that would reach the lost, they always prefer the latter. He said it is always more important to do what you can to reach new people, even if you have to sacrifice ministry to the saints. And this was his reasoning: he said, “The people who are saved are already as saved as Billy Graham.” In other words, they are as saved as they are ever going to be, so we don’t want to spend our efforts on ministry to them. That wasn’t Paul’s attitude. Paul understood the parable of the soils. He understood that some people believe for a while, but then when they run into suffering or persecution or they get enticed by money or possessions, or they get caught up in the anxieties of this life, the Word of God can get choked out of their life and they fall away. And so Paul labored and strived and poured himself out and wrote epistles and sent missionaries and put his best people on the job of seeing to it that that didn’t happen. The idea that just because someone is born again

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<sup>3</sup> Ro.9:1-3.

means they are as saved as they are ever going to be is a catastrophic distortion of what the Bible teaches. Just in this chapter we have already seen that saved people need to work their own salvation (v.12). Salvation is something that is to continually progress from the time of conversion until you die. Paul was saved, and yet in chapter 3 he talks about how he was striving to take hold of that for which Christ took hold of him. And he emphasizes the fact that he has not yet taken hold of it but was pressing on toward the goal so that somehow he might attain to the resurrection from the dead.

**Hebrews 9:28 so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.**

We are not currently as saved as we will ever be. We are waiting for him to return and bring the rest of our salvation to us. The race isn't over just because you crossed the starting line. That's what some of these church growth gurus seem to think – "Oh, he's converted. He already crossed the starting line, so we don't need to worry about him." Maybe he is truly converted, but he still has the whole race ahead of him. The race is over when you cross the *finish* line. And the greatest emphasis in the New Testament is on the importance of helping one another make it to the finish line. In 2 Corinthians 11:28 Paul describes his greatest burden – eclipsing even all the beatings and whippings and dangers and torture – the heaviest load of all for him. You might expect him to say it was his concern for the lost. That was a huge concern for him, but an even greater weight was his concern for all the churches.

Now, please don't hear me saying that reaching the lost is unimportant. The great commission is that we make disciples of all nations, and that starts with baptizing them, which is a reference to conversion. And I am deeply concerned that here at Agape we have not done enough to reach the lost, and I am very eager to correct that. But one thing we must never do is try to correct it by neglecting ministry to those who are already converted. If we get to the point where we start neglecting ministry to the saved just because we want to gather more lost people into a church building, then we aren't doing what's best for the saved or the lost.

So, Paul is concerned for the spiritual growth and progress of the Philippian church, dealing with the disunity problem and selfishness problem was a major priority for him, he definitely plans on going there to work on that if they release him from prison, but in the meantime, he wants to send someone to get started on it, and that someone has to be Timothy, because he is the only one qualified.

"Wow, what were the qualifications that were so high that there's only one man in Rome that meets them?"

What are the qualifications? The first one might surprise you. If you were in charge of making up a qualification list for a missionary to go take care of some really important task like this, what sort of things would you put on the list? You know what the number one thing on Paul's list was? Anxiety.

## **The Qualification of Anxiety**

The literal translation of verse 20 is this:

**20 I have no one else like him, who will have genuine anxiety...**

Have you ever seen that on a ministry application?

"The successful candidate must have major anxiety."

Timothy's anxiety was what made him qualified. Anxiety over what?

**20 I have no one else like him, who will have genuine anxiety for your interests.**

He didn't worry about his finances. He wasn't stressed out about his health or his house or any of that. Those things didn't get him worked up, and yet he had major anxiety.

"Over what?"

Over the spiritual wellbeing of the people he was ministering to. He didn't lie awake at night stressing about high taxes or government corruption, but he would lie awake at night thinking about George, who hasn't been in church for a month now and seems to be drifting from the Lord. He would get

a knot in his stomach thinking about that new book that some of his people were reading that taught all kinds of heresy. He was preoccupied with the fact that there seemed to be more and more gossip happening in the church, and there was grumbling and complaining. His blood pressure went up when he heard about some ladies who were willing to meet for a Bible study, but there was no one available to teach it.

That is the kind of man Timothy was, and it was that anxiety that made him the only qualified candidate. Paul said, “I don’t care how much education you have, how many years of ministry experience you have, how many books you’ve written – if you aren’t touched emotionally by the spiritual needs of the people, if you don’t feel it in the pit of your stomach when people don’t get what they need for spiritual growth, you’re disqualified.”

## Passion for People

This is just another result of passion. Last week we saw that Paul’s passion in ministry drove him to hard work – running and laboring and pouring himself out. That is one thing passion will do. Another thing it will do is give you an ulcer. Maybe not that far, but it will put your emotions through the ringer in your concern about people’s spiritual needs.

## Bad Anxiety

So that’s what made Timothy qualified – his anxiety. But that’s a problem - because what are we going to do with Philippians 4:6?

**Do not be anxious about anything.**

No anxiety allowed. And that’s the same Greek word as in 2:20. Paul says, “Timothy is the only one qualified because he’s the only one with enough anxiety,” then he turns right around in chapter 4 and forbids anxiety. What happened? When Paul got to chapter 4 did he forget that he used to be pro-anxiety just two chapters earlier? No, he is obviously talking about two different kinds of anxiety. Jesus made that distinction in the parable of the soils when he warned us about what he called **the anxieties of this life**.

**Mark 4:19 ...the anxieties of this life ... come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.**

There are anxieties of this life – temporal things, like money and cars and clothes and education and marriage, and there are anxieties about eternal things. The anxieties of this life have a purpose. God gave us the emotion of anxiety to help us take care of things we need to take care of. You get too close to the edge of a cliff – God designed you to start feeling anxiety that forces you back to a safe spot. You are tempted to procrastinate with doing your taxes, but then when the deadline approaches, you feel the pressure that finally motivates you to do them. A student gets to thinking about the possibility of failing the test tomorrow, and so he feels pressure that motivates him to study. When an anxiety motivates you to take action in an area where you need to take action, that’s good. When it’s an area that is outside of your control, or it’s not your area of responsibility, then there is no point in having anxiety over those things, since the purpose of anxiety is to get you to take action.

**Matthew 6:24 Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life ... 27 Who of you by worrying can add a single cubit to his stature?**

That word translated **worry** is this same word – anxiety. If worrying about the consequences of not getting your work done motivates you to go ahead and get your work done, that’s great. But what good does it do to have anxiety about how tall you are? That’s outside of your control. If something is outside of your control, or outside of your area of responsibility, then just don’t worry about it. Instead, trust God with it. And even the things that are your responsibility – if you feel enough pressure to get you to take action, that’s great. But if that pressure starts taking over – it starts dominating your emotions and giving

you ulcers or panic attacks or takes away the peace in your heart, then it's counterproductive. That is the kind of thing that is being forbidden in Philippians 4 and Matthew 6 where we are told not to have anxiety or worry. If it is motivating you to take care of your responsibilities, that's great. But if it is taking away your peace and joy, then it has crossed the line into sinful lack of trust in God.

That is one way anxiety can go bad. But there is also another way. This is the account of when Jesus was invited over to Martha's house, and it's a great example of the anxieties of this life becoming more important than eternal things.

**Luke 10:38 As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. 39 She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. 40 But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" 41 "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, 42 but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."**

Was it Martha's responsibility to be a good hostess and take care of the food and make all the preparations? Yes. That was her responsibility. And it was within her power to act. So what made this a bad kind of anxiety then? Look what Jesus says.

**Luke 10:42 but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.**

What was Mary doing?

**Luke 10:39 ...Mary, sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said.**

Mary was focused on Jesus. She was listening to him, paying attention to him, having interactions with him. And Jesus says, "That's the only thing that matters." It was fine for Martha to feel pressure about having Jesus over that motivated her to make preparations. But when that pressure became so big in her heart that it made her more concerned about the food and the dishes than about fellowship and interaction with Jesus Christ, that's where it went bad.

All ministry should be done for the purpose of drawing near to Christ. If you do your ministry for the purpose of having fellowship with Christ as you join at his side in doing his work, or if you do it for the purpose of expressing love to him by serving his people, then you are like Mary. But if you lose sight of all that and you are just focused on the earthly, temporal aspects of the work, you will be just like Martha. First you'll start to resent the work, like the priests in Malachi who were serving the Lord and saying, "What a burden!" Then self-pity will take over, and then you'll start to resent all the people around you who aren't helping you. And ultimately you will start to resent the Lord himself. And your peace and joy will be gone. You can tell when the anxieties of this life have taken over your heart and you're not doing your ministry to draw near to Christ, when your work in ministry becomes an irritation rather than a joy.

And the solution to that isn't to stop working. The solution to that is to do what Mary did – focus on Christ. Make all your working and resting and everything else an act of fellowship with Jesus Christ. The solution is to make sure that you are doing the work you are doing as a gesture of love to Christ. Spend time enjoying the fact that you can work side-by-side with Christ. Enjoy the fact that the power of the Holy Spirit is coursing through you when you use your spiritual gifts, and trust that Jesus Christ will take your efforts and do the same thing he did with the boy's lunch when he fed the 5000. It is impossible to have fellowship with Jesus Christ and not enjoy it. That is absolutely impossible. So when the work becomes oppressive and burdensome, it means you are slipping from fellowship with Christ and you need to turn your attention back to him.

## Ministry Anxiety

So, what about Timothy? Is he another Martha? He has all this anxiety - was it the bad kind or the good kind? Let's apply our two tests:

- 1) First, was it something he had no control over or something he didn't have any responsibility to take action in?

Was he stressing out over something that wasn't his area? No, in fact, let me show you something interesting in verse 20. The verb is actually in the future tense.

### **20 I have no one else like him, who will have genuine anxiety for your interests.**

He doesn't even have the anxiety yet. My guess is, since he is currently ministering in Rome, his heart is full of concern for the Romans. But Paul knows Timothy's heart enough to know that as soon as Timothy arrives in Philippi he will be become consumed with concern for the Philippians. So Timothy's anxiety passes the first test. What about the second one?

- 2) Eternal above the Temporal

Did Timothy have anxiety over earthly, temporal aspects of ministry – workers showing up late, someone interrupting his dinner, having a misprint in the bulletins, etc.? Or was his focus on Christ? Was he like Martha - all embroiled in the work without paying attention to Christ? Or was he doing it in fellowship with Christ? Look what it says:

### **20 I have no one else like him, who will have genuine anxiety for your interests.**

Ok, so whose interests is Timothy concerned about? The Philippians' – unlike everyone else.

### **21 For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of ... Jesus Christ.**

Do you see what Paul's doing there? Serving the interests of the Philippians and serving the interests of Jesus Christ are the same thing. Those two things are interchangeable. The reason Timothy was the only man Paul could send was because everyone else focused on their own interests rather than Christ's interests, but Timothy was different. He focused on Christ's interests, which means he was focused on the spiritual interests of the people he was serving. Serving the interests of Jesus Christ means doing what is in the best interests of the people Christ loves. So is Timothy's anxiety over the things of this life or over eternal, spiritual things? It was anxiety over eternal, spiritual things because he was serving the Philippians in order to serve Christ. There was one reason and one reason only why Timothy wanted to do that ministry. It wasn't because he liked travel, or Philippi was his favorite city, it wasn't because they had done something for him, it wasn't because he just liked people in general or just liked ministry in general. He was going to be consumed with their interests because he loved Jesus Christ, and he knew that Jesus Christ loved the Philippians. It was all for fellowship with Christ. Timothy was like Mary, not Martha.

And that is so important for us to see, because some of us might have walked out of last Sunday's sermon with a kind of Martha mentality.

“Man, now I feel guilty. I've got to scramble and get busy in ministry. But I'm so busy already, and I don't think I'm going to enjoy it, and I had problems in the past when I served in ministry, and what could I contribute that's worthwhile anyway, and what if I have to work with people I don't like, what if I fail, but I need to just force myself to do it anyway because it's the right thing to do...” All of that totally misses the point. The purpose of ministry is to draw near to Christ. To express your love for Jesus Christ by serving the people he loves – that is what ministry is about.

## Passion for Christ

You are not fit for ministry just because you are excited about the work. You are fit for ministry when you have a passion for people's spiritual needs *because* of your passion for Christ. Christ cares a lot about the spiritual wellbeing of his people, and you want to be close to his heart. We don't serve in

ministry to pay Jesus back for dying on the cross. We don't serve in ministry because we think God is mad at us, and maybe if we serve him then he will finally love us. We serve in ministry because Jesus Christ is doing something in his church, and we want to join by his side in that work so we can draw near to him. Some people say, "I'm sitting out of ministry right now because I don't feel very close to God." And they are waiting until they are close with God before they start serving. That's like saying, "I'm not going to spend time talking to my wife because I don't feel close to her. Once I feel close, then I'll start talking." That's not the way it works.

### **James 4:8 Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.**

You will never get closer to God by disobeying him. But it is very possible that if you serve him with an attitude that says, "Please accept this as a gesture of my love, Lord," that work done with that attitude will actually draw you nearer to him.

## **Christ's Interests**

So often we distance ourselves from Christ because we don't understand that the primary way to draw near to Christ is to show love to his people. Some people will say, "I don't have any problem serving Christ. My thing is, I'm just not into serving people. I love God. Jesus is awesome. But the people in the church – they are insensitive and prideful and selfish and rude and untrustworthy, they gossip, they stab you in the back – I just can't work with them. I'm happy to serve Jesus' interests, but not all those people's interests."

And they fail to see that Jesus' interests are that you serve the interests of the people he loves. Timothy was the only one who got that, and so he was the only one Paul could send.

## **Caring**

The reason this is the chief qualification is because no matter how much skill and training you have in ministry, if you don't care enough about the people's growth, you won't have the motivation to do whatever it takes to overcome obstacles. You will be like a college professor, who doesn't care how you do in his class. He's getting his paycheck - you can sink or swim. If you miss a class, don't expect a phone call from him – "Hey, let me tell you what you missed" – that's just not going to happen. That attitude might work in a university, but not in ministry. For ministry to be successful you need someone who cares enough to do whatever it takes. Like Paul with the Corinthians.

**1 Corinthians 9:19 Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. 20 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law ... to win those under the law. 21 To those not having the law I became like one not having the law ... 22 To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.**

Paul says, "I'll do whatever it takes to make sure they get it." When I first started out in ministry I preached because I love to preach. And very quickly I realized, that's not ministry – it's just talking. Ministry is when I see that the people aren't getting it, and I can't rest until I figure out a way to make sure they do get it. If they're not getting it because of the way I'm saying it, I need to say differently. If they're not getting it because of a problem in our relationship, then improve the relationship. If they're not getting it because of a distraction in the environment, I need to limit that distraction. If they're not getting it because of hardness in their heart, I need to get on my knees and beg God to soften their heart. Ministry is not like a professor who delivers a lecture just to get a paycheck. Ministry is like a parent, whose child is dying, who is heartbroken, and who will do absolutely everything he can possibly do to bring that child back to good health. Those are the people God uses – people who have anxiety over spiritual, eternal things. And that comes from a passion for people, which comes from a passion for Christ.



## Selfishness Kills Care

And all of us who are believers have that to some degree. The problem is it gets choked out by our own temporal anxieties – anxieties about things that aren't eternal. That's what Jesus was warning us about in the parable of the soils.

**Mark 4:18 Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; 19 but the anxieties of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.**

The anxieties of this life choke out anxieties about eternal things. Temporal things, like dishwashers and report cards and cell phones, become bigger in your heart than things like humility and patience and holiness and knowledge of God. So now I am not lying awake at night crying out to God for unity in the church, because I'm thinking about my mortgage. I am not all worked up about how to help a brother overcome discouragement because I'm thinking about whether LeBron James will outplay Steph Curry in the NBA finals. I haven't really thought much about how to increase the culture of encouragement at Agape because my garbage disposal is leaking down into the basement. You find yourself putting more thought into how to advance to the next level in your game than about how to advance the kingdom of God.

We know there were believers in Rome. At the end of the letter Paul sends greetings from all the saints in Rome. So we shouldn't take this to mean that everyone looks out *only* for his own interests and *not at all* for those of Christ. If that were the case, that would mean there were no Christians in Rome at all. By definition, a Christian is more concerned about Christ's affairs than his own. So these believers in Rome (like all Christians) were concerned primarily about the affairs of Christ over their own, but in this particular case their concern for their own affairs interfered with their devotion to Christ. And so when Paul brought up the idea of going to Philippi, "Now is a bad time for me career-wise." How about you?

"I can't afford it right now. I'm trying to get out of debt."

You?

"I don't think I'm up to that kind of journey – my knees are getting pretty bad."

"Don't look at me - I'm working on completing my education."

"Sorry Paul, but my kids are doing so well here – we don't want to uproot them."

"Timothy?"

"When do I leave? And what do you want done while I'm there? And when do you want me back?"

And when Timothy responded that way, it must have struck Paul – that attitude is exactly what the Philippians need to see. If they could just learn that kind of selfless humility, their selfishness problems would be solved.

## Conclusion

Think of the typical excuses we come up with for not serving in ministry.

- I don't have time.
- I'm not gifted – I don't really have anything to offer.
- I need to focus on my own family, not the church.
- I tried serving before and it didn't work out well.
- I'm afraid to sign up for ministry because I don't know what's going to happen in the near future, and I'm afraid I won't be able to follow through.
- I'm not ready.
- I don't think the timing is right just yet.

I could go through and try to debunk each one of those, but it wouldn't do any good, because the reason we come up with excuses not to serve is because we don't want to serve. And so if I debunk one excuse, another one will pop up in its place. There is one thing, though, that will erase all of our excuses: passion for the interests of Christ. It's when we say, "I love Jesus, and he said the number one way to

express love to him is to serve the people he loves, and the number one vehicle for doing that is the ministry of the church, so sign me up!”

“But Darrell – I really do have anxiety about people’s spiritual needs. I really do care. I have a loved one who is lost and my heart breaks in desiring their salvation. I know someone who is enslaved to some sin and I would give my right arm to see them break free. I care a lot; my problem is, it’s out of my control. If anxiety is for the purpose of getting you to take action, what good is this anxiety, because I can’t reach those people?”

You can’t by yourself, but the church can. The healthier the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is around the world, the more those kinds of problems are going to meet up with grace. And so there is never a spiritual problem that we shouldn’t worry about because we can’t do anything about it. We can always do something about it by playing our role in the church, which is the body of Christ. And there is no limit to the marvelous things Jesus Christ is both able and willing to accomplish through his body.

**Benediction: Acts 20:32 Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.**

### **Application Questions (James 1:25)**

- 1) Name one person who inspires you with their anxiety for eternal things. Describe what you’ve observed in that person.
- 2) What are your most compelling, spiritual anxieties?
- 3) What earthly anxieties most threaten to distract you from spiritual ones?
- 4) What spiritual gifts has God given you to use in service to his people?