

New Year 2024 Pt. 2

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, January 21, 2024

ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

KEY – Allow me to note the following elements before we dismiss the Children’s Church, Nursery and volunteers:

The 2023 ABM will be held today following service. A brief meal will be provided for all who plan on attending. All are welcome to attend. Parents with children are invited to observe and participate from the Comm. Room. Those who have not yet received their copy of the Annual Report should do so immediately after the service.

DELVING IN PT. 1

Thank you for joining us. Whether you are here in person or joining via the livestream you are most welcome! Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take notes as you like. We have much to cover in a rather short space of time.

NOTE 1 – We are in the midst of a series on the openings of the letters and/or epistles of the apostle Paul. I can think of no better way to begin 2024 than by considering the manner in which Paul began his writings!

NOTE 2 – Last week we noted that the introductions to his letters reveal Paul as a man who knew his identity. We noted that Paul understood himself as the following: **a)** servant; **b)** divinely-ordained apostle of Christ; **c)** member of the people of God; **d)** member of the household or family of God; **e)** co-laborer or worker; **f)** soldier in the army of the Lord; **g)** spiritual father (i.e., to individuals and bodies); and a **h)** prisoner of Christ.

Q. Do we know our identity in Christ Jesus?

Q1. Do we rightly see ourselves as His servants?

Q2. Do we see ourselves as those called and sent?

Q3. Do we see ourselves as members of His people?

Q4. Do we see ourselves as a members of His. family?

Q5. Do we operate as kingdom workers and soldiers?

Q6. Do we have sp. children who aspire to our ex?

Q7. Are we one willing to suffer as prisoners?

NOTE 3 – Let us continue this week with the theme that Paul knew his CIRCLE (i.e., family and friends in Christ).

KEY – Let us read through the following selections with such a theme in mind. Do we have volunteers to read?

1 Corinthians 1:1–3 (NIV, Emphasis Mine)

1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother **Sosthenes**, 2 To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours: 3 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 1:1–2 (Emphasis Mine)

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and **Timothy** our brother, To the church of God in Corinth, together with all his holy people throughout Achaia: 2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:1–2 (Emphasis Mine)

1 Paul and **Timothy**, servants of Christ Jesus, To all God’s holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: 2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1:1–2 (Emphasis Mine)

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and **Timothy** our brother, 2 To God’s holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ: Grace and peace to you from God our Father.

1 Thessalonians 1:1 (Emphasis Mine)

1 Paul, **Silas** and **Timothy**, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you.

2 Thessalonians 1:1–2 (Emphasis Mine)

1 Paul, **Silas** and **Timothy**, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: 2 Grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Timothy 1:1–2 (Emphasis Mine)

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope. 2 To **Timothy** my true son in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

2 Timothy 1:1–2 (Emphasis Mine)

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, in keeping with the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus, 2 To **Timothy**, my dear son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

Titus 1:1, 4 (Emphasis Mine)

1 Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to further the faith of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness . . . 4 To **Titus**, my true son in our common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

Philemon 1–3 (Emphasis Mine)

1 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and **Timothy** our brother, To **Philemon** our dear friend and fellow worker— 2 also to **Apphia** our sister and **Archippus** our fellow soldier—and to the church that meets in your home: 3 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Q. What do we see herein?

A. That 10 of the 13 epistles penned by Paul directly reference men and women who were in association w. him.

DELVING IN PT. 2

NOTE 1 – Even a casual review of such content reveals the mention of many figures: **a)** Sosthenes; **b)** Apphia; **c)** Archippus; **d)** Philemon; **e)** Silas; **f)** Titus; and **g)** Timothy. Though this might seem like a fair amount of associates, we have not begun to scratch the surface of individuals who appear in the life and ministry of Paul!

Q. Do you not believe me?

NOTE 2 – Let us take a moment to review one section of the Book of Romans (alone) which makes my point(s):

Romans 16:1–16, 21–23 (Emphasis Mine)

1 I commend to you our sister **Phoebe**, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae. 2 I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me.

3 Greet **Priscilla** and **Aquila**, my co-workers in Christ Jesus. 4 They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. 5 Greet also the church that meets at their house. Greet my dear friend **Epenetus**, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia.

6 Greet **Mary**, who worked very hard for you. 7 Greet **Andronicus** and **Junia**, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.

8 Greet **Ampliatius**, my dear friend in the Lord. 9 Greet **Urbanus**, our co-worker in Christ, and my dear friend **Stachys**. 10 Greet **Apelles**, whose fidelity to Christ has stood the test. Greet those who belong to the household of **Aristobulus**.

11 Greet **Herodion**, my fellow Jew. Greet those in the household of **Narcissus** who are in the Lord. 12 Greet **Tryphena** and **Tryphosa**, those women who work hard in the Lord. Greet my dear friend **Persis**, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord.

13 Greet **Rufus**, chosen in the Lord, and his **mother**, who has been a mother to me, too. 14 Greet **Asyncritus**, **Phlegon**, **Hermes**, **Patrobas**, **Hermas** and the other brothers and sisters with them. 15 Greet **Philologus**, **Julia**, **Nereus** and **his sister**, and **Olympas** and all the Lord's people who are with them.

16 Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings.

....

21 **Timothy**, my co-worker, sends his greetings to you, as do **Lucius**, **Jason** and **Sosipater**, my fellow Jews.

22 I, **Tertius**, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord.

23 **Gaius**, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, sends you his greetings. **Erastus**, who is the city's director of public works, and our brother **Quartus** send you their greetings.

KEY – This single text identifies some 30-plus figures in the life of Paul—and dozens more are noted elsewhere!

DELVING DEEPER (SPHERES)

When you look at the life of the apostle Paul, it becomes clear that he trafficked in three spheres of influence:

1) Paul Had Figures Who Poured Into Him

NOTE 1 – To begin, the apostle Paul had figures who poured into his life or met varying personal and sp. needs:

NOTE 2 – Such a theme is evidenced in the midst of Romans 16 (Rom. 16:13, Emphasis Mine): “13 Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his **mother**, who has **been a mother to me**, too.” This passage is full of mystery regarding this unnamed woman who had “been a mother” to Paul. In what way(s) you and I can only imagine:

- Q1. Had this motherly-figure offered Paul some special instruction or wisdom?**
- Q2. Had this motherly-figure encouraged Paul in his life/outworking of ministry?**
- Q3. Had this woman provided Paul with some form of ‘godly’ influence/example?**
- Q4. Had this woman offered Paul some tender affection/met a ‘deeply-felt’ need?**
- Q5. Had this unnamed motherly-figure labored in prayer on behalf of the apostle?**

NOTE 3 – Such a theme is evidenced in the midst of the Book of Philippians re: a man named Epaphroditus. The church at Philippi had heard of the imprisonment of Paul, so they sought to bless him with a care package (i.e., to be delivered by a messenger named Epaphroditus). In his fervor to serve the Lord by serving Paul, Epaphroditus became seriously ill and, in fact, almost died. God graciously restored Epaphroditus to health, and Paul sent his friend back home with the newly penned Book of Philippians. I celebrate that Paul allowed a figure like Epaphroditus to invest into him on behalf of the believers at Philippi.

Q. Can you not feel his affection for Epaphroditus and the Philippians?

Philippians 2:25–30

25 But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. 26 For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. 27 Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. 28 Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. 29 So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him, 30 because he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me.

Philippians 4:18b–20

18 . . . I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. 19 And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. 20 To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

NOTE 4 – Arguably the most “instrumental” figure in the life and/or ministry of the apostle Paul was Barnabas!

Q. What would have become of the life and ministry of Paul if not for Barnabas?

Acts 9:26–28 (Following the Conversion of Paul) (Emphasis Mine)

26 When he [Saul or Paul] came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. 27 But **Barnabas** took him and brought him to the apostles. **He told them** how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus. 28 So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord.

Acts 11:19–25 (Some Time Later)

19 Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed [cf. Acts 8] traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. 20 Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. 21 The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. 22 News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent **Barnabas** to Antioch. 23 When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. 24 He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. 25 **Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, 26 and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch.** So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

Q1. Who was instrumental in bringing Paul into the broader church community? BARNABAS

Q2. Who was responsible for opening doors of ministry to Paul in his early days in Christ? BARNABAS

Q3. Is it not a wonderful thing that Paul had figures like the mother of Rufus, Epaphroditus and Barnabas?

2) Paul Had Peers for the Journey of Life

NOTE 5 – Beyond having mentor figures and/or figures who were allowed to pour into the life of the apostle, Paul also had what I commonly call “peers for the journey” of life. That is, Paul had men and women who served as co-laborers in Christ (i.e., believers of app. equal experience and maturity with whom Paul traveled)!

NOTE 6 – Barnabas, an early mentor-figure and discipler of Paul, would in time go on to become a beloved peer:

Acts 13:1–3 (Emphasis Mine)

1 Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. 2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, **“Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”** 3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

NOTE 7 – Silas would become another close companion of the apostle Paul in latter missionary journeys (Acts):

Q. Was his name not apparent in the varied introductions of the apostle Paul?

1 Thessalonians 1:1 (Emphasis Mine)

1 Paul, **Silas** and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you.

2 Thessalonians 1:1–2 (Emphasis Mine)

1 Paul, **Silas** and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:
2 Grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

NOTE 8 – Let us consider one account (i.e., briefly) that features the exploits Paul and his missionary peer, Silas:

Acts 16:25–34 (Imprisonment at Philippi) (Emphasis Mine)

25 About midnight **Paul and Silas** were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. 26 Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone’s chains came loose. 27 The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. 28 But Paul shouted, “Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!” 29 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before **Paul and Silas**. 30 He then brought them out and asked, “**Sirs**, what must I do to be saved?”

31 **They replied**, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.” 32 Then **they** spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. 33 At that hour of the night the jailer took **them** and washed **their** wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized. 34 The jailer brought **them** into his house and set a meal before **them**; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole household.

Q. Is it not wonderful that Paul did not have to face such moments of pain or breakthrough alone?

NOTE 9 – Paul had a litany of close companions who appear time-and-again throughout his inspired epistles. Time will not permit me to speak of John Mark, Priscilla and Aquila, Apollos, Demas, Onesimus, Aristarchus, Epaphras, Gaius, Jason of Thessalonica, Sopater, Sosipater, Tychicus, and of course, the dutiful physician, Luke.

3) Paul Poured and/or Invested into Others

NOTE 10 – Finally, the apostle Paul “poured and/or invested himself” into others (i.e., as a mentor figure, etc.):

1 Timothy 1:1–2 (Emphasis Mine)

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope.
2 To **Timothy** my true son in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

2 Timothy 1:1–2 (Emphasis Mine)

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, in keeping with the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus,
2 To **Timothy**, my dear son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

Titus 1:1, 4 (Emphasis Mine)

1 Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to further the faith of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness . . . 4 To **Titus**, my true son in our common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

1 Corinthians 4:14–16 (Church) (Emphasis Mine)

14 I am writing this not to shame you but to warn you as **my dear children**. 15 Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many **fathers**, for in Christ Jesus I **became your father** through the gospel.
16 Therefore I urge you to **imitate** me.

KEY – It must be noted that each of these three levels or spheres of relationship are worthy of further analysis. In fact, perhaps we will take the time in the days to come to revisit such a theme in the midst of our studies. However, I say all of this to make the following point: apostle Paul did NOT serve the Lord as an isolated man. If any man could have it would have been Paul, for he was immense of strength and indefatigable in the Lord. Yet consider that his life abounds with mentors, peers for the journey and a cadre of spiritual children in Christ!

DELVING DEEPEST (APPLICATIONS)

Q1. Yet what of you?

Q2. Can such be said of you?

NOTE 1 – When you consider the grand story of your life, if your tale were chronicled like that of Saint Paul, does it abound with mentors, peers for the journey of life and a collective of spiritual children in Christ Jesus?

Q. Ultimately, do you know your circle as Paul knew his?

KEY 1 – Concerning mentor figures and more:

Q1. Do you have trusted voices that you allow to guide you?

Q2. Who in your sphere of living is allowed to correct or challenge?

Q3. Who are those men and women who are welcome to strengthen?

Q4. Who are those men and women who are allowed to encourage?

Q5. Who are those figures who are welcomed to speak comfort?

Q6. How receptive are you to the investment of others?

KEY 2 – Concerning peers for the journey:

- Q1. Do you have peers for the journey of your life?**
- Q2. Do you have men and women who are there for you?**
- Q3. Who are the people you can call at 2am w/out hesitation?**
- Q4. Who are the people whom you call brother or sister in Christ?**
- Q5. How connected are you to such a one? How tight is your “circle”?**

KEY 3 – Concerning proteges and children:

- Q1. Do you have spiritual children?**
- Q2. Are there people who look to your example?**
- Q3. Is your example truly worthy of aspiration or imitation?**
- Q4. Who are the people who can call you at 2am and you will answer?**
- Q5. What about your life and legacy do you hope will be replicated in such a one?**

NOTE 2 – You see, far too many give too little thought to such questions. Rather, many seek to go it alone, contrary to the testimony and wisdom of Scripture, living in isolation or as a spiritual island in the Lord. Sadly, such pay a heavy price and miss out on many wonderful opportunities for growth, ministry, and beyond.

NOTE 3 – Let this year be the year you take your CIRCLE seriously. Make it a priority and watch what He can do!

CONCLUSION

NOTE 1 – Feel free to give either in person or online at www.NewLifeBarre.org.

NOTE 2 – Check out our website for any of our beyond Sunday ministries (MM, WM & CYC).

NOTE 3 – As we continue in 2024, please allow me to speak this blessing upon you as we close. Note:

Numbers 6:24–26

- 24 The Lord bless you
and keep you;
- 25 the Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
- 26 the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace.

NOTE 4 – We will convene for our ABM after a brief lunch prepared downstairs. See you shortly!