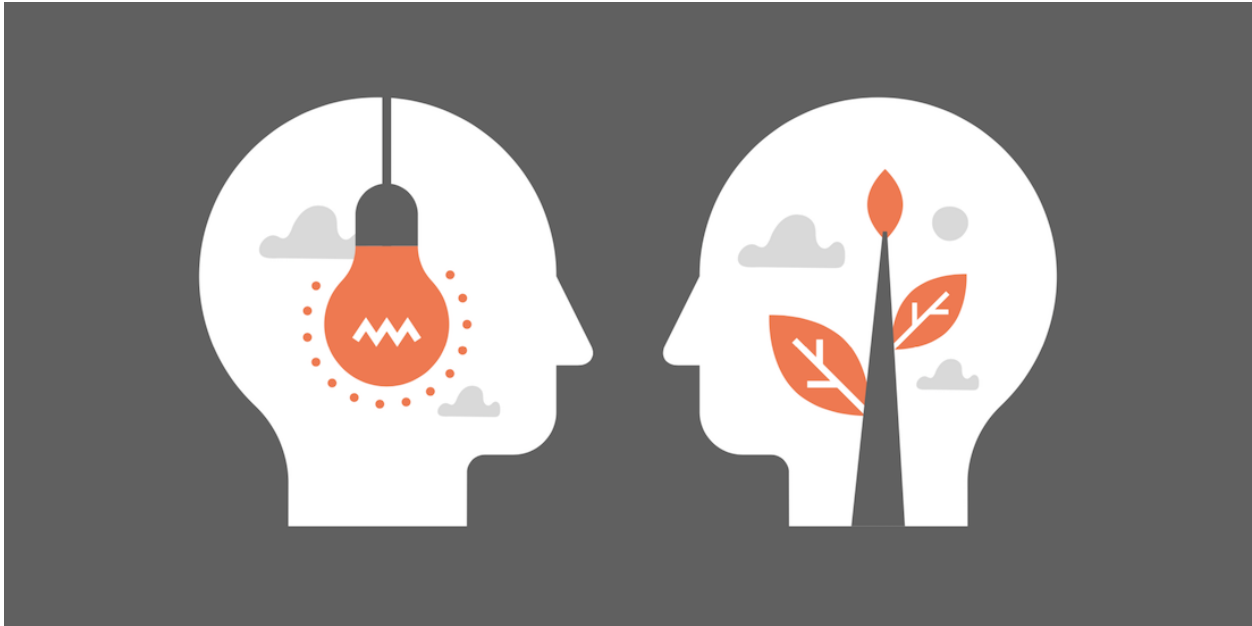


Sermon, September 26, 2021
1 Timothy 1:1-14, 2:1-2; Mark 3:13-19
“Shaped by Community: Everyone Needs a Timothy”
Rev. Dr. Brian Jones, Senior Pastor



On Saturday, I spent a couple of hours getting recertified in CPR and in using the AED, our automatic defibrillator. A friend asked if I wanted to come, and I did need to be recertified. Seems to me that giving up an hour or so to make sure you were doing things properly in order to potentially save a life seemed to be a good thing to do.

At the end, the instructor filled out all of our paperwork, and then we were given the survey to fill out. Do you know the survey? Where you have to evaluate the instructor. I get that, it's important to have feedback and groups want to know how to improve their service and or instruction.

And, of course, I filled it out, but struggled with it for a minute. Now, she seems to be a fine instructor. She gave good instruction, didn't waste our time. But there was a part of me that thought, how do I know? I mean, unless they bring in several people who are in cardiac arrest, aren't I kind of going on the assumption she did a good job? But I gave her high marks and kept my fingers crossed.

Which makes me wonder about the validity of a survey. Are they helpful? I hope so because we have to fill them out all the time. It's amazing how many places want your feedback. You go to a restaurant and

you often get a survey with your bill. Or one where you can take them home to fill out the survey. Have any of you done this? Go online and take a survey about our place and we will give you a coupon for the next time you come in. Is that helpful? I mean, if I give your place a bad review, I don't want the coupon, I'm not coming back. So if the only ones who are doing the survey are the ones who want to come back, is that helpful?

Of course, we are just as guilty, we do surveys from time to time, we give you surveys or have them set up online to fill out at your convenience, usually about upcoming ministry ideas we would like to start, and so on. But what if we had a different type of survey to fill out today? One that required your absolute honesty. It would be anonymous, there is no way I would know how you answered. And to make it even easier, it's a bit of a self-interest survey so you are the only one who needs to know the answer. You can do this here, you don't have to go to a website, and you don't even have to write anything down. But I think it's really a crucial question.

Are you ready? OK, here's the question, why did you come here today? Or why are you watching? Why are you here? Well, I came because hopefully I want to have a better relationship with Jesus. I have some questions, I'm going through a rough time right now. I came because mom or dad wants to come, and they needed me to drive them. I came to see my friends. I came just because it's a habit, it's a bit like making my bed in the morning, it's just what I do on Sunday.

Now, before we go on, we are glad you here. But often what I see is that the main reason we come to church is because of us. We are wanting some answers, peace, joy, whatever it might be. Or we want something for our children or our grandchildren. I like the music, the time works for me.

Of course, there is nothing wrong at all with wanting a church that attends to your needs and to your family with a schedule that works for you. But the problem is when we approach our faith from the viewpoint it's about me and what I get out of it, we can find ourselves on a slippery slope toward a self-centered faith. Which seems to be where the church in our culture is headed. If I was given a survey and I was asked what is the number one danger to the church in our culture today, I would have an answer. Folks, it's not the political left or the right. The church has survived that for two thousand years. It's not greed or money, the church has always struggled with that. It's not an increasingly secular anti-Christian society. The church survived the persecution of Rome, for heaven's sake. My friends, the biggest danger we face today in the church is our own self-centeredness. It's the demonic presence of narcissism.

And make no mistake, narcissism is demonic. It's not spinning your head around Exorcist demonic, because none of us would fall for that. It's a subtle shift of moving God off of the throne and firmly planting our own needs and desires there. If they are met, my faith and my church are good. Worship is good. I

went online the other day, and out of curiosity looked up selfish church. And literally thousands of videos popped up talking about the danger of self-centeredness in the church. In men, in women. There were sermons, there were parody songs, A lot of it biblical, some not so much. But thousands. It's like the weather. You know that old saying everyone talks about the weather, but no one does anything about it? It's like everyone realizes that narcissism and self-centeredness is hurting the church, but we don't seem to have a clue how to deal with it.

How do we change that narrative? Well, we've been talking about that a bit over the past few weeks. We said that we are shaped by our community. We are affected by the community in which we surround ourselves. If you are surrounded by self-centeredness, you're going to be affected by that. You can't be shaped positively by a community that doesn't care about your spiritual growth. If we were to give that same survey "why are you here" to the early church in Acts, you would find two clear reasons why they gathered. We are here to praise and worship Jesus, and we are here to help shape someone else's life for the Kingdom of God. This is why the early church grew so rapidly. Filled with the Holy Spirit, they gave testimony to the risen Savior, and they invested themselves in shaping someone else's life for Christ. The Methodist movement swept across Great Britain and the U.S. for the same reason, a lively testimony to the risen Savior and Wesley's commitment that the Methodists would gather to shape someone's life for the glory of God. *Focused on God and the shaping of someone's life. Why are you here today?*

A few weeks ago, we said that everyone needs three very specific types of people in their lives. I didn't mean only three, you can have more than one person in the types of people, if you follow. We began with the idea that everyone needs a Paul, we all need some spiritually mature people in our lives. Last week, we said everyone needs a Barnabus. We all need encouragers in our lives. As we look to our New Testament lesson today, we see that everyone needs a Timothy.

Look at how loving and tender Paul is with Timothy, but also look at how Paul intentionally mentors Timothy, how he molds and shapes him and helps him grow and be used in the Kingdom of God. My friends, everyone needs a Timothy, everyone needs someone they take under their spiritual wing, and in who's life you can impact for the Kingdom of God. Who is your Timothy? As you look around, who is your Timothy? Who's life did you come to change today?

You know, if I were to be honest, if I was in the survey, "why are you here today?", my answer is *I'm here today because there were people God put in my life who invested themselves in me and cared about who I would become in the Kingdom of God.* Parents, pastors, Sunday school teachers, those who led confirmation. And my story isn't unique. All of us have someone who saw us as their Timothy. Someone

who invested themselves in us. Do you have a Timothy? Who's life are you going to impact for the Kingdom of God?

Why did you come today? My prayer is that, like the early church, like Wesley, like the people who invested themselves in you, you will join them and say *I came today to worship my risen savior Jesus. And I came to change someone's life for Christ.* Why did you come? Amen.