

REDEFINING NORMAL

"REDEFINING CAUSE"

PHILIPPIANS 2:19-30

This Week's Core Competency

Giving Away My Life – I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes. Romans 12:1 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.*

The apt choice of "give away" links this creed nicely to Romans 12:1 where Paul urges us to "offer" our bodies as living sacrifices—something the apostle calls our "spiritual act of worship." In everyday, non-Pauline terms he's urging us to spend our lives doing things that please God. Doesn't he say as much in 6:19 where he tells us, "Once you spent your lives slavishly doing what displeases God for selfish purposes, but now you must spend your lives slavishly doing what pleases God for holy purposes" (paraphrased).

Adherence to the creed can have many faces. Tracy and his wife, missionaries involved in Bible translation who knows where, give away their lives to fulfill God's purposes. David Daniels, your pastor, and Tiffany, his wife, give away their lives to fulfill God's purposes. We usually think of missionaries and pastors, ministry professionals, when we recite this creed, but adherence to the creed isn't limited to them. It can't be reduced to a *career choice*. Your home group leaders, your community group shepherds, and teachers, too,

It is not our careers but our vocation that should guide our lives.

-Henri Nouwen

give away their lives to fulfill God's purposes, and so do those who volunteer in any of our six compassion agencies, or in our children's ministry, or in our student ministry. But it isn't limited to them either. It can't be reduced to filling a *volunteer position*. Do parents who work to preserve their marriage, to support their children, and start them off on the right track (Pr 22:6) not give away their lives doing what pleases God? Do employees who work with integrity and their employers who create jobs for them not give away their lives doing what pleases God? Of course. We all have the same vocation or calling, to live "for the praise of his glory" (Eph 1:12), which we express in our diverse careers and life settings. In fact, broadly speaking any Christ-follower who at anytime chooses the way of obedience over disobedience, the way of selfless love over selfish love gives away his life to fulfill God's purposes.

Is *not* giving away my life even an option? Hardly. I cannot *not* give it away anymore than I cannot *not* spend it. It ekes away in drips and drabs 24-7. How I spend it is really the question. Do I give it away to fulfill God's purposes or spend it on things that at best don't particularly matter to God? Too often the things that matter to God don't really matter to us, and the things that matter to us don't really matter to God. Agreed? The issue is one of stewardship. To cite another creed, "Everything I am or own belongs to God." My life is not my own; it belongs to God. But I get to decide how I'm going to spend it. On this the Teacher writes, "Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see, but know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment" (Ecc 11:9). Stewards are accountable for their stewardship.

For Discussion

For three years James has been his community group's point person on the Global Outreach Team or Go Team, a team of volunteers that seeks to communicate, educate and encourage church members to get involved in what God is doing around the world. However, he hasn't had time to attend meetings lately. Still he's continued in the position because he's more knowledgeable than anyone else when it comes to the Go Team's agenda and to be perfectly honest, because no one else seems to be interested in doing it. But he's started coaching his son's baseball team, traveling a little more for work, and golfing with some of the guys in his community and is beginning to think it's time for a break. After all he's served for three years, and he doesn't want to "Go" any more. What's more, he's losing interest in spiritual things in general. He finds it harder to do the routine things he had done with a measure of enthusiasm in the past: attend church, study the Bible, pray. You know. So he's trying to decide whether to push through his growing indifference hoping that his waning interest will wax again or take a break. Maybe it's time for somebody else to "Go."

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Philippians 2:19-30

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.

25 But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow 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 Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor men like him, 30 because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me. (NIV, (c)1984)

Cf., NIV, (c)2010

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 will show genuine concern for your welfare. 21 For everyone looks out for their 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.

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. (differences underlined)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Highlight Paul's personal references to himself and to the Philippians in vv. 12, 16-18.
- * Box words that indicate *relationship* within sentences, between sentences, and between paragraphs:
 - o "that" indicating *purpose* in v. 19
 - o "for" indicating *reason* in vv. 21, 26.
 - o "as" indicating *comparison* in v. 22.
 - o "but" indicating *contrast* in vv. 22, 25, 27.
 - o "because" indicating *reason* in vv. 22, 26, 30.
- o "therefore" indicating *result* in vv. 23, 28
- * Bracket "in the Lord Jesus" and "in the Lord" in vv. 19, 24, 29.
- * Circle "no one else like him" in v. 20.
- * In the margin next to v. 20 write, "Cf. vv. 3, 4."
- * Circle "served" in v. 22.
- * Underline "brother," "fellow worker," and "fellow soldier" in v. 25.
- * Circle "messenger" and "take care of" in v. 25.
- * Circle "risking" in v. 30.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Paul could have said, "I hope to send Timothy to you soon" in verse 19 and "I am confident that I myself will come soon" in verse 24. What do the phrases "in the Lord Jesus" and "in the Lord" add to the meaning of these verses respectively?
2. Why did Paul hope to send Timothy to Philippi?
3. He expressed his *reason* optimistically. Why?
4. Timothy was one of a kind. How so?
5. Explain the *contrast* in verse 22.
6. Why didn't Paul send Timothy to Philippi immediately?
7. Why would Paul commend Epaphroditus and go out of his way to explain why he sent him back to Philippi?
8. God had mercy on both Epaphroditus and Paul. How so?
9. What made his severe illness commendable?
10. **Discussion:** What do you find exemplary in Timothy and Epaphroditus?

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

Paul routinely included his travel plans in the letters he wrote to churches. Academics sometimes call this part of his letters "the travelogue." "In these passages Paul reminds readers of his apostolic authority by making his presence felt through the letter itself, by reference to the visit of an emissary or to Paul's coming visit. The letter and the envoy are anticipatory substitutes for Paul's own personal presence when he cannot travel, but both function as a means of conveying his apostolic presence" (P. Trebilco, "Itineraries, Travel Plans, Journeys, Apostolic Parousia," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*). Although Paul was not physically in Philippi, he conveyed his presence in his epistle and through his representatives. What's interesting is not that Paul's travel plans show up in Philippians but where they show up, closer to the beginning than the end, and why they show up there. One author writes, "After the theologically rich language of 2:5-18, we are surprised suddenly to encounter two paragraphs whose primary concern seems to be the travel plans of Paul and his coworkers. Why would Paul include such mundane information *at this point* in the letter? Why this *sudden introduction* of a passage which, as Karl Barth says, contains no 'direct teaching'" (Frank Thielman, *The NIV Application Commentary: Philippians*, 150 italics added). The question may seem academic to some, but if the passage contains no direct teaching, how can it have any direct relevance?

As with so many interpretive problems, this one can be resolved by a close examination of the context. Paul told his readers "conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ" in 1:27. He had already given them his example to follow in this regard (vv. 12-14, 30), so he continued by giving them the example of Christ to follow (2:5-11). To those two examples he then adds the example of Timothy in verses 19-24 and Epaphroditus in verses 25-30, men who did nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit but in humility considered others

better than themselves, men who looked not only to their own interests, but also to the interests of others (vv. 3, 4). "It is likely, then, that although Paul wanted to inform the Philippians of his travel plans in this passage and may have wanted to remind them of his authority, he nevertheless placed the passage here because he wanted it to contribute to his list of examples. Both Timothy and Epaphroditus exhibit the qualities of those who 'conduct' themselves 'in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ' (1:27), especially by looking 'not only to [their] own interests, but also to the interests of others' (2:4)" (151).

Timothy and Epaphroditus were a priceless pair. Both were men who in humility considered others better than themselves; both were men who shared the attitude of Christ Jesus who humbled himself (vv. 5-8). Timothy's interest in the welfare of the Philippians was unsurpassed as was his devotion to Paul and the work of the gospel. Epaphroditus, whom Paul with affection called my brother, colleague, and comrade in arms, faithfully ministered to the apostle and in so doing risked his life to carry out his assignment. Both men were faithful to their assigned tasks despite having to fulfill them in the face of hardship. "It is not likely that Christians will receive much encouragement from the broader culture to be faithful, in spite of hardship, to their commitment to the gospel. The notion that someone might become a 'slave' in the service of anything or risk one's health to fulfill a higher calling appears extraordinary, even abnormal. Yet it is precisely such people that Paul in this passage asks his Philippian readers, and us, to hold in high esteem (2:28). Indeed, the exemplary function of Timothy and Epaphroditus in this passage shows that Paul hopes that all of his readers will, because they are believers, view the commitment of Timothy and Epaphroditus as the norm and not follow the path of those who look out for their 'own interests, not those of Jesus Christ' (2:21)" (162).

The Message of this Passage

Follow the example of Timothy and Epaphroditus, who lived in a way worthy of the gospel by looking out for the interests of others not just themselves, and make sure you honor others like them.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you through his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

- Write about what God wants you to know . . .

- Write about how God wants you to feel . . .

- Write about what God wants you to do . . .

- **Home Group Discussion** (for those involved in the deeper connections of a home group)

Cindy is a single twenty-something in your home group. As a Christian, God has called her to live "for the praise of his glory." She decided on a career in education and presently teaches third grade at Dunn elementary school. Henri Nouwen writes, "Quite often our vocation becomes visible in a specific job, task, or endeavor. But our vocation can never be reduced to these activities" (*Seeds of Hope*, 148).

1. Talk about how Cindy's *vocation* might become visible in her *career*.

He goes on to write, "But our vocation can never be reduced to these [career] activities" (148).

2. Talk about why not.

Finish by talking about your own career and how your Christian vocation manifests itself in what you do for a living.

“Redefining Cause”

(Use the space below for Sunday's message notes)

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 19 **in the Lord** Paul's hope is grounded in his relationship to and the will of the Lord Jesus. "This means that his hopes are governed by the Lord's will for his situation, and equally that his plans do not rest on a human calculation of release and freedom. They are based on God's undertaking for him" (Ralph. P. Martin, *The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians*, TNTC, 126). "Every believer is 'in Christ,' and this vital union should influence every thought and activity. Thus Paul loves in the Lord (1:8); grounds his confidence in the Lord (2:24); rejoices in the Lord (3:3; 4:10); and desires that others rejoice in Christ (1:26; 3:1), welcome Christian leaders in the Lord (2:29), and always stand firm in the Lord (4:1). It may be that Paul was uncertain of the outcome of his case at Rome and therefore the more obviously submitted all his plans and hopes to the lordship of Jesus" (Homer A. Kent, Jr., "Philippians" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 132, 33).

v. 19 **Timothy** Timothy's name appears 29 times in the NT: Ac 16:1; 17:14, 15; 18:5; 19:22; 20:4; Ro 16:21; 1Co 4:17; 16:10; 2Co 1:1, 19; Php 1:1; 2:19, 22; Col 1:1; 1Th 1:1; 3:2, 5, 6; 2Th 1:1; 1Ti 1:2, 18; 4:1; 6:11, 20; 2Ti 1:2; 3:10; Plm 1:1; Heb 13:23. "Timothy was Paul's most highly valued coworker. Paul frequently referred to him as his son (1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Tim 1:2, 18; 2 Tim 1:2), entrusted him with several important missions to his churches besides the one mentioned here (Acts 17:14-15; 18:5; 19:22 [this one may refer to the Phil. 2:19 visit]; 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10-11; 1 Thess. 3:2-6; 1 Tim. 1:3), and included him in the sponsorship of six letters (1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon)" (Thielman, 153, footnote 5)

v. 20 **like him** Lit., "of like soul," but to Paul or to Timothy? "Although the referent of 'like-souled' is not immediately clear, most likely Paul means that Timothy is 'like-minded' to me,' rather than no one else is like-minded to Timothy." Thus with a slight word play on 'being cheered' (lit., 'good souled'), Paul emphasizes that the primary reason for Timothy's coming is that he can count on him to carry Paul's own deep concerns at heart" (Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, NICNT, 265, 66; see also Thielman, 152). A different author argues better to the contrary, "The sense of the passage seems to be that of all his Christian friends in the place of his confinement, i.e. the brethren who are with him (4:21) and 'the saints' and members of Caesar's household (4:22), there is no-one who shares so intimately Timothy's deep concern for the Philippians. The alternative translation (e.g. by Collange: 'he is the only one who truly shares my preoccupations' [cf. 'He is the only one who shares my feelings,' TEV]) founders on the fact that Paul's Greek construction cannot mean that he is referring to himself, because if that had been in his mind he must have written, 'I have no-one else like myself' (Martin, 127, 28; see also Kent, 132).

v. 21 **everyone** Even though Timothy's character put him in a class by himself, this sentence need not be read as a sweeping criticism of others in company with Paul. "The sentence is really an aside. It is Paul's general comment, in parenthesis, on the state of the world around him. The sentence is crisp and pointed as such a comment, an obiter dictum, should be. It says nothing about his fellow-Christians; but it is rather his solemn reflection when he remembers that, in a world of selfishness and self seeking (cf. Rom. 5:7 for a parallel reflection), it is such a rare thing to find a man like Timothy who is really anxious to promote the welfare of other people, and to give himself to a fatiguing journey and to the resolving of personal quarrels in the Philippian church . . . His readiness to help, then, supremely exemplifies a selfless, altruistic spirit unlike that described in 2:1-4" (Martin, 130).

v. 22 **proven** Timothy had demonstrated skills and character. "Timothy's mettle had been tested in the difficulty of apostolic service, and both Paul and the Philippians had found him as faithful as a son to his father, as willing to slave (douleuo; NIV 'serve') in the work of the gospel as Paul himself" (Thielman, 153).

v. 24 **soon** "Paul awaits the judges' verdict. When that is known he will commission Timothy to make the journey to Philippi. If the verdict goes against him, Timothy as Paul's envoy will act in the apostle's name as one sent 'in the Lord Jesus' (v. 19). If, however, it is a favourable decision and brings release from his chains Paul will follow 'shortly' (RSV), i.e. soon after Timothy or maybe 'certainly'" (Martin, 132).

v. 25 **Epaphroditus** Epaphroditus' name appears two times in the NT: Php 2:25; 4:18. Although some identify him with Epaphras in Col 1:7; 4:12 because the second is an abbreviated form of the first, the two are not the same person. Epaphroditus likely delivered Paul's letter upon his return to Philippi. "How surprised the Philippians must have been to see Epaphroditus again! They had sent him to Paul not only to deliver a monetary gift from the church (4:18) but also to stay with Paul and minister to his other needs (2:25), something they could not do themselves from such a distance (2:30)" (Thielman, 153).

v. 25 **your messenger** Lit., "your messenger [apostolos] and minister to my need" (NASB; cf. the NET Bible). Paul shows how highly he regards Epaphroditus by describing him with two titles of honor, 'messenger' and 'minister'-titles that rightfully belonged to Paul himself . . . In verse 25, then, Paul introduces Epaphroditus with a fanfare of complimentary language, leaving little doubt in the minds of the Philippians that their messenger is returning with the apostle's blessing" (154).

v. 30 **risking** "It is a gambling term. Epaphroditus staked his life for the service of Christ, in the interest of the apostle and on behalf of the Philippian community" (Martin, 138).

Connect the **FAMILY**. During this series, Bible stories appropriate for children will be used that complement the adult teaching.

Experience it!

Experience scripture through the activity-based learning exercise. Dinner is a perfect time to engage the family.

"Beyond" is a great way to describe what it means to minister to someone else. Read Mark 1:29-34 to discover several instances of people going beyond. Jesus went BEYOND to heal Peters' mother-in-law. She then went out of her way to feed Jesus (that's more BEYOND!). Later, Jesus had the strength - the meal probably helped - to heal lots of people (and even more BEYOND!).

Pray it!

As a parent you can teach your child to pray by using actual scriptures as a guide. Pray this scripture with them this week..

Lord, because of your mercy, I offer my body as a living sacrifice that is holy and pleasing to You - it will be my spiritual act of worship. Ro 12:1

Post it!

Post the kid-friendly Core Competency and the memory verse throughout the house. Lead your children to interact with them as they memorize.

Giving Away My Life – I give away my life to help with God's work.

Memory verse – "I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness."

Jn 12:46

Discuss it!

Discover biblical truth by discussing the scripture. Reflective questions are great with older kids.

- *Whose mother was sick?
- *What all did Jesus do to heal her?
- *After the fever left her, what did Simon's mother-in-law do?
- *How might have her waiting on Jesus helped him heal people that evening?

Live it!

Live out the Core Competency and build deeper relationships by doing this activity.

Having Jesus in your heart is a great thing! So great, in fact, the Bible says we should want everyone to have Jesus in their heart. Inviting a friend to church is a great way for him/her to hear the story of Jesus. It's also a great way to go BEYOND. Bring a friend to church this Sunday and both of you will receive five Kid Pix tokens!

Kids K through fourth grade receive Kid Pix Tokens for each discipleship activity completed.



Family completes **Experience It** _____
 Child memorizes kid-friendly **Core Competency** _____
 Family participates in **Live It** _____ and **Pray It** _____
 Child memorizes **Memory Verse** _____

Child's name _____

Parent's signature _____

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

Tom Bulick (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than thirty-five years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) for twelve years before accepting the position of Spiritual Formation Pastor at Pantego Bible Church. He and his wife Ruth have been married forty-two years and have one son, Zach.

Keith Smith (B.A. in Speech Communication, Texas Tech University and M.A. in Religious Education, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary) is the Family and Children's Pastor at Pantego Bible Church. Keith is a featured communicator for Song of Solomon for Students and speaks at children/student camps across the country. He has developed a number of relational parenting seminars designed to motivate parents to empower their parenting by emotionally connecting with their kids. Keith lives with his wife, Denise, and their two children, Jordan and Alex.



8001 Anderson Blvd.
Ft. Worth, TX 76120
1-866-PANTEGO
Fax 817-275-6403
www.pantego.org

The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.