

**LESSON SEVEN**  
**ROLE MODELS**  
**(Philippians 2:19-30 NKJV)**

### REFLECTION

Our culture has its share of celebrities, and often these people are famous for nothing more than being famous! There is, of course, a huge difference between being a character and having character. Who are the people you most admire—especially in the spiritual realm? Why?

### DRAWING NEAR

Compose a personal servanthood “resume.” Since becoming a follower of Christ and a member of a church, what are some of ministry roles you’ve filled. Which of those have you enjoyed most? Least?

### SITUATION

Paul has pointed to the example of Christ to compel the Philippian believers to put aside their differences, embrace unity, and obediently follow God in a way that will attract others to the message of salvation. If they do this, Paul states, he will be able to “boast” when his time on this earth is complete and that his efforts on their behalf were not in vain. As a further illustration for how he desires the believers to act, Paul draws on the example of his co-workers Timothy and Epaphroditus whose conduct serves as role models of faithfulness and selflessness.

### OBSERVATION

Read **Philippians 2:19-30** (New King James Version)

### EXPLORATION

1. Why did Paul hold Timothy in such high regard?

**Answer:** Paul held Timothy in such high regard because he had no man likeminded as Timothy. Likeminded literally means having the same spirit and interest. It is often translated as having a “kindred spirit.” Timothy was one in thought, feeling, and spirit with Paul in his love for the church. He also held Timothy in high regard because he knew Timothy would naturally care for the state or well-being of the saints.

2. What are some unique traits that set Timothy apart and made him such an effective partner with Paul in sharing the gospel?

**Answer:** Timothy’s caring for the things of Christ and not things concerning himself was a unique thing about him. Also, he had served like a son to Paul in the ministry. They were like father and son—they had a close bond.

3. What were the outstanding qualities of Epaphroditus?

**Answer:** Epaphroditus was like a brother to Paul, a companion in labour and a fellow soldier. He longed for the people at Philippi. And he even pushed through a near death sickness to serve in the work of Christ. He disregarded his own welfare to serve Paul on behalf of the people at Philippi. In **verse 25**, Paul calls him the Philippian's messenger. The word messenger comes from the same word that yields the English word apostle. He was not an apostle of Christ, but an apostle (sent one) in the broader sense, of the church in Philippi. He was sent to Paul with their monetary love gift (see **2 Cor. 8:23**).

It seemed as if he cared more about his mission than his own health.

4. Paul encourages the Philippians to honor people like Epaphroditus. What does this look like?

**Answer:** To honor people like Epaphroditus is to receive them in the Lord with gladness and commending them for the work that they have accomplished in the name of the Lord. It doesn't mean to worship them.

5. We tend to place the people mentioned in Scripture on a pedestal. Why would this serve as a disservice to them and to you?

**Answer:** It is okay to thank and commend people for the work that they have done in the ministry. They should not be put on a pedestal and worshipped. We must keep things in perspective and give God the Glory!

Also, the people in Scriptures were not perfect—many had weaknesses and downfalls.

6. Why did Paul call out the example of these two men? How do they serve as practical examples of humility and service to the believers in Philippi?

**Answer:** Paul called out these two men for the work that they had done in the ministry and their self-sacrifice and humility. They served as practical examples because they didn't have supernatural powers, nor did they try to make a name for themselves. They were servants of God and showed true humility. Nowhere do we see or hear of them bragging about what they had done, nor being close to the apostle Paul.

## INSPIRATION

The church of Jesus Christ began with a group of frightened men in a second-floor room in Jerusalem.

Though trained and taught, they didn't know what to say. Though they'd marched with Him for three years, they now sat...afraid. They were timid soldiers, reluctant warriors, speechless messengers.

Their most courageous act was to get up and lock the door.

Some looked out the window, some looked at the wall, some looked at the floor, but all looked inside themselves.

They should, for it was an hour of self-examination. All their efforts seemed so futile. Nagging their memories were the promises they'd made but not kept. When the Roman soldiers took Jesus, Jesus' followers took off. With the very wine of the covenant on their breath and the bread of his sacrifice in their bellies, they fled.

All those boasts of bravado? All those declarations of devotion? They lay broken and shattered at the gate of Gethsemane's garden.

We don't know where the disciples went when they fled the garden, but we do know what they took: a memory. They took a heart-stopping memory of a man who called himself no less than God in the flesh. And they couldn't get him out of their minds.

Try as they might to lose him in the crowd, they couldn't forget him. If they saw a leper, they thought of his compassion. If they heard a storm, they would remember the day he silenced one. If they saw a child, they would think of the day he held one. And if they saw a lamb being carried to the temple, they would remember his face streaked with blood and his eyes flooded with love.

No, they couldn't forget him. As a result, they came back. And, as a result, the church of our Lord began with a group of frightened men in an upper room. Sound familiar? Things haven't changed much in 2,000 years, have they? How many churches today find themselves paralyzed in the upper room? (From *Six Hours One Friday* by Lucado.)

## REACTION

7. How does it encourage you to realize the "great saints" of the Bible were fallible and fearful and sometimes fickle and faithless?
8. How does it challenge you to watch ordinary people like Timothy and Epaphroditus live extraordinary lives of sacrifice and courage?
9. How can you, like Timothy, develop the godly quality of not just looking out for your own interests?
10. If your spiritual leaders were to describe you, what words and phrases would they use?
11. Epaphroditus risked his life in some way to serve the Philippians. What are some lesser—but still important—risks you can take for Christ this week?
12. How will you demonstrate humility and service to other believers this week?

Dependable people are like diamonds. They are precious because they are so rare. Experience and know-how are great assets, but they're not much good without trustworthiness. Talent is wonderful, but by itself it's not enough. Far better to be a faithful Christian. Are you? Like Timothy and Epaphroditus, are you a role model for others? Determine to be a person whom others can rely on. Keep your word. Show up. Be consistent. Live for others. Take risks. Be a "go to" guy or gal. Make it your goal, by God's grace, to exemplify a life of spiritual steadiness.

## DEVOTION

*Father, you have surrounded us with men and women who love you and who model what it means to walk with you. We praise you for the wonderful examples of godliness you have given to us. Show us creative ways to honor our spiritual mentors. And work in our hearts so that more and more we become that kind of role model for others..*

## JOURNALING

What are some words of appreciation and encouragement you can offer to someone who has been a hero and inspiration in your life? (be sure to share these thoughts with the person!)

**Next Week:** Lesson Eight: Right Standing with God—**Philippians 3:1-7**

## FOR FURTHER READING

For more Bible passages on spiritual role models, read **Proverbs 1:8-19; John 13:12-17; 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-10; 1 Timothy 4:11-14; and Titus 2:6-8.**