

LIFE UPSIDE DOWN__5

Care



“I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare.”
- Philippians 2:20

“Only those who give away their lives for my sake and for the sake of the Good News will ever know what it means to really live.”
- Jesus, Mark 8:35

There isn't any complex theology to unravel in this passage, just two examples of people who made a significant difference in the lives of others. The late Jim Eliot once prayed, *“Father, make me a crisis man. Bring those I contact to decision. Let me not be a milepost on a single road; make me a fork-in-the-road, that men must turn one way or another on facing Christ in me.”*

Nothing indicates that either Timothy or Epaphroditus were impressive speakers or had charismatic personalities. But there's no mistaking the influence they had, simply because they genuinely cared for others. These two men exemplify the kind of person God uses to fulfill His purposes—ordinary people who care not only for themselves, but for what matters to Jesus Christ.

Opening Up

What's one of the craziest things you've ever done?

Digging In

Read Philippians 2:19-30

1. What do you know about the background of Timothy or Epaphroditus? Why do you think God often passes over “natural talent” and the very gifted to use people like these two “regular” guys?
2. Sometimes those who make the greatest impact on others are not the ones we might have expected. Have you ever seen this truism at work? Explain.
3. Reread this passage and make note of what strikes you about Timothy and Epaphroditus. How do these men exemplify the attitudes and behavior called for in verses 2-4?
4. When you see a need or an opportunity to serve, what's your first thought? It's easy to allow self-concern to dull our hearts to the needs of others. And so it is good to occasionally ask ourselves, *“Am I both willing and available to be used by God?”* What is involved with both qualities? Why are they both important in tandem?
5. Are you a “Timothy” or an “Epaphroditus” to anyone's work? If not, is there a ministry in which you could serve? Explain.
6. Are you faithful in the assignments that God gives you? In other words, if the leadership at Southeastern were looking for someone to shore up a particular ministry, do you suppose your name would easily come to mind?

Living Out

Implicit in this passage is why God uses some people and not others. Regardless of your natural ability or personality, you can be used of God to make a difference in the lives of others. The real question is, *“Do you want to?”* Given your present circumstances, what is one way you could act that would reflect one of the qualities mentioned in this passage?

Lifting Up

This series of lessons was intended to capture some of what it means to live “upside down,” at least as far as the world is concerned. Living in such an inverted way will enable you to experience the joy of knowing that your life is bringing glory and pleasure to our eternal God. Spend time in prayer, that He will help you (plural) grow your hearts toward each of these qualities: a desire for unity, a willingness to serve, a bias toward action, an attitude of gratitude, and a genuine concern for others.