

USEFUL UNTO HIM // Philippians 2:19-30

Message from Pastor Neal

A pressing question on the conscience of every follow of Jesus is simply, “Is God using me?” Regardless of who you are, what talents you have, or what role you’ve been given – God desires to use you. Therefore, we are called to a lifestyle of usefulness, seeking to be used in the economy of God’s Kingdom. In this passage, Paul describes the usefulness of Timothy and Epaphroditus. We find no less than six adjectives to describe a posture of life that is useful unto the service of King Jesus.

1. Available for the work (v. 19)

Why did Paul send Timothy? Because he was available. Ability doesn’t matter until you have availability; God won’t use you until you are available. As Isaiah said to the Lord, “Here, I am! Send me.” Isaiah 6:8

2. Distinguishable from the crowd (v. 20)

A useful Christian is distinguishable from the crowd; he must possess qualities that set him apart. Paul says there is no one like Timothy. How does one gain such a distinction? Be distinguishable for God before men—if God’s attention is on your life, then you’ll have the attention of others.

3. Reliable through the seasons (v. 22)

A useful Christian is reliable through the seasons. Paul mentions Timothy’s proven worth. He’s a watched man and his reliability and worth have been noted over time. If you have a track record of being reliable, you will find yourself being useful in the church.

4. Teachable like a child (v. 22)

Paul echoes a sentiment he has expressed elsewhere in scripture (1 Timothy 4:14, 2 Timothy 1:6, Acts 16:1-3): Timothy is like a son to him. Timothy was not intimidated by Paul, the great missionary, and did not envy the spotlight. To be teachable, you must be found humble. Don’t think of this as your mature hour—there is always room to grow.

5. Relatable to the people (v. 26)

A useful Christian is relatable with the people. Epaphroditus, a fellow-worker, fellow-soldier, messenger, and minister, had a desire to be relational. He was longing and distressed over the believers in Philippi. We are in the people business—do we love people the way God loves people? To use us, God must break our hearts for people.

6. Expendable for the gospel (v. 27)

A useful Christian is expendable for the gospel. Epaphroditus was “near to death” in service to God. God could require our lives, but he wants us to have the attitude that our lives are not our own. The Lord has a blank check for each one of us.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Which of these qualities is the most difficult to develop in your life? How could the Holy Spirit help you to grow in this area?
2. What makes someone distinguishable? Does this look the same for every Christian?
3. Which of these qualities must develop over time? Which can be applied immediately? How are both used to serve the church?