

## **Developing Young Leaders in a Dysfunctional World:**

### **An Exegetical, Leadership of First Timothy**

#### **Abstract**

This paper explores the quest for authentic Christian leadership in a dysfunctional world in both early and contemporary Christianity by utilizing social and cultural texture analysis of the first letter of the Apostle St. Paul to Timothy. Through this exegetical analysis, this paper explores how the Apostle Paul used valued enduring values to counteract the negative influences of contemporary secular culture. The premise of this paper is that, without intervention, young men and women who are reared in a dysfunctional culture are far less likely to become effective leaders in society. The findings have a practical bearing on how teachers and mentors may apply biblical text in the process of developing leaders for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## Developing Young Leaders in a Dysfunctional World

Society changes have made families less traditional and more dysfunctional. Traditional families with where mother and father reside in the home are now unique happenings. According to the US Census (2015), there were 53% of unmarried U.S. residents 18 and older were women. Sixty-three percent of unmarried U.S. residents 18 and older who had never been married. From 1997-2002 time periods, substantial gaps existed between the welfare of children in higher-income families and lower-income families (Wertheimer, McPhee, & Moore, 2005). In 2015, there were an estimated 427,910 children in foster care. More than 30% were in relative homes, while 45% were in nonrelative foster family homes. About half of these children were left foster care were reunited with their parents or primary caretakers (Childwelfare.gov, 2017). Children were placed in the foster care system because the government determined that it was not safe for a child to remain at home due to a risk of maltreatment, which includes physical or sexual abuse. Unfortunately, this situation creates unsettling results. According to one national study of youth in foster care, 38 percent were emotionally disturbed, 50 percent had used illegal drugs, and 25 percent were involved in the legal system (Casey Family Programs, 2003). Many children feel isolated and abandoned. Therefore, this circumstance provides a sense of shame for these children. In this research, dysfunctional underpins the notion of abnormal behavior or a deviation from expected conditions.

The results of single parent homes routinely produce increased juvenile delinquency and unmarried teen pregnancy. The rate of violent juvenile crime is higher in America than other developed countries. Juvenile homicide has been escalating until the 1990s while adult homicide has declined (Tuell, 2002). To a child in this circumstance, it provides a source of shame. According to Jager, Yuen, Bornstein, Putnick, and Hendricks, (2014), family roles, including parents and children, help mold the structure and expectations for social interaction. Lerner (2009) discussed the following attributes of a functioning family: (a) The functional family encourages the optimal growth of all of its members and promote of sense of unity; (b) Parents make and enforce rules that guide a child's behavior while not regulating the child's emotional and intellectual life; and (c) Parents calmly connect to their own family while not denying or silencing any family member's sense of self. In the case of families, dysfunctional behaviors carry negative consequences to social relationships. Furthermore, dysfunctions

exist in an anxious system while emotional turmoil sends shock waves throughout the household (Lerner, 2009). In fact, dysfunctional dyads are more likely to be found in dysfunctional families than in healthy families (Jager, Yuen, Bornstein, Putnick, & Hendricks, 2014). Thus, a dysfunctional family creates an environment for chaos, conflict, and misbehavior while social relationships between parents and children are often broken. This paper explores the quest for authentic Christian leadership in a dysfunctional world in both early and contemporary Christianity by utilizing social and cultural texture analysis of the first letter of the Apostle St. Paul to Timothy. Through this exegetical analysis, this paper explores how the Apostle Paul used valued enduring values to counteract the negative influences of contemporary secular culture.

Without positive role models, many children in these helpless situations become perplexed and confused as adults. Some youth become easy prey to postmodern influences that often produce rebellion and a disregard for authority. Therefore, the leadership gap widens as many young people succumb to these negative factors. What can churches do to encourage young Christians to move beyond their present plight? How can leaders infuse proper values to this youth generation? The focus of this study explores the Apostle Paul's strategy for infusing values to his young apprentice Timothy. This investigation also analyzes how to counter negative culture influences by applying a social and cultural texture analysis of the first letter of Paul to Timothy.

## **Background**

### *The Apostle Paul*

To understand the Apostle Paul's personal history as a missionary to the Gentiles, one must understand the different populations he visited, the Greek and Roman civilization characteristics, and the social and cultural influences. Paul was writing in the language used by his Hellenistic readers in everyday life (Conybeare & Howson, 1976). Paul's role as a spiritual leader allowed him to communicate with diverse cultures. During this time, a person could see Paul speaking to a commander of the garrison in Greek; turn and address his countrymen in Hebrew; and listen to an oration of Tertullus in Latin (Conybeare & Howson, 1976). Paul was intimately engaged with instructing the early church leaders. In this framework, Paul interacts with a highly developed ecclesiastical organization; there are elders (I Timothy 5:1), bishops (I Timothy 5:17-18), and

deacons (I Timothy 3:8). Obviously, this elaborate structure provided a challenge to Paul's leadership skills (Barclay, 1960). This is the place Paul found himself, defending the faith and guiding the early Christian leaders.

### *The Book of First Timothy*

First Timothy represents a critical message to church leaders in the early church. Although these Pastoral Epistles were geared for churches, Paul personally addressed his message to three critical people: Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. Therefore, Paul wrote these books to the pastors as well as to the churches. The major emphasis of these Pastoral Epistles was instructing the pastors in how to defend the faith and maintain sound biblical doctrine (Constance, 2005). The themes spoke to faith, salvation, good works, personal integrity, church and individual discipline, ethics, eschatology, and the gospel (Constance, 2005). Two books are named after Paul's young apprentice Timothy. Timothy is named 17 times in the Epistles, six times in the Acts of the Apostles, and once in Hebrews (Berardino, 1992). Paul wrote the first epistle to Timothy for the following reasons: (a) to encourage Timothy to remain at Ephesus and deal with the pressing issues of the church, (b) to provide authoritative instruction on church order, (c) to instruct the church how to combat the enemies of the Faith, and (d) to remind Timothy on how to conduct himself while under severe pressure (Constance, 2005). Therefore, the books of Timothy serve as pastoral hope for many religious leaders.

### **Method**

In evaluating the sacred text of First Timothy, socio-rhetorical criticism, which is a method that can assist in understanding scriptures, is utilized. Socio-rhetorical criticism integrates the methods people use in language as well as culture. It exhibits five different angles to explore multiple textures within the texts: (a) inner texture, (b) intertexture, (c) social and culture texture, (d) ideological texture, and (e) sacred texture (Robbins, 1996). For this study, a social and cultural analysis is employed. The analysis will further explore the areas of shame, honor, and social challenge.

## Analysis and Findings of Study

### *Social and Cultural Texture Analysis*

Applying social and cultural texture analysis of First Timothy provides the framework for exploring the social and cultural location of the language and affords an understanding of the type of social and cultural perspective for the times. Therefore, this analysis provides an overall impression of the scriptural circumstances through the eyes of the people in the cultural and social setting (Robbins, 1996). Using this approach gives the reader a clear understanding of scriptural implications of the scriptures as they relate to living a committed religious life.

*Shame.* Shame is a critical factor in Jewish culture. In this social setting, shame refers to a person's sensitivity about what others think, say, and do with regard to his or her honor (Robbins, 1996). In traditional Mediterranean society, the family is a primary source of honor. The Hebrew Bible, known as Tanakh, showcased the history of the Jewish people in the form of extended families. Common custom united *natural communities* of Jewish-born to Jewish parents; most Jewish children were overwhelmingly raised in this type of setting. In this environment, Jewish boys were given a family name during brit milah (the covenant of male circumcision) as well as a Jewish name that would be used for religious purposes (Tiscali.co.uk, n.d.). Within families, women were embedded in a patriarchal dominated environment. Marriage was usually arranged, sometimes within kinship. Jews considered it critical to select a Jewish partner for marriage (Tiscali.co.uk, n.d.). The prohibition of marriage between Jews and Gentiles were profound (Deuteronomy 7:3). Therefore, marriage was a fusion of honor for both families (Esler, 1994). A line was thus drawn between those who are one's kin or who are not. Therefore, the purpose of Jewish marriage was to maintain and perpetuate the covenanted community (Broyde, 2005). For the early Christian church community, a similar line was drawn between those who were members or patrons and those who were not (Esler, 1994). In this arrangement, relationships were born, trust was established, and confidence was built.

Growing up in a traditional Jewish culture must have been difficult for Timothy. The Apostle Paul understood what it meant to live in shame because of his past

deeds against the church. Shame in this context relates to Timothy's family background. From the perspective of current child psychology, Timothy's behavior could have been negative. First, he was robbed of the traditional Hebrew male passage. Timothy did not grow up in a natural community. Timothy grew up in a nontraditional home. His father was Greek, and his mother was Jewish (Acts 16:1). In this setting, Timothy could not enjoy the proper rites of passage for young Jewish males. Being the head of the household, his Greek father would heavily influence Timothy's value formation. Honor and shame were the operative feelings, rather than the guilt in ancient Mediterranean culture (Constance, 2005). As a Jew by birth and a Christian by spiritual rebirth, Timothy's pagan background would be a source of shame for him.

*Honor.* During the first-century Mediterranean period, honor was an esteemed value in a male dominated society. Honor relates to a person's rightful existence in society and focuses on a person's worth of how he or she was ranked by a relevant social group. The Jewish interest in descent from Abraham was essentially a claim to the ascribed honor that came from having an illustrious family member (Esler, 1994). Therefore, a place of honor is established through boundaries of power, sexual status, and social status (Robbins, 1996). Acquired honor was the socially recognized claim to worth that an individual earned by excelling over others in various forms of social interaction (Esler, 1994). The Apostle Paul understood Timothy's background and did not allow it to set him back. Therefore, Timothy was thrust into a critical leadership role, and this role provided a great source of honor for him.

*Challenge-Response (Riposte).* The Apostle Paul had conflicts on several major levels. Through the Challenge-Response (riposte) approach, these conflicts have more relevance because it is taken from a biblical context. The Challenge-Response (riposte) in a cultural setting is a type of social communication where messages are transferred in the form of a challenge. In this context, the Challenge-Response within the context of honor has at least three stages: (a) the challenge in terms of some action by the challenger; (b) the perception of the message by both the individual to whom it is directed and the public at large; and (c) the reaction of the receiving individual and the evaluation of the public response (Robbins, 1996).

Without a doubt, the Apostle Paul found himself in the midst of conflict on several fronts. During this time, there were very dangerous heresies, which threaten the church. There were two major heresies in asceticism and the denial of the resurrection of the body. Asceticism related to the special physical limitations, such as food and sex. It was characterized by vain babblings, tales, and useless controversies (1 Timothy 6:20) --it was tied to Jewish legalism (Barclay, 1960). The heretics of the resurrection claimed that any resurrection of a man had already been experienced; this understanding was clearly against the tenets of Christianity. The following was a basic characteristic of Paul's opposition: (a) it was sizeable and dangerous; (b) the opponents were engaged in false teaching, both in the church and in member's homes; (c) the opponents were deceived by Satan; (d) they rejected the truth (1 Timothy 6:5); and (e) they were immoral because they took advantage of the people (Marshall, 1999). Through analyzing the three Pastoral Epistles, it is clear that these teachings were related to Judaism. The false teachers attacked at the heart of the gospel by providing misinformation, such as the resurrection. This heresy crisis among Christians placed the Apostle Paul at odds with this movement.

Therefore, Paul's ministry stood opposed to these philosophies. Paul's enemies can then be viewed in two camps. On one side, Paul faced an Orthodox Jewish fraction that was conservative; it demanded that Gentile Christians follow Hebrew protocol, such as circumcision (Fee, 1984). On the other hand, Greek culture had profoundly impacted the effectiveness of the Christian church. This new Greek line of thought was called *Gnosticism*. The basic thought was that all matter was essentially evil and the spirit was the only thing good. Matter was considered as eternal as God. With this philosophy, Gnostics could not acknowledge God as the direct creator of the universe (Barclay, 1960). Therefore, in Gnosticism, one sees intellectualism, intellectual arrogance, fables, asceticism, immorality, and refusal to recognize the resurrection of the body. These issues were what the Apostle Paul was addressing in these Pastoral Epistles.

## **Results and Discussion**

This section applies the results of the socio-rhetorical criticism to the concept of value formation to young leaders. Before evaluating these results to contemporary leadership theories, several definitions need to be defined. There are many definitions of leadership; however, this study focuses on leadership as

the ability to influence others and its impact on followers (Northouse, 2004). Value formation of leadership involves God equipping his leaders through the sacred guidance of the Holy Spirit. From the previous social and cultural texture analysis, it was determined that the Apostle Paul understood how to infuse values into young leaders, despite less than honorable family backgrounds, and built leadership character in hostile environments. There are several themes which will be discussed based on the exegetical analysis are: leaders encourage young leaders, Christian leaders model targeted values, and leaders build young leaders by providing opportunities for value formation.

### *Leaders Encourage*

Exemplary organizations encourage young leaders by fostering genuine relationships with them. Good leadership is a positive attribute for high performing organizations. For this paper, leadership is defined as ‘a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.’ In Paul’s circle of influence, encouraging leaders were part of his divine ministry. For example, Paul demonstrated a sincere interest in the lives of his young leaders. Paul pursued a friendship with Timothy (Philippians 2:19-24). He showed Timothy that he cared about him as a person, not just another church obligation (Fee, 1976). In I Timothy 1:2, Paul greeted Timothy in a loving way: “Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.” As a spiritual son, Timothy enjoyed an intimate and enduring relationship with Paul (I Timothy 4:6). This relationship helped heal any shame due to the influences of his biological, pagan father. Little is mentioned about the father and to what his involvement was in this family. A native of Lystra in Asia Minor, Timothy had a Jewish mother but a Greek father. Timothy was converted on Paul’s first journey (Ferguson, 1997). Obviously, in a strict Jewish culture, Timothy’s background was disturbing.

Paul did not focus on the shame but rather on the honor of a Christian heritage; Paul reaffirmed Timothy about his rich family heritage. II Timothy 2:5 reads, “When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.” Paul used this point to inspire Timothy. If Timothy failed in his pastoral duties, he could have endangered his family honor in the Christian community



(Barclay, 1960). Therefore, Paul's encouragement was a tool to help guide young leaders in the early church.

Furthermore, Paul also understood Timothy's character flaws. Timothy tended to be timid and fearful in the past (Constance, 2005). In I Timothy 1:3, Paul instructed Timothy: "As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine." The situation was not easy. Timothy had to deal with Jewish people who may have felt that he was not a true Jew because of his father's Gentile background. Timothy was pastoring many individuals who were older than him. Paul encouraged Timothy on this matter by reminding him to stay encouraged, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God (II Timothy 1: 7, 8)." However, Paul put much trust in Timothy. Paul expressed this concern in I Timothy 1: 18, saying "This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare."

Today, many church leaders try to engage young people by telling them what to do and how to do it without having relationships with them. However, these young people are interested in building relationships first. It is easy to find fault in the shortcomings of today's youth. Leaders should seek the good in each individual and "stir up the gifts" in him or her. This action starts by getting to know a young person as an individual. This requires more than creating a youth program; it requires commitment, listening, and time. Today's youth want adults who are interested in them. Building a relationship is vital. For those youth with tainted family backgrounds, relationship building becomes a critical component for personal success. Encouraging youth is another area of opportunity for churches. Young people are constantly bombarded with negative feedback. Paul was a steady source of encouragement for young leaders. Paul adds in I Timothy 4:12, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers..." Therefore, leaders can be a positive catalysis in youth leadership development by building relationships with them and encouraging them.

### *Leaders Model*

Christian leaders must model the values they expect from young leaders to be considered credible. Paul's life demonstrated that his calling was noble. In I Timothy 1:1, Paul made a proclamation about himself: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope..." Paul viewed his apostleship as honorable, responsible, and privilege (Barclay, 1960). Paul called himself an apostle of Jesus Christ; the word apostle is the Greek word *apostolos*, which comes from the word *apostellein*, which means "to send out." He uses the word *epitage*, which means "by the royal command of God." Paul boldly decreed the gospel of Christ. Romans 1:16, reads "I am proud of the good news! It is God's powerful way of saving all people who have faith, whether they are Jews or Gentiles..." Paul made it known that being an ordained church leader meant he or she was set apart for a special service (Barclay, 1960). Therefore, Paul clearly communicated to his young pastors to take pride in the high calling of being a servant leader.

Furthermore, Paul understood that humans are governed by good and bad values. These values are stimulated through the spiritual world. In Galatians 5:16, Paul encouraged Christians on this matter: "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." Paul had already explained the negative consequences of following the flesh. Paul's own personal hardships, tribulations, and rejections signaled the cost of Christian leadership. Paul had warned Timothy about the dangers of getting too complacent in this ministry. Paul mentioned two believers, Hymenaeus and Alexander, who had defected from the faith. Their conduct demonstrated bad values and was associated with wild beast; they were noted as *wolves* (Acts 20:19). In this paper, value is defined as 'beliefs upon which one acts by preference' and serves as influencers on attitude and behavior (Zander, Jonsen, & Mockaitis, 2016). In fact, personal values assist leaders in dealing with decision making and uncertainties. Star (2016) further argued that leaders must understand their own core values and those of the organization that they are representing. Given this perspective, Paul made a distinction between good values (I Timothy 3) and bad values (I Timothy 1:9-10) to his young leaders.

Today's church leaders must model good character to young people. Christian leaders should provide a model for their followers. Effective leaders exemplify good character, such as integrity, courage, and patience. Caring leaders treat their followers as though they possess intelligence and creativity. Miller (1995) explained that when conflict must be resolved when justice must be defined and carried out, these are the times when leaders act with ruthless honesty and live up to their covenant with the people they lead. Many adults feel that children should just do as they are told. However, these same adults feel no obligation to be living examples for the children. Pascarella (1999) argued that too many Christian leaders do not live the lives they profess. He suggested that leaders become more discipline so that they will align themselves with God in everything they do. The values of this present culture have made these hypocritical leaders irrelevant in motivating the future leaders to action. Therefore, church leaders must serve as organizational advocates; they must influence how followers perceive an organization's core values (Malphurs, 1996). If today's leaders do not demonstrate values consistent with their organization's values, they will lose credibility with young people.

### *Leaders Build*

Christian leaders should develop opportunities for building strong character in young people. The Apostle Paul provided assignments from which Timothy could mature. Paul was in the business of instructing church leaders. For example, Paul met with the elders at Ephesus during his third missionary journey and warned them about the emerging false teachers (Constance, 2005). When Paul left from Ephesus, he placed young Timothy in charge of this congregation (I Timothy 1:3). As a precaution, Paul had already circumcised Timothy to minimize any church disruption among the Jewish believers. Later, Timothy wrote Paul to request that he be allowed to leave Ephesus. He wanted to return home. Timothy's request was denied (I Timothy 3:14; 4:13). Paul's response must have disappointed Timothy (Constable, 2005).

Paul needed Timothy to fill the leadership gap that was apparently missing in Ephesus. Paul was clearly giving Timothy an assignment to build character. In II Timothy 2:1, the apostle encouraged Timothy: "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Many people in the church at Ephesus

would resent Timothy's leadership because of his age, mixed heritage, and his association with Paul. Therefore, this assignment served several purposes: (a) to exhort Timothy as he tried to stop the erring church elders, who became increasingly argumentative, (b) to formally authorize Timothy to carry out his pastoral duties, and (c) to expose these false teachings as well as the false teachers (Fee, 1984). Paul was known for giving his young pastors difficult assignments. Unlike Timothy, Titus was given the assignment of appointing elders in various churches that had not been established (Fee, 1984).

Additionally, Paul understood the pressures of leading others while carrying a tainted past. As a past Jewish zealot, Paul persecuted the church. Paul faced heavy opposition, and his past deeds made his job difficult. First, Paul was opposed by groups of Jewish Christians. Second, Paul's teaching about Christ, salvation, and oneness of all--including females, Gentiles, and slaves, left his beliefs counter to Jewish tradition (Marshall, 1999). Paul understood his situation and saw something special in young Timothy. Paul had placed Timothy in a situation where he stood out because he was young, a bi-ethnic, and an outsider in this Ephesus community. Paul explained in II Timothy 2:6, "Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands." Paul challenged Timothy to move beyond his shame and his youth by providing these special assignments to build his character. The results were positive. Timothy assisted Paul in Troas, Philippi, Berea, Thessalonica, Athens, and Corinth (Constance, 2005). Timothy had become one of Paul's trusted companions. Paul spoke about this spiritual maturity of Timothy in Philippians 2:22, "But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel." Therefore, these extremely hard opportunities helped strengthen Timothy's confidence and reinforce his character. Thus, today's leaders should focus on giving youth opportunities for positive value formation.

Contrary to popular belief, character does count. During a Sunday morning service, one Tennessee minister explained in his sermon, "Everyone wants to be outstanding, but no one wants to stand out." However, leadership requires that individuals stand out. Young people need opportunities that will allow them to build Christian character. Some church leaders feel that young people grow and mature by chance. It does not. Many traditionalists feel to affect change in an organization, a leader must command or manipulate followers. However, O' Toole (1996) maintained that anyone who attempts these types of controlling

methods to force change would receive fierce resistance. Guinness (2000) explained that contemporary society views character as something that distinguishes an individual; however, biblically, character is viewed as essentially moral. In Jewish culture, someone who was well-intentioned but failed to keep his word was considered irresponsible. Good character does not need to be policed or supervised. Individuals should understand what needs to be done and do it.

### **Conclusion**

With record numbers of divorce, broken homes, and negative cultural influences, young people are increasingly growing up in a dysfunctional world. Many adults have given up on this lost generation. Adults gladly embrace young people who show potential and who stem from a traditional family background. However, many adults do not want to deal with youth carrying dysfunctional baggage. Many adults are simply afraid of them. Anger is on their faces. Rebellion is on their lips. However, these children who are reared in dysfunctional environments are crying out for help. Some of these children would gladly trade places with others. Some pray to God for help: "Give me a clean heart so I may serve Thee. Lord, fix my heart so that I may be used by Thee."

Therefore, many young people live in isolation, despair, and shame. Jesus commissioned the Church to go and make disciples. Some churches do not understand how to inspire a pop culture generation. However, the Bible contains a blueprint. Clearly, the church has an awesome responsibility in molding young people, despite their dysfunctional circumstances. The Apostle Paul answered this challenge in his day by equipping his young pastors, such as Timothy, for Christian service. Church leaders can also find helpful solutions by exegetically analyzing the Pastoral Epistles of the Apostle Paul. By analyzing these books, one can understand how one can go from personal shame to divine honor.

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