

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

### **Practice These Things Philippians 4:9**

I am sure that we all appreciate the importance of good training. As many of you know I had my biopsy this past week for prostate cancer. The procedure involved a nurse and a doctor. I know that I am a layman and really do not have the knowledge or the experience to accurately evaluate what I went through or to make accurate judgments about how well trained these medical professionals were, but I did make some observations.

The doctor appeared to be very composed and methodical going through the entire procedure without hesitation. It was as if he had done this procedure 1000's of times before and knew exactly what he needed to do. He had an air of confidence. He seemed not only very well trained but also very experienced. And of course from a patient's perspective this can be very comforting. Was he well trained and experienced? I don't know? I am just a layman but he certainly projected that image.

The nurse on the other hand made things a little less comfortable for me. It started out pretty well. She gave me very clear instructions of what she wanted me to do to prepare myself for the procedure. But then it seemed to go down hill from there.

I first started feeling that there might be a problem when she led me up to the table where the procedure was going to be done. She seemed to indicate that I should get on the table but seemed unfamiliar with the table itself and how I was supposed to position myself on the table. At this point I wasn't alarmed I was just simply mildly surprised. About that time the doctor entered the room and began to give his attention to the machine which he would use to locate and take photographs of exactly where each biopsy would be taken. And again everything seemed to be in very good hands and I totally forgot about the nurse. In fact I couldn't even see her at this point. But then the procedure started. Now you have to appreciate that this procedure was being done without any sedation and it was therefore uncomfortable. And of course I had a personal interest as a patient not only in the procedure being done well but that it would be done as quickly as possible with the least amount of trauma.

The only problem was the nurse. In the midst of the procedure I began to realize that the doctor was working with someone who was apparently not very well trained. There was a great deal of interaction required between the doctor and the nurse in order for him to do the job he needed to do. And it became very clear to me after just a few minutes that the doctor was having to help this particular nurse do her job, even at one point in time apparently having to correct her.

On the positive side of things I was once again very impressed with the doctor who was extremely patient with this well meaning but seemingly unprepared nurse. Was the doctor well trained? It certainly seemed like he was. Was the nurse well trained? It certainly didn't seem so. Hopefully she will do better next time.

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You might be wondering about the results of my biopsy. I won't know the result until the end of next week. And when I find out those results I will have them posted on our web site.

We can all appreciate the importance of good training. The better people are trained the better they perform. And this is not only true of medical personnel but even disciples of Christ. Do you believe this? Hopefully your answer would be yes. And hopefully this is one of the reasons why you have chosen to become involved at Valley Bible Church. Hopefully you have chosen to be involved in this church not simply because we have good music, which we do. Not simply because we have good youth and children programs, which we do. But hopefully because you feel that this is a good place for you and your family to be effectively trained as disciples of Christ. Certainly I believe this and I would like to say to you "That if you apply yourself to this process of training here at Valley Bible Church you will not be disappointed."

What we are striving to do here is very consistent with how Paul was seeking to train disciples in the church at Philippi. And this weekend we will see an outline of those efforts within the passage that we have been studying for several months now. Hopefully you remember this passage very well. We have been studying **Philippians 4:4-9**.

In this passage of scripture there are a series of exhortations. The first exhortation that we have considered is in **Philippians 4:4** "**Rejoice in the Lord always, again I will say, rejoice!**" The second exhortation that we have considered is in **Philippians 4:5** "**Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near.**" The third exhortation that we have considered is in **Philippians 4:6** "**Be anxious for nothing.**" The fourth exhortation in **Philippians 4:7** which we considered last week was "**Let your mind dwell on these things**" referring to all the virtues outlined earlier in that very same verse. This week we will go on to the fifth exhortation.

We find this fifth exhortation in **Philippians 4:9**. Let me read this verse for you. "**The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you.**" What is the fourth exhortation? The fourth exhortation is "**practice these things.**" Practice what things? He is referring to all those things that he himself had provided for them both in word and deed. When we take the things that he had provided for them along with his present exhortation we have an outline of an effective training program for disciples of Christ.

This weekend I would like to give you an outline of an effective training program for disciples of Christ based on Paul's approach. I am hopeful in doing this that not only you would appreciate more fully what is necessary in order to effectively train a disciple of Christ but that you would also commit yourself to taking advantage of the training opportunities provided for you in this church.

What are the necessary requirements for effectively training a disciple of Christ? What are the necessary prerequisites for producing a mature disciple?

Effective training requires that a disciple be biblically instructed. We see this necessary requirement alluded to at the very beginning of **Philippians 4:9**. Let me read for you this very brief portion of scripture. What does it say? "**The things you have learned and received.**"

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What is Paul referring to when he is referring to the things “learned?” The verb “learned” (MANTHANO) is primarily used to speak of learning through instruction. In the context of **Philippians 4:9** where four parallel verbs with slightly different nuances are used it is likely focusing on the Philippians appropriation of the teaching and instruction that Paul initially gave to them while he was ministering among them.

The word “received” has a little different emphasis or nuance. The verb “received” (PARALAMBANO) was a semi-technical term employed to denote the receiving of something by tradition or in other words the passing down of something from generation to generation, such as the Torah. With this understanding we can now appreciate the significance of this word in this context? The semi-technical term “received” (PARALAMBANO) in Philippians 4:9 emphasizes that the instruction the Philippians had received from Paul came from the Lord.

How did Paul seek to train the disciples of Christ at Philippi? He took the words that the Lord had given him and faithfully proclaimed those words to the Philippians. Those inspired words are now recorded for us in the scriptures along with other inspired words of other apostles.

If we are going to follow in the footsteps of Paul and follow his pattern in respect to the training of disciples then we must pass on those same inspired words. For us, this means that we must take the words of scripture and commit ourselves to faithfully proclaiming those words to those who are seeking to be trained as disciples of Christ.

I would like to think that our church is committed to doing this. I would like to think that we are committed to biblical instruction. But it is not enough for us simply to be committed to biblical instruction we must be committed to quality biblical instruction if disciples are going to be effectively trained.

Effective training requires that a disciple not only be given the opportunity to receive biblical instruction but thorough and accurate biblical instruction.

Let us begin by considering the importance of thoroughness to Paul. When Paul was saying farewell to the Ephesian elders he shares with them in **Acts 20:27** **“I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.”** What do we see in this verse? Paul personally insisted on thoroughness in biblical instruction(Acts 20:27).

When a person or a church is committed to declaring the whole counsel of the word of God there is always the potential for upset. I would like to think that this church has, over the years and up to the present time, demonstrated the fact that we will not shrink away from our responsibility to thoroughly proclaim the word. We will not dodge topics because they might be controversial. And we will not dodge topics because those topics might fail to tickle the fancy of what people might want to hear. A case in point might be the topic that we are considering this morning. I believe that it would not be too far fetched in thinking that there are people here this morning who might find the consideration of Paul’s model for training disciples to be rather dry. But my concern in bringing you this message is not too entertain you nor is it, I can assure you, not to bore you. My purpose in sharing with you what I am sharing with you this weekend is to teach the whole counsel of God.

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Let us now go on to concern ourselves with the importance of accuracy in biblical instruction to the Apostle Paul. Let me read for you **2 Timothy 2:15** and Paul's encouragement to Timothy, "**Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling, accurately the word of truth.** Paul not only insisted on thoroughness but also on accuracy in biblical instruction (2 Timothy 2:15).

This is very important to us at Valley Bible. We are attempting as best as we can with the resources that we presently have available to us to not only be thorough but accurate in our instruction. A great deal of work goes into the messages, the lessons, and the documents that we produce here at this church in order to assure accuracy.

When you come to our services and hear a message, or go to a Sunday school class and hear a lesson, or go to one of our home Bible study groups which we call "growth groups" and participate in a study, or visit our web site and access any portion of the huge volume of biblical instruction that is available to you there, you can be assured that we take the accuracy of what you are receiving very seriously.

If you will take advantage of the thorough and accurate biblical instruction that is available to you through this church, which I am confident far exceeds the quantity of instruction that was available to the Christians that were living at Philippi, you will have taken a huge step forward in being effectively trained as a disciple of Christ.

But please listen to this. Even though you may be surrounded by a cornucopia of biblical instruction it will do you no good unless you have the mind to feast on it. What is the first thing we learn about the training of disciples based on Paul's model outlined for us in **Philippians 4:9**. The first thing that we have learned is that effective training requires that a disciple be biblically instructed.

But this is not the only thing we learned about the training of disciples based on Paul's model outlined for us in **Philippians 4:9**.

Effective training also requires that a disciple be provided a personal example to follow. Let us read a little bit further in **Philippians 4:9**. What else does Paul say? "**The things that you have learned and received and heard and seen.**" When Paul refers to things that the Philippians had "heard" and "seen" he is talking about matters related to his example rather than his instruction.

Someone might question this. They might say that when Paul refers to the things that the Philippians "heard" he is referring to his instruction rather than to his example. But this is not likely in light of the fact that this would leave the verse unbalanced; with the first three verbs referring to his instruction and only the last verb referring to his example. I believe that it is better to link the verb "heard" with the final verb which of course refers to his example rather than to the first two verbs which were referring his instruction.

This conclusion is supported by the use of these two words earlier in the epistle. Listen to **Philippians 1:30** where Paul speaking to the Philippians says to them, "**experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.**"

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What did the Philippians hear? They were hearing very positive reports about Paul's character and demeanor as he faced the various persecutions that he was presently going through. What they were hearing was not related to Paul's instruction but rather to his example.

How did Paul seek to train the disciples of Christ at Philippi? He not only instructed them but he also provided them with an example to follow. This example was provided as they heard positive reports about him and as they were able to personally see how he was living his life.

If we are going to follow in the footsteps of Paul and follow his pattern in training disciples of Christ we must be committed to thorough and accurate biblical instruction. In addition to this, Valley Bible must be committed to providing an opportunity for the disciples of Christ to follow a positive example. How is Valley Bible seeking to work this out?

Obviously we do not have the opportunity to place before you the personal example of the Apostle Paul. He has long ago gone home to glory. But we do have the opportunity to place before you people who are seeking to live according to his pattern and they are just as important in the process of training disciples as Paul himself.

Hopefully you remember **Philippians 3:17**. Let me read this verse for you, **“Brethren, join in following my example, and observe (closely watch, scrutinize) those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.”** Where might we find people who are seeking to walk according to the pattern of the Apostle Paul and his missionary team?

We have tried to assemble these people in our various growth groups. Certainly not everyone in every growth group has their spiritual headlights on but you will find people in our groups that in fact do. Valley Bible's growth group ministry provides this church with an opportunity to be trained not only through biblical instruction but also through example.

Please listen to what I am going to share with you. It is not enough for you to read your Bible in the seclusion of your home, it is not even enough for you to come to Valley Bible Church and listen to the messages or attend a Sunday school class even though all these things are good. We need to put ourselves in a position to hear and see the example of those who have their spiritual headlights on if we are going to be effectively trained.

What is the first thing we learn about the training of disciples based on Paul's model outlined for us in **Philippians 4:9**. The first thing that we have learned is that effective training requires that a disciple be biblically instructed. What is the second thing that we learned? The second thing that we have learned is that effective training requires an example. But there is one last thing that we see in this verse that is necessary if disciples of Christ are going to be effectively trained?

Effective training requires a call to action. Let us again look at **Philippians 4:9** **“The things that you have learned and received (through my instruction) and heard and seen in me (through my example), practice these things.”** Hopefully at every level of this church we will be committed to calling our brothers and sisters in Christ to action. If this were not necessary Paul would not be doing what we see him doing as frequently as he does it.

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I know that it may be difficult to day after day, and week after week, to be called to action. But hopefully we will be prepared to respond well to those encouragements.

How do you think the Philippians responded to this admonition in **Philippians 4:9**? Do you think that they became indignant saying, “You don’t know how difficult our lives are? You don’t know how little time that we have? You don’t know how little energy we have?” I am quite confident that this is not how they responded.

But now let us put the shoe on the other foot. What about the person who is always giving the call to action such as the Apostle Paul. Could he in some way have struggled in finding himself in the position of continually having to call people to action? And the answer would have to be absolutely. It can be very tiresome to continually call people to action and see them unmoved and unchanged. But thankfully by the grace of God Paul did not quit and hopefully we will not as well.

### CONCLUSION

What are the necessary requirements for effectively training a disciple of Christ?

Effective training requires that a disciple be biblically instructed.

Effective training also requires that a disciple be provided an example to follow.

Effective training requires a call to action.

If we take advantage of the biblical instruction available through this church, if we take advantage of the biblical examples made available through this church, if you would take advantage of the numerous calls to action made available through this church what will happen? Those who take advantage of what this church is offering will be effectively trained and the God of peace will be with them.

What does the verse say? **“The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you.”**