

August 24, 2008 by Steve Brandon



Churches Help Churches (Various)

1. Barnabas
2. Timothy
3. Epaphroditus
4. Tychicus
5. Titus

<<At the beginning of my message, one of our elders, Gordy Bell, took some time to explain the difficulties that he has been experiencing in living so far away from church. In addition to this, he has some matters with his extended family that needs his greater attention at this time. Thus, he announced his need to attend a church closer to his home, which is compelling him to step down from his role as elder.>>

This announcement may come as a surprise to you, but it doesn't come as a surprise to me. It doesn't come as a surprise to the deacons of the church either. We have all know for quite some time that he has other matters to attend to which are pulling him to step down at this time.

When Gordy initially agreed to be an elder at Rock Valley Bible Church, he knew the pull of his family, of his age, and the distance that he was from the church. But, when one of the elders at Kishwaukee Bible Church, our sending church, said, "Can you give us a year?" Gordy said that he could. Well, that one year has turned into three. I knew that we were on borrowed time every week that He continued to serve in this capacity.

I am forever thankful to the Lord for the years of ministry that Gordy Bell has given to me and to this church. When I think about the help that he has been to me, I think, "Gordy, how can I ever pay you back? I don't think that I can. (Nor do I think that you are really looking for me to pay you back in any sort of way). But, I do envision a day, perhaps 30 years from now, when I'm 71 years old (if God gives me that many years). You will be long gone from the earth, but worshiping the lamb upon the throne. I think that I might find myself in a situation someplace in a church where a young pastor needs help, and I could help him in the ministry. At that time, I vision myself telling the story my old friend Gordy Bell, who came and helped me in my time of need. And I'll tell of how you stepped in to help me, serving with me as a fellow elder. I'll tell this young pastor of what a blessing you were to me. I'll tell him of how much I learned from you concerning prayer and a heart for people. By the Lord's mercy, I'll step up in that situation and help him like you have done me. My only hope is that I will be as big a blessing to that young pastor as you have been to me."

So, where does that leave us as a church? It leaves us with only one elder, which isn't good. Churches aren't meant to be led by only one man. God has so designed them that they be shepherded by a plurality of godly, qualified elders. Now, ss bad as the news is that Gordy is stepping down from the eldership, I do have good news for you this morning. We have a solution to our situation. The solution comes from Kishwaukee Bible Church in DeKalb, the church that planted us.

The elders at Kishwaukee Bible Church are fully aware of the situation. They knew full well that Gordy was serving beyond his original intentions.

In discussing our situation with the elders of Kishwaukee Bible Church, they have offered to send one of their own elders, Frank Yonke, to Rockford on a part-time basis here to Rockford to replace Gordy Bell and to bridge our leadership until we are able to appoint another elder (or two or three). His assignment here is temporary, until he can replace himself. Frank plans on spending half of his time here in Rockford, working for Rock Valley Bible Church and half of his time in DeKalb, working for Kishwaukee Bible Church

Now, the good news is that Frank Yonke is not an unknown commodity for us. Over the years, he has been here in rockford on several occasions. He has preached on Sunday morning and he has conducted several family seminars. Some of you know him very well. He also comes with many years of experience. He has served on elder boards of several churches for more than 20 years. He will be a great help to us.

Near the end of my message, I will give you more detail of what this means. But, before we get there, I want you to realize that our situation, of needing help from another church, isn't foreign in any way to the experience of the early church. In fact, the history of the early church reveals that it is often the case that one church is in need of help and people are sent who are particularly gifted to help them.

Appropriately, my message this morning is entitled, "Churches Help Churches." When you read about the church in the New Testament, you see that the churches were independent churches. That is, they had no denominational affiliation. They were under no hierarchical control. They didn't have bishops in far away places dictating what they must do.

But, although they were independent, they were also interdependent as well. That is, none of the churches in the New Testament stood alone

to do their own thing. Nor did they refuse to interact with one another. But, they served and helped one another. And they did this, not because they had some sort of control that they wanted, rather they did it because they loved other churches, and wanted to see the gospel flourish in another location. This is what Kishwaukee Bible Church is seeking to do. They planted us as a church and feel a responsibility and a desire to help us in our time of need.

In my message this morning, I want to explore the idea that churches described in the New Testament helped each other often, in a variety of ways. And thereby encourage your hearts that receiving help that Frank Yonke can give is entirely Biblical. L

Let's begin by look at Acts 11. The book of Acts describes the work of the Holy Spirit in the work of taking the gospel from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth (Acts 1:8). By the time we reach chapter 11, the church has exploded in Jerusalem (Acts 2-6). Through the martyrdom of Stephen, the church was forced out to Samaria, which is recorded for us in Acts, chapter 8. Finally, in Acts 10, we see Peter bringing the gospel to Caesarea, where Cornelius, the god-fearing Centurion, embraced the gospel with many of his friends and family (Acts 10:24).

Acts 11 starts off with a discussion among the leaders of the church in Jerusalem about what took place in Caesarea. Their conclusion is found in verse 18, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life." Up until this point in the life of the church, the predominant thinking was that Jesus had only come to save Israel from their sins. But, verse 18 was a major turning point in the thinking of many. God's grace in salvation has extended further than Israel. But now, they came to embrace the fact that Christ came to die for both Jews and Gentiles. His sacrifice was sufficient for all who believe in Him for eternal salvation. The mission of the Messiah was beyond merely the Jews. It also included the Gentiles as well. Are you thankful? The existence of our church is a testimony of how God's saving work has extended far beyond the Jews to the Gentiles as well. I want to pick up the story in Acts 19:11 with my first point:

1. Barnabas

Acts 11:19-21

So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord.

At this point, we see the sovereign hand of God causing a revival to take place in Antioch, several hundred miles north of Jerusalem. The saving message of the gospel of Jesus Christ had come to them. The hand the Lord so moved in that place that "a large number who believed turned to the Lord" (verse 21).

Verse 22 picks up the story, "The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch."

At this point, I want you to think about what happened. The church at Jerusalem heard of what was taking place in Antioch. They heard of the "large number" of people who had turned to the Lord. I'm sure that those in Jerusalem were thrilled that God's hand was upon the people. And so, they sent Barnabas off to Antioch.

We aren't quite sure as to why Barnabas went to Antioch, because the Scripture is silent. Perhaps he went merely to investigate as an official representative of the church in Jerusalem. Perhaps he went for a discipling and teaching role. Whatever his exact purposes were, we can safely assume that they had sent him to offer his help and support for the church in Antioch. Surely, with so many people coming to know the Lord, there would be opportunities for help.

Barnabas was uniquely poised to help. Barnabas, himself, was a seasoned churchman, who was committed to the gospel of Christ. He was there in the early church, when Peter and John were arrested (Acts 4:1-3). He may well have been in the prayer meeting that shook the ground (Acts 4:31). When those in the early church were selling their possession for the needs of others, Barnabas, "[who] owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet" (Acts 4:37). Here was a committed servant of the Lord, who understood how the gospel had gone out to the Gentiles. He understood a bit about the life of the church.

And so, according to verse 22, they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. The story picks up in verse 23 with Barnabas arriving in Antioch.

Acts 11:22-23

Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord; for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord.

Here was Barnabas, sent by the church in Jerusalem, in Antioch, encouraging the new believers to persevere in their faith. But, as Barnabas was in Antioch for a bit, he came to understand the weaknesses of what was taking place in that church. And so, ...

Acts 11:25-26

And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul [later to be called Paul]; and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

Tarsus was some 100 miles from Antioch, further north and west along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Tarsus was Saul's hometown.

Barnabas and Saul had become acquaintances, shortly after his conversion. Perhaps you remember the story. Shortly after Saul had been struck blind on the road to Damascus, he "began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues" (Acts 9:20). In doing so, He was "confounding the Jews by proving that this Jesus is the Christ" (Acts 9:22). When Saul came to Jerusalem, he "tried to associate with the disciples but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple" (Acts 9:26).

Those in Jerusalem were familiar with this man. He had obtained warrants for the arrests of Christians. This man was "blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor" (1 Tim. 1:13), who was responsible for the persecution of many Christians. And so, it is understandable that many were afraid. But, the one who made a difference was Barnabas. Acts 9:27 tells us that "Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus, he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus." And so, at the recommendation of Barnabas, Paul was able to move about freely in Jerusalem, where he was "speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord" (Acts 9:28).

And now, many years later, Barnabas knew that Saul was the guy that the church in Antioch needed. So, he went to Tarsus to find him and bring him back to Antioch, where he could ground these new believers in the faith, which he did for an entire year. The church in Jerusalem was helping the church in Antioch. But, soon, their roles would be reversed.

Acts 11:27-30

Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world And this took place in the reign of Claudius. And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea. And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders.

At this point, we see that the church in Jerusalem was in trouble. There was a famine in the land. Those in Jerusalem were in need of help. And so, those in the church in Antioch, freely gave of their money to help out with those who had been affected in Judea. Appropriately, the money was sent to Jerusalem by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. In the very last verse of chapter 12, we see their mission accomplished. 12:25, "And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission, taking along with them John, who was also called Mark."

Now, I want for you to think about what's happening here. Initially, the church in Antioch was in great need. They had many converts coming into the church and they needed leadership. The church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to meet their need. When he arrived, he discerned that he wasn't the one to help them. It was Saul who would be of great help to them. But, then, about a year later, those in Antioch heard about some trouble in Jerusalem. This time, the need wasn't spiritual. There wasn't a need for more teachers in Jerusalem. Rather, the need was physical. There was a famine. And so, the church in Antioch sent Barnabas and Saul back to Jerusalem with a financial gift in hand to help relieve some of the suffering that the famine had brought upon the believers in Jerusalem.

We see "Churches Helping Churches," which is the premise of my message this morning. Such is the New Testament pattern. Today, at Rock Valley Bible Church, we are in a position of need. We need another elder to come and replace Gordy Bell. Perhaps the day will come when there will be a need at Kishwaukee Bible Church. Perhaps we will be on the giving end, rather than on the receiving end. That's my heart. I long for Rock Valley Bible Church to operate from a position of strength, where we are poised and ready to help other churches.

In the New Testament, we see that churches help churches in various ways. So far in Acts, we have seen examples of churches helping churches spiritually. That is, where there was a spiritual need, a need for discipleship. We also have seen churches helping churches physically. That is, where there was a physical need. By the time that we get around to Acts 13, we see another way in which churches help churches. Churches plant churches. We see this in the opening verses of chapter 13, ...

Acts 13:1-4

Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

Here we see the leaders of the church in Antioch praying and fasting together, seeking the will of the Lord. In their praying, the Holy Spirit spoke audibly to them, instructing them to send out Barnabas and Saul. And so, what did the church do? The church laid their hands upon these two men and sent them away.

As chapters 13 and 14 develop, we see the birth of Biblical missions. This is often called, "The First Missionary Journey." Paul and Barnabas traveled to Psidian Antioch, where they preached the gospel. Many were saved and many opposed their ministry. They then traveled to Iconium, Lystra and Derbe, where they encountered much the same thing. They preached the gospel, some believed, but many resisted. Now, when they had reached Derbe, they turned around and visited those who believed, appointing elders and strengthening the churches.

Acts 14:21-23

After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

In verse 26, we see them returning to Antioch, "from which they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had accomplished. When they had arrived and gathered the church together, they began to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. And they spent a long time with the disciples." In other words, they had accomplished everything that God had appointed for them to do. They planted churches. They strengthened the souls of those in the church. They encouraged the churches. They appointed elders in the churches.

In Acts 15, we see another way that the churches help churches. They help with doctrinal disputes. Let's pick it up in verse 1, ...

Acts 15:1-2

Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved. And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.

The work of God can't take place for very long without Satan seeking to disrupt things. And so, some false teachers began to arrive on the scene. These teachers were zealous for the law. They required all believers in Christ to follow the Old Testament ritual of circumcision in order to be saved. This was a doctrine that Paul opposed with all of his heart. (Just read Romans or Galatians, where he articulates very clearly how we are justified by faith alone, and not by works of the law, like circumcision). So strong was Paul that he would write "if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you" (Gal 5:2)

But, when these men couldn't be silenced, they took matters to Jerusalem, where the apostles were ministering. Notice, that it was the church who sent Paul and Barnabas up to Jerusalem to resolve this issue. "The brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem." (15:2) In this case, we see the church in Antioch in a position of needing help. So, they went to the church in Jerusalem to help solve their problem.

You can read all about the issue in Acts 15. It's beyond the scope of my message this morning to dig into the details. But, I can say that there was discussion about these things. Peter spoke to everybody. James spoke to everybody. Finally, the apostles, elders and "the whole church" (Acts 15:22) wrote a letter explaining their official conclusion regarding these matters (Acts 23-29). And so, Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch with this letter in hand. Verse 30 explains what took place. "So when they were sent away, they went down to Antioch; and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. When they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement."

Through this letter, the church in Jerusalem was helping the church in Antioch (and beyond). Being helped by the church in Jerusalem gave the church in Antioch further desire to help other churches. We read in Acts 15:36, "After some days Paul said to Barnabas, 'Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.'" Their heart was to return to where they were before and help these churches in whatever way they needed. Unfortunately, there was a conflict between Paul and Barnabas over whether John Mark should come with them. And the end of the day, they couldn't resolve their dispute, and so they separated their ways. Verse 39 tells us that Barnabas and Mark "sailed away to Cyprus" on their way to visit Psidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. "But Paul" according to verse 40, "chose Silas and left, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord."

Here we see the church behind Paul sending him off to do His work of helping churches. At this point, we read of no more record of Barnabas. And so, it's appropriate that I conclude my first point of following Barnabas through the Scriptures.

But, in chapter 16, we see another man come on the scene, who is crucial in helping other churches. His name is ...

2. Timothy

Timothy is introduced with these words, ...

Acts 16:1-3

Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek, and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted this man to go with him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

Paul met this man named Timothy and immediately saw his potential. Those in the churches of Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him. From other portions of Scripture, we know that, "He was a young man" (1 Tim. 4:12), who had a godly heritage. Both his mother and grandmother were believers in Christ (2 Tim. 1:5). He was a "man of God" (1 Tim. 6:11). Over the years, Paul's discernment of this man proved to be true. Timothy developed into a man of "proven worth" (Phil. 2:22), who possessed a kindred spirit with Paul unlike anybody else Paul knew (Phil. 2:20).

With a great deal of confidence, we can assume that Timothy went with Paul with the full recommendation of the churches in Lystra and Iconium. As these churches released this man, he became a help to many other churches.

As you trace Timothy's activities throughout the book of Acts, you see him ministering along side of Paul, doing whatever it takes to help the churches.

For instance, in Acts 17:14, we read of how Paul was in Berea and being run out of town. But, Timothy was able to remain to minister to

those in Berea.

Acts 17:14-15

Then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea; and Silas and Timothy remained there." 15 - Now those who escorted Paul brought him as far as Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they left.

Though Paul was banned from Berea, his partners, Silas and Timothy were permitted to remain. The only reason why they didn't join Paul and sail with him to Athens, was to carry on the work that was started there in Berea. We can only assume that they were continuing to teach and disciple the new converts in Berea. Well, eventually, they left to join up with Paul. They headed to Athens, but found out that Paul had gone on to Corinth. And so, they went on to Corinth. We read of their reunion in Acts 18:5, "But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ."

At this point, Silas and Timothy were doing whatever they could do to see the work of the church carry on. From verse 5, it's clear that they obtained some sort of secular employment to free up Paul for the ministry. In this way they were helping churches. They were helping Paul be freed up for the purposes of evangelism, as he was committed to testifying that Jesus was the Christ.

One of the last mentions of Timothy in the book of Acts comes in Acts 19:22. This verse is important, because it sets forth a typical pattern for the way that Paul used Timothy to help churches. He sent Timothy on various help missions. "And having sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while" (Acts 19:22). Paul was in Asia, but Timothy and Erastus were sent on to Macedonia. They weren't sent there for vacation. They were sent there to help churches.

This whole idea of sending people to help churches happened often in the early church. People were constantly moving around, from place to place to help churches. From time to time, the purposes were a bit different. In fact, when you trace the journeys of Timothy, you discover that he was sent to different churches for different purposes altogether.

Sometimes, it was to see how people were doing in their faith, whether they were continuing to persevere -- in and out for a quick visit. At other times, his purpose was a bit longer, to help churches grow in their love for Christ. At other time, it was for a long-term purpose of staying in one place for a long time, to pastor the church. I want to show this to you, by showing this to you from several passages of Scripture.

First of all, consider what Paul wrote in the following passage carefully.

1 Thessalonians 3:1-8

Therefore when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith, so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. For indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know. For this reason, when I could endure it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be in vain. But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you, for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith; for now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord.

With these words, Paul explains to those in Thessalonica of his anguish in not really knowing how those in Thessalonica are doing. He had been there. He has seen some profess their faith in Christ. But, he was worried that they may have been affected by the way that Paul was run out of town. So, Paul sent Timothy to find out how the church was doing and return to Paul with a report of how things were going. We don't know how long Timothy spent with those in Thessalonica, but it was probably on the order of a **few days** or perhaps a week or two, but not very long. Paul sent him to return quickly to news of how those in Thessalonica were doing.

Timothy's visits weren't always short. Paul wrote to those in Corinth telling them of how he sent Timothy to help them grow in Christ, "For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church" (1 Cor. 4:17). To Corinth, Timothy's mission was to go and remind the people of the ways of Christ. Again, we don't know how long Timothy remained in Corinth, but it appears as if it was on the scale of a **few months**, as he was charged with helping them to further in their understanding of the gospel.

Timothy's mission to Ephesus was different still. He remained in Ephesus for **years**, as he pastored the church in that city. [\[1\]](#)

That's Timothy. He was a man who was committed to helping churches. He did whatever was necessary to see these things accomplished. So far, we have looked at Barnabas and Timothy. Now, let's focus our attention now upon, ...

3. Epaphroditus

This point will necessarily be short, as Epaphroditus is mentioned in only two verses in the Bible. Both times, it's in Philippians.

When Paul wrote Philippians, he was in prison, wanting and hoping to send Timothy to the church in Philippi. But he couldn't yet send him, because this own livelihood was up in the air and Paul needed Timothy to help him through his difficulties. But instead, Paul had been able to send Epaphroditus. He explained it this way, ...

Philippians 2:25-30

But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need; because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. For indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly so that when you see him again you may rejoice and I may be less concerned about you. Receive him then in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard; because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me.

Rather than sending Timothy, Paul sent Epaphroditus to help the church in Philippi. These verses indicate that there was some history with Epaphroditus and the church in Philippi. He had been to Philippi. He had known the people. He had loved the people. They loved him. He seemed to be the perfect one to send to Philippi.

In fact, Epaphroditus had come from Philippi with a financial gift for Paul. This is mentioned in 4:18, "But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God." Those in Philippi had collected some money to help meet Paul's needs in prison. They sent it by way of Epaphroditus. And so, Paul sends Epaphroditus back to Philippi to help them. I trust that you will see how it was in the early church with people moving around to help other churches in need.

4. Tychicus

This guy is mentioned only four times in Scripture. And every time, he appears to be a sort of messenger. When Paul wrote the letters we know as Ephesians and Colossians, Tychicus was with him in prison. To get these letters to the churches, he sent them by the hands of Tychicus. According to 2 Timothy 4:12, Tychicus was to remain at Ephesus when he made these trips. Here are the verses that explain the role of Tychicus in helping the churches in Ephesus and Colossae.

Ephesians 6:21, "But that you also may know about my circumstances, how I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make everything known to you."

Colossians 4:7, "As to all my affairs, Tychicus, our beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord, will bring you information."

Though Tychicus was a letter carrier, he was far more than a letter carrier. He was also able to communicate Paul's heart to the church and to serve in whatever way he was needed. In the only other verse in the Bible where Tychicus is mentioned, he was awaiting Paul's sending him to see Titus (Titus 3:12). Again, it appears as if he would definitely help Titus in his ministry.

5. Titus.

Throughout the Scriptures, you see Titus traveling about with Paul and on behalf of Paul. During the Jerusalem counsel, Titus joined Paul and Barnabas. At one point, Titus was sent to Corinth (2 Cor. 12:18). He was also spent some time ministering in Dalmatia as well (2 Tim. 4:10). But, what is most pertinent for us this morning is found in the book of Titus. I want for us to consider one verse this morning, which will bring us back (in application) to Frank Yonke and his role here in Rockford.

Paul writes to Titus in chapter 1, verse 5, "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you."

Crete was and is a large island in the Mediterranean Sea, south of mainland, Greece. It's about 160 miles long and 35 miles at its widest point. There were some churches there in need of development. And so, Paul had given him the assignment to travel throughout the island and help all of the churches with two areas of focus. In each of these churches, the task of Titus was two-fold. He was to set in order what remains in each of the churches, to appoint elders in each of the churches.

And this is exactly what Frank Yonke will be doing in Rockford. His mission is to help set in order what remains at Rock Valley Bible Church. And to help in the process of appointing elders at Rock Valley Bible Church, so that he can replace himself and return to his ministry at Kishwaukee Bible Church.

It is interesting to see how the sovereignty of God has been at work. In our annual meeting (for 2007), we listed four goals for this year:

1. More Missions
2. More Leadership
3. More Staff
4. More Space

At the time that we presented these things in early February, Frank Yonke coming to Rockford was not on our radar screen. We did know that Gordy was desiring to step down, but I certainly didn't anticipate that Frank would come and help and be the solution to this problem at this time.

Frank's coming will help with three of the four goals above. First of all, Frank will come and help provide more leadership. Not only will he be one of the leaders, himself. But, one of his key objectives is to help identify, train and appoint other elders here at Rock Valley Bible Church. I ask you to pray for God to work in this process. There are some of you who God may be calling to shepherd the church as elder here.

As Frank will be spending half of his time here in Rockford, he will be "more staff." He will come and take up some official responsibilities, such as meeting with me, meeting with the leadership of the church, and helping out in various areas. We plan on paying a portion of his salary.

One of the things that he will help set in order for us is a more defined focus upon missions, which is the first point above. I think that the only thing that Frank's coming to Rockford won't need to do is help us with "more room." We are not being pressed at this current time in our meeting place.

I'm also encouraged by God's sovereignty in leading us to 1 Peter 5, which addresses to role of elders in the life of the congregation. We will be there soon and be instructed with exactly what we need to hear concerning elders and the role they are called to perform.

Now, I admit, there are many unknowns about these things. We don't know fully how everything is going to work out. I haven't figured out how I will adjust my schedule to work with him regularly. We haven't fully worked through all of the way that finances will work out. We haven't figured out what sort of office space he might have. We haven't fully figured out where he's going to be involved in the life of the church.

But, we do know two things. First of all, Frank's goal in coming to us is to return to DeKalb, after setting in order what remains and after appointing elders, as Titus was call to do. Second, we are depending upon God to accomplish His work among us.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on August 24, 2008 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] At this point, I want to point out by way of footnote that you may have noticed at this point that a slight change has taken place with this point. It's no longer so much that churches are sending people to help other churches as it is that Paul is sending people to help churches. If you have observed this, you are doing well.

The reason for this subtle change is really quite simple. Paul is in prison and apart from any church fellowship, which made it impossible for him to get any sort of church approval on his desires. I'm sure that he would have desired this. And, given the opportunity, he would have preferred to see a church body affirm his actions. Yet, it's quite clear that the heart remains for helping other churches, which is the point of my message.