

ENTOURAGE - PART 2

YouTube: Typewriter Artist

1. Work hard (1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Corinthians 16:15-18; 2 Corinthians 5:11; Exodus 19:6)
2. Respect, love, and encourage (1 Thessalonians 5:13; Romans 12:8; Romans 14:19; Hebrews 13:7; 1 Peter 2:9)
3. We are all ministers (1 Thessalonians 5:14; 2 Corinthians 5:20, 12-14; Luke 22:26-27; Matthew 28:16-20; Revelation 5:10; Hebrews 10:23-25)

Paul Smith was born in the 1920s with cerebral palsy, a serious condition that affects the brain. When he turned 16, he learned to speak, and at 32 he learned to walk. He never learned to read. But at the age of 11 he started to create paintings using 10 symbols of an old typewriter. And he continued to make those pictures until his vision deteriorated and prevented him from doing so in 2004. A few years later, on June 25, 2007, he died.

Paul Smith did one thing really well. With one finger and ten keys. Millions of people have been inspired by the video you just watched. A man of faith, Paul was undoubtedly a part of Jesus' entourage. Which is a group of people surrounding a very important person. That VIP is not the pastor. And as we'll see today, it's not the people. It's Jesus. This becomes clearer from the writings of Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14.

1 Thessalonians 5:12-14

12 Dear brothers and sisters, honor those who are your leaders in the Lord's work. They work hard among you and give you spiritual guidance. 13 Show them great respect and wholehearted love because of their work. And live peacefully with each other. 14 Brothers and sisters, we urge you to warn those who are lazy. Encourage those who are timid. Take tender care of those who are weak. Be patient with everyone.

Verse 12 begins not with a reference to apostles, prophets, evangelists, or pastors like we studied in Ephesians 4:11 last time. There's no embedded Greek words referring to elders, overseers, or shepherds. This passage is about we the people. The lay leaders. The Christians following Christ. And it begins with a plea to honor these leaders in the Lord's work. Which absolutely can and does include apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors. Male and female.

But since those roles and offices aren't specifically listed here, perhaps Paul is now widening the lens. Including the other brothers and sisters also doing the Lord's work. Verse 12 says we the people should "honor" them too. And in 1 Corinthians 16, the apostle Paul even calls a few of them out by name.

1 Corinthians 16:15-18

15 You know that Stephanas and his household were the first of the harvest of believers in Greece, and they are spending their lives in service to God's people. I urge you, dear brothers and sisters, 16 to submit to them and others like them who serve with such devotion. 17 I am very glad that Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus have come here. They have been providing the help you weren't here to give me. 18 They have been a wonderful encouragement to me, as they have been to you. You must show your appreciation to all who serve so well.

Stephanas the Greek and his family were apparently among the first to follow Jesus in their zip code. And since they were spending their lives serving God's people, it's obvious they had not lost their first love (cf. Revelation 2:4). Have you? Why are baby Christians the most enthusiastic Christians? They're all fired up. But did you know in the priesthood of all believers what's normal is to stay that way?

Sidebar: Did you hear Paul give a shout out to my long lost distant cousin Fortunatus? He and his friends Stephanas and Achaicus were apparently road warriors. Traveling to find Paul and give him help. It surely is encouraging when God's people put some more gas in their Ford to keep on trucking for the Lord or some gas in their Mercedes to keep them hauling Dorcas ladies? Anyone else remember those lyrics? Anybody that makes

that extra trip to church for School Board, Bell Choir, Soup for You, Business Meeting, Pathfinders, Circle of Friends, or What the Bible Says About deserves our encouragement and appreciation amen? They're working hard. Not to impress the pastor. But to please the pastor's pastor. Jesus Christ. The only VIP.

2 Corinthians 5:11

11 Because we understand our fearful responsibility to the Lord, we work hard to persuade others. God knows we are sincere, and I hope you know this, too.

The pastor and the people understand they're called. And they believe their responsibility is to the Lord. They work hard to persuade others to follow Jesus because they take the priesthood of all believers seriously. They love the church. They know Christ died for it (cf. Acts 20:28). But they also know God so loved the world. And died for it too. And that nothing else in this world lasts forever except a relationship with Jesus. Who from the very getgo was bragging about saving and sustaining the children of Israel. After Egypt, the pre-incarnate Christ predicted:

Exodus 19:6

6 And you will be my kingdom of priests, my holy nation.

Notice, this verse says they "will be" a priesthood of all believers. They "will be" an entourage for God. A couple thousand years later, the Thessalonians were still under

construction. Listen to what the apostle Paul tells them next in verse 13.

1. Work hard (1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Corinthians 16:15-18; 2 Corinthians 5:11; Exodus 19:6)
2. Respect, love, and encourage (1 Thessalonians 5:13; Romans 12:8; Romans 14:19; Hebrews 13:7; 1 Peter 2:9)
3. We are all ministers (1 Thessalonians 5:14; 2 Corinthians 5:20, 12-14; Luke 22:26-27; Matthew 28:16-20; Revelation 5:10; Hebrews 10:23-25)

1 Thessalonians 5:13

13 Show them [your brothers and sisters] great respect and wholehearted love because of their work. And live peacefully with each other.

You wanna be in Jesus' entourage? You wanna be in the priesthood of all believers? You can be! God is calling a few good men. And women. He's calling and giving to the church some apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors (cf. Ephesians 4:11). But God is also calling we the people to be local leaders too.

But apparently, some folks weren't respectfully and peacefully following their lead. Which is a good reminder for us to do so in the 21st century too. Respectfully, and peacefully, we may disagree at times. Like how many hymns each praise team should sing each Sabbath. Or

how often the pastor should alternate between expository and topical sermons. Or whether or not people should eat meat. That was an old school issue too.

Whatever the issue, even if its doctrinal, and not a personal lifestyle, cultural, or behavioral preference, we should show great respect and wholehearted love and live peacefully with each other. We know our co-founder James White agreed. Did you know James White only wanted two fundamental beliefs? The commandments of Jesus and the testimony of Jesus (see Alden Thompson's book *Beyond Common Ground: Why Liberals and Conservatives Need Each Other* p.16). That's it. Today, we've got many more. And we are a world wide church family. With lots of personal lifestyle, cultural, and behavioral preferences to navigate as well. But if any of these things, small or large, local or worldwide, are not presented and lived respectfully and peacefully, they are not worth the paper they're printed on. Isn't that what the Bible is saying or am I just making that up?

Personally, I really liked our early Adventist position on doctrine. At that time we had twenty-five of them. But the second sentence of our 1872 Fundamental Principles James White was referring to said, "We do not put forth this as having any authority with our people, nor is it designed to secure uniformity among them" (Ibid.).

Whoa! Isn't that interesting? We used to have a healthy appreciation but not militant unrealistic expectation for doctrine. I wish we could get that back. Maybe if we live respectfully and peacefully, we can. But what else is expected of we the people?

Romans 12:8

8 If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.

I've never seen the verse that says if it's your gift to criticize others, do so. If it's your gift to demonize your brother or sister, do so. If its your gift to assume the worst about another and slander them behind their backs or on TV or online because they've come to a different conclusion, do so have you?

How do we show respect and wholehearted love? How do we live peacefully? By finding ways to encourage others. Even when we disagree with them! Perfect Corinthian love does not demand its own way. Is not irritable. Keeps no record of wrongs (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:5).

We take God's call and the gifts God has given our brothers and sisters seriously when we gladly give whatever we've got to God. I hope nobody here is trying to impress me. I'm not the one taking attendance. Tracking

your finances. Watching your witness. But God is. Jesus is the One who will be saying some day, “Well done good and faithful servant” (cf. Matthew 25:21) not me. No wonder Colossians 3:23-25 adds, “23 Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. 24 Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and that the Master you are serving is Christ.” And that’s usually where people usually stop reading. But that’s not how it ends! Verse 25 also says, “25 But if you do what is wrong, you will be paid back for the wrong you have done. For God has no favorites.”

You can fool me. The church. Your spouse. Your friends. You can even fool yourself. But you can’t fool Christ. Jesus knows your heart. He knows not only what time, talents, treasure and temple things you give but more importantly, why you give them. And if you don’t give, or even if you do give, but you don’t give kindly, the Bible says you will answer to God for that. So since God is taking this respect, love, and encouragement thing so seriously, maybe we should too.

Romans 14:19

19 So then, let us aim for harmony in the church and try to build each other up.

Hebrews 13:7

7 Remember your leaders who taught you the word of God. Think of all the good that has come from their lives, and follow the example of their faith.

If we work hard (point number one) and respect, love, and encouragement our brothers and sisters (point number two), we are well on our way to becoming the priesthood of all believers.

1 Peter 2:9

9 You are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.

Notice that it's not "will be" anymore. Now, it's if you do these things, in response to He who loved you and saved you and redeemed you, "you are" a priesthood of all believers. It's amazingly winsome when the church works hard in the world. Rebuilding people's homes and lives one at a time like Haven of Hope. It's amazingly winsome when the church works hard in the world partnering with other Christians to combat the heinous crime of human trafficking. It's amazingly winsome when the church raises money to spend not on themselves but on others far from God and in some cases even farther from their own zip code. It's amazingly winsome when the church speaks

truth in love with each other. And evangelistically with the community in our mission field.

Marion is writing an article in the next Focal Point about saving some money for evangelistic advertising for our next evangelistic effort. She wants to invite some Toledo friends outside our sphere of influence. I think we're doing a pretty good job reaching children in our church and school. In 2013, 20 people were baptized or joined our church and most of them were young people. But we're not, if I'm honest, doing as well reaching adults.

So every spring and fall, I'd like to host some sort of outreach effort to reach them too. Do you believe God is still talking to the people through the sacred infallible writings of Scripture? Do you believe God is still in control of the future? Do you believe the signs of His return according to the United States Geological Survey are now taking place up to 23 times a day? Maybe you do. And these are a few reasons you became or still are an Adventist Christian. But there are many people in our mission field that don't know these things. How can we show these adults the goodness of God and call them out of the darkness and into God's wonderful light if we don't ask?

Our What the Bible Says About meetings are an attempt to do so! I think it would be great if everyone in this church supported at least one evangelistic series each year. I'm

not saying you should support spring and fall. I'm saying I think you should support spring or fall. With your time. Talent. Treasure. And temple. Even if its just you. Twice a week. But you know what we got this year? Thirty of you last fall and fifteen of you this spring. Maybe some of you are saying, "Well, I've heard those presentations." Well, maybe you have. But by being there, you can make it a lot more comfortable for those who haven't.

And even if you have, repetition is good for you. If you don't use it, you lose it. The median age of the church keeps rising. We need to reach the young and the old. Inside and outside the church. Our ongoing mix of ordinary outreach and seasonal evangelistic invitations will hopefully help us do so.

We must continue to mingle with men. Desire their good. Win their confidence. And bid them to follow Jesus. This is not just the pastor's job. This is the job of all the people in Jesus' entourage. Because point number three, in the priesthood of all believers, we are all ministers.

1. Work hard (1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Corinthians 16:15-18; 2 Corinthians 5:11; Exodus 19:6)
2. Respect, love, and encourage (1 Thessalonians 5:13; Romans 12:8; Romans 14:19; Hebrews 13:7; 1 Peter 2:9)

3. We are all ministers (1 Thessalonians 5:14; 2 Corinthians 5:20, 12-14; Luke 22:26-27; Matthew 28:16-20; Revelation 5:10; Hebrews 10:23-25)

1 Thessalonians 5:14

14 Brothers and sisters, we urge you to warn those who are lazy. Encourage those who are timid. Take tender care of those who are weak. Be patient with everyone.

Being lazy, or idle in the Greek, is not an option because we are Christ's ambassadors, servants, disciple-makers, and ministers.

2 Corinthians 5:20, 12-14 (Ambassadors)

20 So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!" 12 Are we commending ourselves to you again? No, we are giving you a reason to be proud of us, so you can answer those who brag about having a spectacular ministry rather than having a sincere heart. 13 If it seems we are crazy, it is to bring glory to God. And if we are in our right minds, it is for your benefit. 14 Either way, Christ's love controls us.

It would be nice if the priesthood of all believers included diplomatic immunity and free parking everywhere, but it doesn't. But that doesn't mean we aren't Christ's ambassadors!

Luke 22:26-27 (Servants)

25 Jesus told them, "In this world the kings and great men lord it over their people, yet they are called 'friends of the people.' 26 But among you it will be different. Those who are the greatest among you should take the lowest rank, and the leader should be like a servant."

Although we serve the King of Kings, we don't lord it over people. We humbly serve people. This, by far, remains one of the most effective, counter-cultural, startling ways Christians show God's love to this day. I just bought a new book about that entitled *Jesus Prom*. Why don't you read it along with me from home? We are all called to serve. One subtle way I try to remind you about that is by sitting in the front row with you not on stage in these chairs up here. Pastors are called to serve. But so are all people. Week after week after week. We are Christ's ambassadors, servants, and disciple makers.

Matthew 28:16-20 (Disciples)

16 Then the eleven disciples left for Galilee, going to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him—but some of them doubted! 18 Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. 19 Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. 20 Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I

have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Please notice the disciples doubts did not disqualify them from service and they don't disqualify you either. Often, doubt is what drives you and those you reach deeper into God's word. And if we work hard and respect, love, and encourage one another, then one day Revelation 5:10 will also be true of we the people as well. I love this last Scriptural "ta-da."

Revelation 5:10 (Ministers)

10 And You have caused them to become a Kingdom of priests for our God.

No longer is it “will be” or “you are” but one day Jesus will say, “Well done good and faithful servants. You have become a Kingdom of priests.” Don't you want to be in Jesus' entourage? You can be!

If you're not already doing one thing well for Jesus' sake, and you really want to do something besides warm a pew, before I close, I'd like to give you a few upcoming ordinary outreach opportunities. Our Adventist friends on the east side of Toledo in the The Fountain Church are hosting a summer tennis camp for ages 15-17. Dates are from June 8th - July 13th on TUE and THUR from 5:30-7:00pm. We could use six volunteers 17 years or older to play tennis with unchurched people. Who here has a tennis racket?

Nancy Rieger runs our Panera Bread Giveaway every Friday morning. But she will be unavailable on Friday, May 8 and needs a replacement. Who here will call Nancy and be her one week substitute?

If you filled out the bulletin insert, you noticed we could use some folks to be trained for prison ministry, community visitation, and social committee. We could use others willing to be trained for leadership development and Sabbath School teaching. Please let me know if you're interested in learning about your spiritual gift. Allan teaches a class on that.

One way we can all help is when the church gathers for weekly worship, we go inside. Supporting every generation and tribe. I really want to be a multi-ethnic multi-generational church don't you? If you don't, heaven is gonna be awkward for you.

When the church gathers every three months for quarterly for business meetings, I think the church should be there. Encouraging the finance committee and guiding the personnel committee helping us plan our outreach and evangelistic efforts.

I had a friend in Florida call me a couple days ago by mistake. But since he had me on the phone, he took the time to pray for me. I was so grateful. Prayer is a powerful

way you can get more involved. I'm grateful Sharon and Bill Crosby runs ours email prayer chain. My brother Mark once said, "Church is a lot less boring when you're involved." I couldn't agree more. Do you?

Pastors are called. Male and Female. But so are all people. Like Paul Smith who despite cerebral palsy created typewriter art for 72 years. And Linda Wilson-Allen who starts her day at 2:30am praying for the riders she drives on her bus. Sam Whiting tells her story in the September 8, 2013 edition of the San Francisco Chronicle (<http://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/Muni-driver-will-make-new-friends-keep-the-old-4797537.php>). "There is a lot to talk about with the Lord," says Linda. After prayer, she catches the first inbound train, at 4:20 a.m., and then transfers to another where she takes charge of her bus.

If a person standing at the shelter is studying the map, looking lost, she will ask them where they are going and tell them to get on, assuring passengers she will help them reach their destination. If a first-timer puts a \$5 or \$10 bill into the fare box, expecting change, she will make the change herself, with a hand-to-hand cash transaction that involves the next few paying customers.

She loves the people on the bus, knows the regulars, learns their names. She will wait for them if they are late, and then make up the time on her route. She gets out of

the driver's seat of her bus to help seniors. One day Linda saw Ivy was struggling with grocery bags and got off the driver's seat to help carry the grocery bags onto the bus. Now, Ivy lets other buses pass the bus stop so she can ride on Linda's bus.

Another woman named Tanya was touched by Linda's kindness. When it was almost Thanksgiving, Linda saw Tanya was a stranger and was lost, and said to her, "You're out here all by yourself. You don't know anybody. Come on over for Thanksgiving and kick it with me and the kids." She did and now the two are like sisters, where Linda will visit Tanya in Atlanta, and Tanya will visit her in San Francisco.

Passengers offer Linda use of their vacation homes. They take her to lunch during her shift break. They bring her potted plants and floral bouquets. She likes to accessorize her uniform with scarves, so that is what riders give her. One woman upgraded her gift to a rabbit fur collar. And often at the end of her route, riders give her a standing ovation. To which Linda replies: "That's all. I love you. Take care."

God has always desired a priesthood of all believers. An entourage of brothers and sisters who work hard at loving and encouraging one another. We all have a job to do. Inside and outside the church. Because we the people are

Christ's ambassadors, servants, disciple makers, and ministers. Since we are...

Hebrews 10:23-25

23 Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise. 24 Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. 25 And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.