

# Like-Minded

## A WORD STUDY



Worshippers at the Western Wall in Jerusalem

ILLUSTRATOR PHOTO/ BRENT BRUCE (60/0549)

BY MICHAEL PRIEST

AS I TYPE THESE WORDS MY OLDEST SON, Jonathan, is a month and a half away from his twentieth birthday; my second son, Caleb, is two days away from his eighteenth; my third son, David is two weeks removed from his fifteenth; and my wife and I will be celebrating our twenty-fifth anniversary in just eight days. Over the course of these fifteen to twenty-five years, we have come to think and act alike. My sons have picked up on my mannerisms, taken up my colloquial phrases, and adopted my hobbies and favorite sports teams. My wife and I actually think alike and can anticipate what the other is about to say. We really are two who have become one. We are like-minded.

Although the New Testament does not indicate Paul was married, he too had someone with whom he was liked-minded. In *Philippians 2:20*, speaking of Timothy, Paul wrote, “For I have no one else like-minded who will

genuinely care about your interests” (HCSB). What did Paul mean when he declared that he and Timothy were like-minded? Was he implying that, because of years of friendship, he and Timothy now shared mannerisms, colloquial phrases, interests, and could even anticipate what the other was thinking, or did it go much deeper?

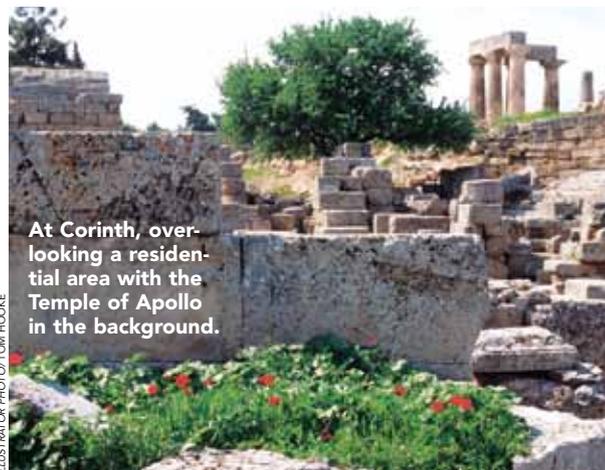
In this article we will explore the origin and meaning of “like-minded” in the Book of *Philippians*. We will also discover what Paul meant when he described Timothy as being like-minded and understand how this word would have been meaningful to the *Philippian* believers.

The English word “like-minded” is actually a rare compound word in the original Greek of the New Testament. In fact, *Philippians 2:20* is the only place the word appears in the New Testament. It comes from the words *isos*, which means “equal in number, size, quality,”<sup>1</sup> and *psuche*, which means soul.<sup>2</sup> When used in a compound form, *isos* usually means as good, as in quality.<sup>3</sup> Together the words form *isopsuche*, which means to be of like or equal soul.

## TIMOTHY *Paul's Fellow Worker*

The New Testament offers at least seven indications of Paul's appreciation for Timothy and his work. **First**—Paul was likely instrumental in Timothy becoming a believer: “He is my dearly loved and faithful son in the Lord” (1 Cor. 4:17b, HCSB). **Second**—Paul stated Timothy helped write six epistles (2 Cor. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1; Philem. 1). **Third**—when Paul could not go to Corinth, he sent Timothy: “This is why I have sent Timothy to you. He is my dearly loved and faithful son in the Lord. He will remind you about my ways in Christ Jesus, just as I teach everywhere in every church” (1 Cor. 4:17, HCSB). He instructed the believers at Corinth to welcome Timothy and to honor his work (16:10-11). **Fourth**—Paul also sent Timothy to Philippi because he knew Timothy would show concern for believers there (Phil. 2:19-20). **Fifth**—Paul penned two letters of instruction and encouragement to Timothy. **Sixth**—Paul encouraged Timothy to continue in his work—likely as pastor of the Ephesus church (1 Tim. 1:3). **Seventh**—when Paul was nearing the end of his life, he asked Timothy to visit: “Make every effort to come to me soon” (2 Tim. 4:9, HCSB). **B**

Robert J. Dean, “Timothy” in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, gen. ed. Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1597-98.



At Corinth, overlooking a residential area with the Temple of Apollo in the background.

ILLUSTRATOR PHOTO/TOM HOOKE

Sites depicted on this page show three cities in which we know Timothy ministered: Ephesus, Corinth, and Philippi. At Ephesus (right), the theater is on the city's eastern side, at the intersection of Marble Street and Arcadian Way. The theater, which was enlarged during the 1st to 3rd centuries A.D., eventually sat 25,000 spectators. The seating area was originally covered by an awning.

ILLUSTRATOR PHOTO/BOB SCHATZ (11/25/16)



To be like-minded goes well beyond simply thinking alike or having similar desires. It implies two people share the same values and principles.<sup>4</sup>

When Paul referred to Timothy as like-minded he was heaping lofty praise upon his younger protégé. In essence Paul was saying, “He is like me at the deepest level.” Paul and Timothy shared a deep love for God. They shared a commitment to ministry generally, and to the Philippians specifically. They shared the same core values and willingness to suffer for those values if need be.

In the context of Philippians, Paul had already told his friends he had a genuine interest in their well-being. He wrote, “For God is my witness, how I deeply miss all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. And I pray this: that your

**Below: On the left side of the row of stones was the Commercial Road at Philippi. Between the row of stones and the columns**

**were shops that opened both to the road and the forum (located to the far right). The shops were likely two stories tall; the owners lived**

**above the shops. The Commercial Road ran parallel to the Via Egnatia, which was located on the opposite side of the forum.**





The tell of Lystra (center) remains unexcavated. Located in modern south-central

Turkey, Lystra was likely the hometown of Timothy. Below: Courtyard

(or interior) of St. Paul's Outside the Wall in Rome. Tradition holds that Paul was

buried here. Paul stated: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21, KJV).

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love will keep on growing in knowledge and every kind of discernment, so that you can approve the things that are superior and can be pure and blameless in the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God" (1:8-11, HCSB). The Philippians knew of Paul's interest not just because he told them, but because they had seen it in him. Because Timothy was of like mind, he too was concerned for the Philippian believers' well-being. Thus Paul could say of Timothy, "For I have no one else like-minded who will genuinely care about your interests" (2:20, HCSB).

Even though Paul might have been tempted to put his own interests above Christ's, he was committed to do otherwise. He, therefore, could write, "For me, living is Christ and dying is gain. Now if I live on in the flesh, this means fruitful work for me; and I don't know which one I should choose. I am pressured by both. I have the desire to depart and be with Christ—which is far better—but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you" (1:21-24, HCSB). Paul desired the gain of death, but was committed to live on for the benefit of Christ. Because Timothy was of like mind he too would put Christ's interests first. While all sought their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ (2:21), Timothy was different. Like his mentor Paul, he put Christ's interest ahead of his own.

That Timothy was like-minded with Paul would have been especially meaningful to the Philippians at two points. First, since Paul was imprisoned and unable to come to them, knowing that Paul was not sending the "second team" had to be comforting. Timothy coming to Philippi was as good as Paul coming. He shared Paul's heartbeat for Christ's ministry and the Philippians, and spoke with Paul's authority. He was the "real deal."

Second, since some in the Philippian church seemed to be struggling with self-advancement, Timothy's "others first" mindset, just like Paul's, would have been a wonderful example to follow. To address the self-advancement, Paul wrote, "Do nothing out of rivalry or conceit, but in humility



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consider others as more important than yourselves. Everyone should look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (2:3-4, HCSB). He then provided the superior example of Jesus' selflessness in verses 5-8. In 4:2 Paul encouraged two members, Euodia and Syntyche, "to agree in the Lord" (HCSB). Apparently some members were putting their own interests ahead of the interests of others and were jockeying for position in the church.

When Paul founded the church in Philippi they had seen his selflessness. They knew of his ministry elsewhere and how he put his own interests behind the interests of others and Christ. Since Timothy was like-minded and cut from the same bolt of cloth as Paul, his impending presence would be a perfect in-the-flesh example for those members with a skewed and selfish priority. **B**

1. "ἴσος, ἡ, οὐ" (isos, "equal in number, size, quality") in Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* [BAGD], trans. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, rev. F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 381.
2. "ψυχή, ἡς, ἡ" (psuche, "soul, life") in BAGD, 893.
3. H.A.A. Kennedy, "The Epistle to the Philippians," in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 3:444.
4. Richard R. Melick, Jr., *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 32 in *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1991), 117-18.

Michael Priest is pastor of Bartlett Baptist Church, Bartlett, Tennessee.