

# **LEARN TO LEAD IN 2 TIMOTHY**

**Developing  
the nine essential qualities  
of a spiritual leader,  
by going through 2 Timothy  
verse by verse**

**PART ONE**

**by Terran Williams**

# About this commentary

**This book is designed for leaders in God's kingdom.**

Although the whole Bible equips kingdom leaders, the books of Nehemiah and 2 Timothy are probably the most leadership-intensive books in the Bible (1 Timothy and Titus could be included too). This commentary/manual draws leadership training from 2 Timothy, going through this magnificent epistle verse by verse.

This unique book serves as:

- 1) *a self-study in spiritual leadership.*
- 2) *a curriculum or resource that leaders can use in training more leaders.*
- 3) *a verse by verse, application-orientated commentary of 2 Timothy.*

2 Timothy 3:16-17 says that every single word, verse and paragraph of the Bible is inspired by God, and is useful in equipping us in what to believe and how to live. That is why for every verse or section of verses, I have sought to crystallise (in easy-to-understand points) the meaning, and how to apply this to our lives and our leadership.

**This commentary draws heavily from Michael Eaton's commentary.**

Since this book is not only about developing your leadership, but also about gaining an accurate understanding of 2 Timothy, I have lent heavily on Michael Eaton's wonderful commentary of 2 Timothy, called 'Preaching through the Bible: 2 Timothy'.

**I have used the TNIV translation *and* Eaton's translation.**

I like the TNIV for its combination of translation excellence and for its readability. Please note: In Eaton's commentary he gives his own translation. Where his translation differs in meaning from the TNIV I have indicated this (in brackets) next to the relevant verse.

***Recommend this free resource to others if you find it useful.***

# Outline

## **PART ONE** *(This is the one you're currently looking at)*

QUALITY 1: BECOMING A KINGDOM LEADER (1:1-5)

QUALITY 2: BECOMING A SPIRIT-FILLED LEADER (1:6-8)

QUALITY 3: BECOMING A GOSPEL-CENTRED LEADER (1:8b-12)

## **PART TWO**

QUALITY 4: BECOMING A LEADER-MAKING LEADER (1:15-2:2)

QUALITY 5: BECOMING AN ENDURING LEADER (2:3-14)

QUALITY 6: BECOMING A USABLE LEADER (2:15-23)

## **PART THREE**

QUALITY 7: BECOMING A DISCERNING LEADER (2:24-3:16)

QUALITY 8: BECOMING A BIBLE-ROOTED LEADER (3:14-4:5)

QUALITY 9: BECOMING A LONG-DISTANCE LEADER (4:6-22)

# Two Timothy Chapter One

## QUALITY 1: BECOMING A KINGDOM LEADER (1:1-5)

### Introduction

My favourite definition of ‘the kingdom of God’ is that it is *the new thing that God is doing in the world through Jesus*. Jesus himself came to launch God’s kingdom on the earth. And he trained his disciples to continue doing just that. That is why spiritual leaders are kingdom leaders. They live to see God’s kingdom advancing. They seek that more and more people will, more and more meaningfully, be open to, and participating in, the new thing God is doing in the world through Jesus. In 1:1-5 we will look at several aspects of kingdom leaders. But before even looking at verse 1, let’s start with four points that paint a general overview of 2 Timothy...

*Please read 2 Timothy 1:1-5.*

- **A kingdom leader influences others towards God.**
  - 2 Timothy, along with Nehemiah, are two of the clearest ‘leadership manuals’ in the Bible. They show us what good leadership looks like in God’s kingdom. Before a leader-in-training reads any other leadership books and manuals (which are readily available today) they should study these two books.
  - Before exploring 2 Timothy, let’s define what we mean by ‘kingdom leadership’:
  - *Leadership is essentially about influencing people.* Based on this definition, almost everyone is a leader, because almost everyone has at least a few people in their lives over whom they have some influence.
  - *A person does not need a position to lead.* Sometimes in a family, or in an organisation, it is not the positional leader who holds the most influence. As a general rule, the person whom everyone listens to when they speak is the real leader. In this sense, leaders influence others with or without the help of a ‘badge’ of authority.
  - *Kingdom leadership is therefore about influencing people towards God and his purposes for their lives.* To the degree that you can influence people towards God and his purpose for their lives, to that degree you are a kingdom-influencer. Based on this definition we see that a person can be a kingdom leader in whatever sphere of influence: be it family, friends, work, etc. You don’t necessarily have to be a full-time leader in your church to be a kingdom leader.
  - *The local church deserves leaders that are well-equipped and excellent at what they do.* Although, as I have pointed out in the

previous point, it is possible to be a kingdom leader in any life sphere, these leaders are most needed within our local churches. This is because the success and the health of every local church depends on the success and the health of its leaders. And a simple biblical study of God's passion and plan for the church (which is beyond the scope of this book) reveals that the local church, being 'the apple of God's eye', deserves the very best leadership we can give it.

- **A kingdom leader knows that leadership development is *not* essentially about skills development.**
  - In this letter, Paul sought to develop Timothy's kingdom leadership. Yet what he put the emphasis on was *not* skills development - such as the skill of leading a prayer meeting, or delegating well, or preaching a good expository message, or how to build a strong organisation. Instead, Paul trained Timothy *through relationship; modelling; on-the-job training; coaching in Spirit-dependence; and insisting on the development of Christ-like character and loyalty to the gospel-message*. Astoundingly, there is nothing about skills-development in this entire letter. This does not mean that skills are not required. Indeed, Ecclesiastes 10:10 reminds us that in the same way that a sharp axe gets the job done better, so skill brings success. We must therefore be careful to place *greater* emphasis on the above important aspects of leadership development than we do on the attainment of skills.
- **A kingdom leader knows that success without a successor is no success at all.**
  - While writing this letter, Paul was in prison, awaiting execution. He had planted some churches in the region of Ephesus and many more had grown from those. Paul, in this letter, was handing over the spiritual responsibility of these churches in Ephesus to his young aide, Timothy.
  - This is both challenging and applicable to us today. The great temptation every gifted leader faces, is a desire to 'build towards themselves'. When people do this, they may succeed greatly in their lifetimes, but will do great harm to the church (and indeed any organisation) in the long run. When they retire or die, their work will collapse because they failed to raise a successor. Paul shows us another way. He followed the example of Jesus - dedicating a large portion of his life to raising other leaders. The lesson is clear: success *with a successor* is the highest success of all.
- **A kingdom leader gets their authority by being under authority.**
  - There is a flow of authority in God's kingdom. All authority comes from God himself, but it often comes through other people whose authority is more established and obvious than our own. This was the case with Timothy, who had authority over a whole region of churches simply because he was under Paul's authority. He

operated within *delegated authority*. Paul was a man known to have spiritual authority, and he shared some of that authority with Timothy. If people were to ever ask Timothy why he was doing whatever he was doing, he could say, 'Paul told me to do this. I am under Paul's authority.' Interestingly, this letter was written to Timothy, but there are places where the word 'you' is clearly in the plural. This means that Paul anticipated that churches would read this letter too - and know exactly what authority he had given to Timothy. He was the one charged to lead them. Paul wanted the churches to know that he had given Timothy this authority.

- Today, this simple insight is so often overlooked: people who yearn to be leaders in God's kingdom often try to take the short-cut by asserting their own authority, rather than submitting and receiving the delegated authority of another. If we try to lead, but we ourselves are not 'under authority' then we have no legitimate authority. Not only that, but if we do not know how to follow, then how can we legitimately lead? Many churches have learnt to their peril that the kind of leader who does not know how to follow will be more prone to hurt others and will damage those they lead. This is why the best leaders are also usually also the best followers.
- One remarkable thing that often happens to us if we lead, but cannot or will not follow, is that we tend to attract people just like ourselves. Such people will attach themselves to us (rather than genuinely teaming with us and yielding to us) and will likely compete with us for authority. However, if we ourselves are 'under authority', we have the right to address the refusal to submit in others, and thereby be a model to them of how to follow by showing the attractiveness of humility.

<p>1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, in keeping with (<i>or 'to advance'</i>) the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus,</p>
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- **A kingdom leader is conscious of their calling and mission.**
  - *Paul was conscious of his calling.* In ten of thirteen of his letters, Paul started off by mentioning that he was an apostle. There are two kinds of apostles: Firstly, the 'one-of-a-kind' apostles, consisting of Paul and the original disciples of Jesus. They alone could set the doctrine and the priorities of the universal church in their authorship of the New Testament. There are no more of those alive now. Secondly, the apostles spoken of in Ephesians 4:11 who continue the work of the original apostles, but are restricted to being faithful to the doctrine and priorities set by those original apostles. These still exist. Practically speaking, an Ephesians 4:11 apostle is someone who is called by God to help plant new churches and / or adopt disconnected, orphan churches. He or she is someone who, in a team with others,

oversees many churches. Their main focus is the health of the local church, and the quality of its leadership team. Like Paul, they do not impose their ministry on these churches, but rather work relationally and by invitation.

- *Paul was conscious of his mission.* Eaton translates the second part of this verse: *'to advance the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus.'* This phrase wonderfully encapsulates the gospel message. The gospel is a promise of life, both now and forever. Paul's passion and focus was getting the gospel out into the world through planting and strengthening gospel-centred churches. This message needs to be advanced - which means that more and more cities, and more and more people need to hear it, and experience its life-changing power. Today, every Christian leader - whether in the church or in the world - needs to be conscious of what God has called them to be and to do.

## 2 To Timothy, my dear son:

- **A kingdom leader is relationally involved with their fellow-workers.**
  - Timothy was Paul's trainee, but more importantly Paul saw him as his own son. This must have meant that Paul had been 'fathering' him. Fathering infers an affirming, affectionate and sometimes confronting relationship where a more experienced leader guides another in a liberating, non-controlling way. This is how Paul related to Timothy - as a father to a son.
  - Today one of the greatest needs in the church is for father/mother-leaders who will relationally invest in others, and who will genuinely want the other to go beyond him/herself in ministry and fruitfulness. Sustained kingdom effectiveness demands that there be a friendship relationship before and after a functional relationship. With these kinds of relationships in place, young upcoming leaders will be far less likely to seek approval through performance, secure in the fact that they are loved, accepted and known. This will make them sons, not survivors, making a church that thrives into the decades to come.

## Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

- **A kingdom leader is full of the gospel-message.**
  - Paul could not get two verses into his letter without mentioning aspects of the gospel-message! This shows that he was full of this message. 'Prick him', and out flowed the gospel.
  - In the first two verses of this book, we have already discovered several things about the gospel (the first two points coming from verse 1, and the rest coming from verse 2):
  - 1) The message is a **promise**. God wants to do something for us. He has made a promise, and he has the ability and willingness to

keep his promise.

- 2) The promise is that we will **live**. Outside of Christ, humanity is separated from God's life, and lives in a state of unresponsiveness to God. This separation is a current reality, but will extend into eternal separation from God. But Jesus came to give us life. This means that through faith in him we can be joined to God again, and receive a new heart, which is alive to God. This life is eternal life, but we can already begin to experience it right now.
- 3) This giving of life is based on **grace**. Grace is the free, loving help of God. It saves us and then keeps and empowers us. Grace is both the ignition that starts the Christian life, and the fuel that sustains it.
- 4) This giving of life is based on **mercy**. Grace is giving us what we do not deserve. Mercy is *not* giving us what *do* deserve. We deserve punishment for our sin, but we don't get it. Mercy is also God's compassion to our neediness. God sees that, because of our own sin and because of the sin of others against us, we are broken, wounded and fragile people. And this stirs up compassion in him toward us.
- 5) This giving of life brings **peace**. Real, sustained peace is only made possible by Jesus, who has removed the wall of hostility between God and ourselves. We experience peace *with* God, which leads to an experience of the peace *of* God.
- 6) This promise of life, grace, mercy and peace all come from God **the Father**. The gospel reveals that God is not just a Creator, but a loving and involved father who seeks to adopt us as his children.
- 7) This promise of life, grace, mercy and peace all come through **Christ Jesus our Lord**. Amazingly, the Father's way of giving us this gift of life, grace, mercy and peace is through Jesus, the man who lived on this earth 2000 years ago. But this man is no ordinary man. He is the 'Christ', which means the Messiah-king that was promised throughout the Old Testament. And he is also 'Lord' which means that, now exalted, he co-rules the whole universe with the Father. In Paul's time, the word 'Lord' was used to address the Roman Emperor, Caesar - it was scandalous to give that title to Jesus.

3 I thank God, whom I serve, as my ancestors did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers.

- **A kingdom leader has a rich and healthy prayer life.**
  - Notice a few things about Paul's prayer life: 1) Paul prayed **continuously**. He says he prayed 'night and day' and 'constantly'. Although he may have allocated special prayer times in the day, he seemed to pray throughout the day. His whole life was a never-ending conversation with God. 2) Paul **thanked** God in his prayers. God's grace towards him overflowed in Paul's heart back to God in the form of gratitude. 3) Paul **worshipped** God in his prayers. The

word translated 'serve' in the TNIV can also be translated 'worship'. This means he joyfully expressed to God how much he loved and appreciated him. 4) Paul **petitioned** God in his prayers, asking for help for both himself and others. 5) Paul prayed **with a clear conscience**. It is impossible to enjoy God's presence or pray when we are riddled with guilt. Paul must have kept affirming the forgiveness that was his through the blood of Christ. And he must have been determined to walk in the light with God, hiding nothing and defending no darkness in his life.

- Today, kingdom leaders must first connect with God through a rich prayer life before they minister to anyone through their words and deeds. Our relationship with God is the basis for our ministry to people. God takes care of our reputation and influence with others when we take care of our relationship with Him. And we develop this relationship with a growing prayer life - one that is continuous, thankful, worshipful, request-filled, and based on a clear conscience.

4 Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy.

- **A kingdom leader has a rich and healthy emotional life.**
  - This verse gives us an insight into the emotions of Paul and Timothy. We see three different kinds of emotions mentioned here:
    - 1) Timothy had shed **tears** in front of Paul. We don't know whether this referred to tears of joy, or tears of frustration, or tears of sadness - or perhaps from all of the above. But Timothy felt safe to cry in front of Paul, and Paul affirmed this expression of emotion.
    - 2) Paul was filled with **longing** to see Timothy. Paul was deeply fond of Timothy and missed him deeply. There was great tenderness in his heart towards him. He ached with a loneliness that only a good friend and someone he loved could fill.
    - 3) Paul knew what it was like to be filled with **joy**. He even made it a goal in his life to pursue joy. He knew what it was to be happy, to be with loved ones, to laugh, and to have fun with people.
  - Like Paul and Timothy, kingdom leaders today need a rich and healthy emotional life in the context of rich and healthy relationships. Kingdom leaders are not emotion-less machines. On the contrary, we should be more human than others, not less. This does not mean it is acceptable to be dominated by our emotions, but certainly, we must be honest and open about what we're feeling with people, whether these emotions are positive or negative. After all, how can we expect people to entrust their lives to our leadership if they cannot see evidence of *our* basic humanity?

5 I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.

- **A kingdom leader is shaped through prolonged involvement in a faith family.**
  - Timothy may have felt he was too young to be a leader, but Paul reminded him that he grew up from a young age with vibrant Christian people in his life: both his grandmother and his mother. It was as if Paul was saying, 'You have far more experience in this faith than you give yourself credit for.'
  - Paul not only affirmed that Timothy had been surrounded by these examples of faith, but that he had 'caught' this sincere faith too. The same faith now lived inside of him.
  - Interestingly, in verse 3 Paul mentioned that his own ancestors worshipped God. The word 'ancestors' refers to parents and grandparents. It turns out that even Paul, like Timothy, had some Christians amongst his parents and grandparents.
  - Today, many of the best kingdom leaders have had the privilege of growing up with saved parents, in families full of faith. This is a great advantage, in that it provides an early start. But even a person who has not grown up in a Christian family, can still greatly benefit from being knitted into a church family. We must never underestimate how much can be 'caught' from merely being in the sphere of healthy relationships and faith-activity. Prolonged involvement in a faith family is key to growing as leaders.

*In summary, a kingdom leader ...*

- *influences others towards God.*
- *knows that leadership development is not essentially about skills development.*
- *knows that success without a successor is no success at all.*
- *gets their authority by being under authority.*
- *is conscious of their calling and mission.*
- *is relationally involved with their fellow-workers.*
- *is full of the gospel-message.*
- *has a rich and healthy prayer life.*
- *has a rich and healthy emotional life.*
- *is shaped through prolonged involvement in a faith family.*

## QUALITY 2: BECOMING A *SPIRIT-FILLED* LEADER (1:6-8)

### Introduction

Jesus only began his public ministry when he was filled with the Spirit. If he, the Son of God, needed the Spirit's presence and power to complete the work the Father had given him, how much more do we need his presence and power? The Holy Spirit is gloriously available to those of us who have trusted in Christ, but we need to put ourselves in the place where he can fill us, empower us, lead us and use us. This is what we mean when we speak of a *Spirit-filled* leader.

*Please read 2 Timothy 1:6-8.*

6 For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

- **Spirit-filled leaders have had some supernatural commissioning moments in their lives.**
  - Paul reminded Timothy of a special commissioning moment where he had laid hands on Timothy. There had been a supernatural impartation of the Spirit's fire and power into Timothy's life and ministry. Many commentators suggest that this event is the same one spoken of, twice, in Paul's previous letter to Timothy. Looking at the two mentioned, we discover more about this significant event:
    - 1 Timothy 1:18 speaks of 'the prophecies once made about you, so that by recalling them you may fight the battle well.' We see from this verse that Timothy had people prophesy over him regarding his calling. Paul was reminding him to keep recalling these prophetic words. They would help keep Timothy encouraged, courageous, persevering and focused.
    - 1 Timothy 4:14 says, 'Do not neglect your gift, which was given to you through prophecy when the elders laid their hands on you.' The gift mentioned here most likely refers to be the impartation of the Spirit's power to lead. It was imparted to Timothy when a Spirit-filled, faith-filled team of leaders laid hands on him, prayed for him, prophesied over him, and trusted God to impart a leadership 'anointing' to him.
  - Like Timothy, we still need Spirit-empowered commissioning moments if we are leaders. These moments are an opportunity for God, through the prophecy of other credible people, to give us words that will clarify our calling, and encourage us to persevere in difficult times ahead. They are also an opportune time for the Holy Spirit, through the laying on of hands, to impart to us power,

anointing and grace. This impartation is desperately needed as we face the challenges that lie ahead of us, and as we give ourselves to the work God calls us to do.

- **Spirit-filled leaders understand what ‘the laying on of hands’ is all about.**
  - Hebrews 6:2 tell us that ‘the laying on of hands’ is one of the foundational truths of the Christian life. A brief biblical overview on the matter reveals five spiritual purposes for the laying on of hands: 1) It communicates God’s blessing, 2) It conveys God’s healing, 3) It imparts the Spirit’s infilling, 4) It transfers gifts of the Spirit, 5) It commissions people for works of service.
  - In this verse we see that when Paul laid his hands on Timothy there was an impartation of the Spirit’s infilling (as seen by the mention of a ‘flame’), a transferral of gifting and empowering from Paul to Timothy, and a commissioning for the work of service Timothy was entering into.
  - The laying on of hands is not a mechanical thing. It only ‘works’ when it is associated with faith and the Holy Spirit’s presence and leading. Every Christian leader should be ready to lay hands on people, and to receive the laying on of hands.
  - See the following block for the verses that reveal the five kinds of supernatural grace that at different times ‘flow’ through the laying on of hands:

**1) Communicates God’s blessing.**

- Mark 10:16 - He took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.
- Genesis 48:14 - Israel blesses his two grandchildren by putting his hands on them; right hand is the greatest blessing.

**2) Conveys God’s healing.**

- Luke 4:40 - Laying his hands on each one, he healed them.
- Matt 9:18 - Come put your hand on her (dead daughter) and she will be healed.
- Matt 9:29 - He touched their eyes. According to your faith it will be done for you.
- Mark 6:5 - He laid his hands on a few people and healed them.
- Mark 16:18 - They will place their hands on sick people and they will get well.
- Acts 28:8 - Paul went in to see him and after prayer, laid his hands on him and healed him.
- James 5:14 - Is anyone of you sick. He should call the elders of the church to pray over him, and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered with faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.

**3) Imparts the infilling of the Holy Spirit.**

- Acts 8:19 - Simon sorcerer: ‘Give me this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.’
- Acts 9:17 - Ananias placed his hands on Saul and said, ‘See again and be filled with the Spirit.’
- Acts 19:6 - When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

**4) Imparts or transfers specific gifts (or empowerings) from the Spirit.**

- Deuteronomy 34:9 - Joshua was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him, therefore the people listened to him.
- 1 Timothy 4:14 - Do not neglect your gift, which was given to you through a prophetic message, when the body of elders laid their hands on you.

**5) Commissions for areas of ministry responsibility.**

- Numbers 27:18-23 - Moses commissions Joshua in front of everyone, giving him some of his authority. It is acknowledged that he, prior to this, has already received the Spirit.
- Numbers 8:10 - Bring the Levites before the LORD. The Israelites are to lay their hands on them, presenting them as a wave offering from the Israelites, so that they will be ready to do the work.
- Deuteronomy 34:9 - Joshua was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him, therefore the people listened to him.
- Acts 6:6 - They presented these men to the apostles who prayed for them, and laid their hands on them.
- Acts 13:3 - So they placed their hands on them, and sent them off.
- 1 Timothy 5:22 - Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands. *(This is a warning to not prematurely appoint someone for leadership.)*

**• Spirit-filled leaders keep themselves on fire for God.**

- Paul instructed Timothy to ‘fan into flame’ his call and the power of God on his life. Timothy had experienced a moment when he seemed to have been set ablaze by the Spirit when the elders and Paul laid their hands on him. But since then, it seems that this flame had waned somewhat. Paul urged him to fan the flame. Paul could not do this for him. Even God could not do this for him. It was Timothy’s responsibility to rouse himself in God and to sustain the fire of spiritual passion in his own life.
- Spirit-filled leaders need to make sure that they are freshly filled with the Spirit’s power. This flows out of a proactive personal prayer life where faith is exercised, and where the gifts that God has put in us are freshly affirmed and made to surface. It comes from hungrily seeking the Spirit’s presence and power - on a daily basis. The fire we experience in our times alone with God will be revealed when we stand before people in a ministry setting - in the words of John Wesley, ‘In prayer I set myself ablaze, and in ministry I invite people to watch me burn.’

7 For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.

**• Spirit-filled leaders shake off self-doubt, insecurity and timidity.**

- Timothy was young and seemed to be timid and shy. He may have been physically weak (1 Timothy 5:23 tells us that he was frequently ill). His father did not seem to have been a Christian and this may have made it difficult for him growing up. We know

he was young, and he must have easily felt intimidated by men with more natural authority and maturity. All this would have contributed to his feeling timid and full of self-doubt.

- But Paul was insistent that God had not given him a Spirit of timidity. This was Paul's way of telling him, 'Stop thinking about all your deficiencies and weaknesses - and start affirming by faith that the Spirit of God is in you. He will give you everything you need. There is no situation you cannot handle with the Spirit's help. There is no person who can truly intimidate you - if you will but draw on the boldness the Spirit offers you. With the Spirit's help, you have what it takes to lead, and to lead powerfully and effectively. Take your eyes off yourself and your inabilities, and put your eyes on the Spirit and his power living in you.' We need to hear these same words today. Better yet, these are the words we must regularly speak to ourselves.
  
- **Spirit-filled leaders replace self-reliance with Spirit-reliance.**
  - Many leaders battle far more with self-reliance than they do with self-doubt. This means that we tend to lean too much on our own cleverness, experience, training, natural strengths, or on our competence. But Paul did not point Timothy from his weaknesses to his strengths, but rather toward the Spirit's power! He says, 'God has given you ... a Spirit of power.'
  - We need to learn to lean on the Spirit every day, and in every situation we face. The Spirit wants to give us everything we need to influence people towards God and his purposes. He wants to give our words authority. He wants to quicken our understanding to know God's will. He wants to give us special grace to stay calm in the face of crisis and resistance. He wants us to operate in some of the gifting mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11: 'Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.'
  - We have been given a Spirit of power! We need to learn to depend on the Spirit, and on his power. One miracle-working revivalist used to say, 'I am the lightning rod, and the Holy Spirit is the electricity. I merely attract and conduct God's power to advance the gospel, and to set the captives free.' Perhaps we need to adopt this expression for ourselves.
  
- **Spirit-filled leaders are lovers before they are leaders.**
  - Not only had Timothy been given a Spirit of power, but Paul also affirmed that he had been given a Spirit of love. In the next point

we will explore how this love flows *through* us, but let's first look at how it first flows *to* us. Generally, God can seldom do something *through* us that he hasn't first done *to* us.

- Elsewhere the Bible says that 'perfect love drives out all fear' (1 John 4:18). Paul knew that Timothy needed to freshly experience 'God flooding his heart with love by the Holy Spirit' (Romans 5:5) in order to overcome self-preoccupation and cowardly fear.
  - Today, we desperately need to learn to experience and enjoy the love God has for us - and the Holy Spirit is the one who gives us this capacity to experience God's love. This revelation of God's love is the only thing that can weed out self-preoccupation in our lives. And it is the only way we can truly start to love others. Being loved by God will iron out the insecurities and fears that so easily sabotage our ministry to others. That is why, long before we are leaders we are called to be lovers - lovers of the God who first loved us - and who *continues* to love us. And then lovers of people.
  - But not only do we need to experience the Father's love flowing through the Spirit into us, we also need to grow our love-relationship with the Holy Spirit himself (see Philippians 2:1 which speaks of 'fellowship with the Spirit'). The Holy Spirit does not just want us to partner with him in ministry, but he also wants us to partner with him in love. This is perhaps why so many people who move powerfully today in the gifts of the Spirit say the same thing: 'The key to moving in the Spirit's power is to be someone who loves intimacy with the Spirit, someone who is consumed with knowing how deep, and wide, and long, and high is the love of Christ (see Ephesians 3:18).' Intimacy with God precedes impact for God. Experiencing God's love, and loving God in response, precedes leading others. This is what we mean by leaders are, first of all, lovers.
- **Spirit-filled leaders make themselves riverbeds of the Spirit's love towards others.**
    - Paul told Timothy that God had given him a Spirit of love. Timothy must have been overwhelmed by all the different kinds of people in the churches in Ephesus, and in the city of Ephesus. It wasn't his home city and he would have felt culturally out of place. All of this would make it difficult for him to really love people. But Paul was saying, 'Make your life a riverbed of the Spirit's love toward others.'
    - Today we desperately need to know that we do not have in ourselves the love we need to give others. We can only find it in God. We must invite God to love others through us and ask him to give us his love for them. Oh, let us fall to our knees and ask the Spirit to help people that we find unlovable - whether they be intent on harming or opposing us, or very different to us, or those we find (in ourselves at least), unlovable. If we as leaders fail to love, we fail entirely.

- **Spirit-filled leaders draw on the Spirit of a sound mind.**
  - Paul affirmed that Timothy had been given ‘the Spirit of ... a sound mind’ or, as in translated in the TNIV, ‘the Spirit of ... self-discipline’. What does this mean? Eaton’s interpretation is that: ‘The Spirit enables us to stay cool amidst conflict, to make good decisions in the midst of uncertainty, to be disciplined amidst pressures that would otherwise prompt us to neglect certain aspects of what God is calling us to. If we are not enabled by God himself, we shall become unbalanced or emotionally distraught. We shall need ‘a sound mind’ to stay within God’s will despite criticism, slander, and endless opposition to our every move! But all will be well if we look to the Holy Spirit, who gives us a sound mind.’
  - A phrase of similar meaning is used later in this letter to Timothy: ‘But you, keep your head in all situations (2 Timothy 4:5).’ (This sounds very similar to the opening words of Kipling’s famous poem, ‘If’: ‘If you can keep your head when (those) all about you are losing theirs’...) The phrase captures what the Spirit wants to enable in us: an ability to ‘keep our heads’, to cope, to stay calm, clear and focused - when surrounded by confusion, pressure, tumult and opposition. When the temptation to lose our heads comes, we need to call on the Spirit for the ability to keep our heads! That is partly what it means to have a sound mind.

8 So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God,

- **Spirit-filled leaders are learning to face suffering in the Spirit’s power.**
  - Paul was in prison for his testimony about Jesus. And he was soon to be executed. Timothy would have been tempted to think, ‘Serving Jesus can really get you into trouble - maybe I should back off from proclaiming the gospel, and pouring my life out for the well-being of the church.’ But Paul urged him to ‘join him in suffering for the gospel *by the power of God.*’
  - The Holy Spirit wants to come to us in our sufferings and give us a supernatural joy in the face of pain, a supernatural boldness in the face of opposition, and a supernatural perseverance in the face of suffering. Like Paul, we must, with the Spirit’s help, refuse to be ashamed of our faith, or intimidated by anyone or any system that resists the forward movement of the gospel through our lives.
  - Church history is filled with stories of how the Spirit empowers people to face suffering for the gospel. Just think of Richard Wurmbrand who was imprisoned for many years, and was frequently tortured on account of his faith. He wrote, ‘Alone in my cell, cold, hungry and in rags, I danced for joy every night ... sometimes I felt so filled with joy that I felt I would burst if I did

not give expression to it.' Let us take heart then when trials and sufferings come as a result of our obedience to God - no doubt God will empower us to deal with them!

***In summary, Spirit-filled leaders ...***

- *have had some supernatural commissioning moments in their lives.*
- *understand what 'the laying on of hands' is all about.*
- *keep themselves on fire for God.*
- *shake off self-doubt, insecurity and timidity.*
- *replace self-reliance with Spirit-reliance.*
- *are lovers before they are leaders.*
- *make themselves riverbeds of the Spirit's love towards others.*
- *draw on the Spirit of a sound mind.*
- *are learning to face suffering in the Spirit's power.*

## QUALITY 3: BECOMING A GOSPEL-CENTRED LEADER (1:8b-12)

### Introduction

Romans 1:16 gives us a glimpse into the central passion of Paul's heart, 'I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God to save anyone who believes.' In every letter of Paul's he elevates his mission as a gospel-messenger. He addresses every pastoral challenge with an appeal to some aspect of the gospel. And he draws people into a life of trust in God and Christ, always through stating and restating elements of the gospel. In so doing he sets the tone for every future spiritual leader. We too should have the gospel as our life's passion and purpose. This is what we mean by being a gospel-centred leader.

*Please read 2 Timothy 1:8b-12.*

8 Join me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God,

- **Gospel-centred leaders seek the Spirit's power in order to advance the gospel.**
  - Paul existed to 'advance the promise of life' (v1). He gave his life for the spreading of the gospel message. And he understood that all the power of God he experienced through the Spirit's enabling was ultimately to advance the gospel. God and Paul were in agreement about this: the most important thing this world needed (and still needs) is to hear the gospel message.
  - Today, we sometimes think that the Spirit's infilling is meant to make us more excited, or to have amazing experiences of God's nearness. Although this is part of it, the Spirit primarily wants to fill people so that they will become energised to be effective gospel messengers. In many charismatic circles, the church sometimes thinks that if we just have enough Holy Spirit encounters as a church, then the world will be reached and changed. This is not true. Holy Spirit encounters need to translate into effectively communicating and living out Christ's message - the gospel, to this world. We see this in Acts 2. The Spirit was poured out on the church. This made the unchurched people curious, but it was only as Peter then preached the gospel in the power of the Spirit, that people were saved and changed. It is not enough to make not-yet Christian people curious. We need to reach out to them with a communication of the gospel message.

9 who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, 10 but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has

destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

- **Gospel-centred leaders are able to communicate a shortened form of the gospel to non-Christian people.**
  - Every Christian, but especially Christian leaders, need to be able to articulate the gospel message. Although it is gloriously complex and multi-faceted, we need to be able to regularly communicate it in a shortened form. That is where verses 9-10 come in handy: Paul offers a shortened form of the gospel message. Let's analyse these two verses, and draw out six components of the gospel message ...
  - **1) God wants to save us.**
    - God has 'saved us' (v9). It is a gospel of **salvation**, or being saved. Salvation is the word that encapsulates all that God wants to do *in* us, *to* us, *for* us the moment we trust in Christ. Ephesians 1 and 2 explore what salvation is in more detail, but in summary, salvation has at least three main aspects...
    - 1) Salvation is *God forgiving our sins, reconciling us to himself*. We were guilty of sin and on a collision course with a Holy God on Judgement Day, but Jesus died for our sins so that we could stand sinless before God, and at peace with him. He now no longer counts our sins against us. We get to have a relationship with him.
    - 2) Salvation is *God giving us new hearts and lives*. Though we were dead in our sins and entirely unable to respond to God, he has made us alive with Christ and given us - to use some similar meaning phrases - new life, a new birth, a new heart, and the Holy Spirit to live within us. This aspect of salvation is specifically touched on in verse 10 when it says that Christ has brought *life* to light through the gospel.
    - 3) Salvation is *God adopting us as his children*. Although we were created by God, we were spiritual orphans until God adopted us into his family, and became our Father. What a privilege: we were once alienated from him by our sins but now we are adopted into his family!
  - **2) Once God has saved us, he begins to change us for good.**
    - Once we are saved, we will be able to **change**. Not only has he saved us, but he has 'called us to a holy life' (v9). It is important to understand that the holy life does not precede being saved, but rather follows it. This does not mean we will instantly live holy lives, but that, over time, we will be able to be increasingly holy in our lives. Salvation flows naturally into holiness. True holiness is impossible if we have not yet received salvation. Consider how being saved logically leads into personal change ...
      - Once our sins are forgiven, and we are reconciled to God, then we have the chance to start again. A

conscience clogged up with the guilt of the past makes it impossible to meaningfully change. It is relationship with God that energises and fuels real change in us.

- Once we receive new hearts and life, then we begin to experience new desires and a new capacity to live in a holy way.
  - Once we are adopted as his children, we begin to experience the security and satisfaction that makes sin less attractive and necessary in our lives.
  - Some people fear the very mention of God changing them, so it is important to reassure them that God only has our very best interests in mind. He is not a mean God, but a good God and father. If he changes us it will be because he wants to get rid of everything that hurts him, others or ourselves - and instead enables us to be the people he created us to be.
- **3) Once God has saved us, he begins to invite us to join him in what he is doing in the world.**
- We have already seen that, once we are saved, God calls us to a changed life. Salvation puts us in the place where we can change. But it also puts us in the place where we become *change-agents*.
  - Verse 9 reveals that God saved us ‘because of his own purpose’. In Ephesians 1:10 and 2:10 respectively, we discover two things about this purpose for which God saves us: First, according to Ephesians 1:10, *God is doing something in this world*. God is seeking to bring heaven to earth, by restoring everything and every relationship within the cosmos that is broken. God is at work in his world. Second, according to Ephesians 2:10, *God wants us to join him*. God allocates to every individual Christian and every local church very specific good works that he needs them to do. This means that we are saved to partner with God in what he is doing in his world.
- **4) Salvation is a pure gift - it is not earned, rather it is received by faith.**
- We are saved, ‘not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. (v9)’
  - *Salvation is a pure gift - this is entirely counter-intuitive to humanity*. We naturally assume that salvation is something we would have to earn through our good deeds, or religious rituals. We see salvation as a reward for the deserving. But the truth is that none of us deserve salvation, and none of us can attain salvation by our attempts to earn it. It is a gift of God’s grace. It is entirely undeserved. This is what makes Christianity different from every other religious belief. Most of the world’s major

religions assert that salvation (or whatever the goal of the specific faith is) is earned by good deeds. Only Christianity makes God's forgiveness and love freely available to the undeserving.

- *Salvation is a pure gift - all we need to do is to humbly admit we need it, and to receive it by faith.* We must humbly admit we need salvation. Salvation is necessary because we are sinful. We will not understand our need for a Saviour until we realise that we are sinners. The sooner we come to terms with our sinfulness the sooner we can reach out for salvation. We must receive it by faith. In the gospel message we hear that God wants to give us the gift of salvation that will then lead to a changed life. He holds this gift out to us. But we have to receive it by faith. What is faith? It is simply believing that God's gift of salvation in Jesus is real, and that he really wants to save us, and then joyfully inviting him to do just that.

○ **5) *Salvation comes through Jesus, the Saviour and King.***

- Let's explore this sentence next: 'This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus'. Let's look at four thoughts that emerge in this sentence ...
- First, notice that when God created the world, it seems that he either knew or anticipated that it would fall away from him in sinfulness. Stunningly, even before he created the world, God had decided that he would save the world, and save human beings, through Christ Jesus. This is why Revelations 13:8 says that the 'Lamb was slain before the creation of the world.'
- Second, Jesus is 'our Saviour'. He, being totally innocent and righteous, took the punishment our sins deserved upon himself on the cross. God put our sins upon him, and punished them there. As a result, the innocence and acceptance that Christ had before God, was given to us.
- Third, Jesus is 'the Christ'. This means that Jesus was the Messiah-king promised in the Old Testament. He was the one who would rule the world 'on David's throne' forever and ever (see Isaiah 9:6-7 for example). Not only did Jesus die on the cross, but he rose again from the dead and was exalted to the right hand of the Father where he now co-rules the world and universe. Said another way, he died for sin, but he rose again from the dead to reign!
- Fourth, Jesus is God's expression of 'grace'. The Greek text literally says, 'Grace appeared... through the appearing of Jesus.' Everything about Jesus - his life, his teachings, his miracles, his example, his death, his resurrection, his exaltation, his intercession for us now, and his imminent return - are expressions of God's grace. Jesus is God's gift

- (for that's what grace means) to this world.
- The point is this: salvation is wrapped up in Jesus. Once we put our trust in Jesus - the one set apart to save us before the beginning of time; the Saviour; the King; the expression of God's grace - we are saved!
- **6) *Salvation has some wonderful eternal benefits.***
- 'Christ ... has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (v10).' Let's look at this last phrase ...
  - We have already seen that salvation is something we experience *in this life*: 1) We begin to experience the joy of our salvation. 2) We begin to experience the joy of changing into the kind of person God intends us to be. 3) We begin to experience the joy of joining God in what he is doing in this world, living lives of purpose. But salvation has amazing benefits that extend *beyond life on this earth*. Verse 10 mentions two eternal benefits: 1) *Christ has destroyed death*. By dying in the place of sinners, Jesus has reversed the curse of death that came upon the human race. Sin brought the curse of death into this world, but Jesus has broken that curse. Death has lost its power. That's why Jesus said, 'Whoever lives and believes in me shall never die' (John 11:26). The end of everything will involve the end of death - as seen when death will be thrown into the lake of fire (Revelations 20:14). This is why Christians alone need not fear death. We have eternal life. 2) *Christ makes us immortal, enabling us to live forever with him*. Yes, if Jesus does not return before we die, our physical bodies will perish, but they will be replaced by glorious resurrection bodies. Immortality in the Bible is connected to resurrection bodies (see 1 Corinthians 15:35-57). We will be given new bodies in a new heaven and a new earth. We will live forever with God in his regenerated universe. All the curses of sin - death, disease and suffering will one day be done away with!

**Extra section: learning how to briefly communicate the gospel message.**

Every Christian should be able to communicate the gospel in shortened form. The six components that Paul mentions here serve as a helpful starting point. Allow me, for even more simplicity's sake, to re-order his message slightly so that it is easy to remember how to do it. The re-ordering is to combine points 1 and 6 (which refer to the immediate effects of salvation), points 2 and 3 (which refer to progressive effects of salvation), and points 4 and 5 (which tell us what we must do to be saved).

***A re-ordered version of the gospel message in 2 Timothy 1:9-10 ...***

***Points 1 and 6 combined:***

***God wants to save you, which means he will...***

- a) forgive your sins,***
- b) give you new life with the Spirit living in you,***
- c) make you his own child, and***
- d) allow you to live with him forever once you die.***

***Points 2 and 3 combined:***

***Once he has saved you, he wants to begin **changing** you in the best possible ways and he wants you to **join him in what he is doing** in this world.***

***Points 4 and 5 combined:***

***Salvation is a **pure gift**, not earned by good deeds or religion, but **by trusting in Jesus**, the Saviour and King.***

***A few tips in communicating this shortened form of the gospel ...***

- Notice that points 1 and 6 describe what happens *instantly* when we trust in Christ, while points 2 and 3 describe what happens *progressively* after we've trusted in Christ. Be careful not to confuse these two separate concepts, otherwise people may think they need to do something in order to earn salvation. Life-change *follows* salvation. The gospel does not call people to change in order to be saved. It invites them to be saved, and then, once they're saved, God begins changing them - with their co-operation of course.
- It is good to commit this outline to memory, so that as the opportunity arises, the Holy Spirit can bring these points to mind.
- There is nothing special about the specific wording of these points however, so feel at liberty to phrase them in your own way. Even the order of these six points can be changed.
- Is there any part of this message that can be left out? Yes, points 2 and 3 can be left out if the time to share the message is very limited. These points describe life after salvation so they can, if needs be, wait.
- I have found that including some of my own experiences and personal stories into some of the points is powerful, especially under points 1 and 6. I often tell of *my experience* of being forgiven. Or I might tell of *my experience* of receiving a new heart, and new life, with the Spirit living in me. Or I might tell of *my experience* of being made God's child, and having God as my own Father. Or I might tell of *my experience* of becoming certain that when I die, I will live forever with God.
- There is a way of declaring this gospel-message to a group of people under the emboldening power of the Spirit, but there is also a way of communicating some of this gospel message in a very relaxed, conversational way with one or two people over a meal or at work. In both cases, more important than our role, we trust the Spirit to be working in people's hearts as they hear the message.
- If you do get to explain this message, and a person seems really interested, then a good follow-on question would be, '*What stops you from trusting in Christ for salvation?*'

11 And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher.

- **Gospel-centred leaders announce the gospel, start communities around it, and explore its depths.**
  - Paul saw himself as a **herald** of the gospel. ‘A herald’ was a news-announcer entrusted to send important messages from town to town. Today, we have a 2000-year-old message that is still as fresh, important and life-changing as it was then. We *must* announce it to people. We must go wherever we need to go to get the message out.
  - Paul saw himself as an **apostle** of the gospel. This is a unique function. Firstly, apostles plant churches, primarily through gospel preaching. Secondly, apostles work into existing churches and ensure that they are built solidly on the foundations of the gospel. Thirdly, apostles partner with existing churches in advancing the gospel near and far. Apostolic ministry is largely defined by the gospel! The main passion of an apostle is that the gospel will take root in lives and regions!
  - Paul saw himself as a **teacher** of the gospel. The central message of the Bible is the gospel message. As students of the Bible we need to explore more deeply the many facets of the gospel, as well as exploring carefully the implications of the gospel for our lives. (As a practical tip, studying the book of Ephesians is a good place to start, because its first three chapters explore a revelation of the gospel, and its last three chapters explore a life-application of the gospel.)

12 That is why I am suffering as I am.

- **Gospel-centred leaders soberly understand that not everyone will be happy to hear the gospel.**
  - ‘That is why I am suffering as I am’ said Paul. He was announcing the gospel, trying to build communities around it, and trying to explain its depths and implications to these new Christians. And many people hated him for it. But why, especially when we consider that the word ‘gospel’ means ‘good news’ do some people respond so badly to the gospel message? Answer: the gospel is an affront and insult to people who:
    - refuse to believe they’re sinners and instead think they’re ‘just fine’.
    - have trusted in false gods, false Saviours, false belief systems, and false religions and are not happy to hear that they may be wrong about some things.
    - do not believe we have our facts about Jesus, God and humanity right.
    - do not want to change, and who do not want us to try and help change anyone they know.
    - enjoy the control they may have over other people, and do

- not want to see these people submitting to any higher power than themselves.
  - think that religion is taboo, and assume that anyone who believes something strongly is dangerous to society.
  - would rather create their own belief system than be told what to believe.
  - are cynical about the world and instinctively reject something that sounds this good.
- No wonder we will get into trouble if we give ourselves to this message! Thankfully, some will immediately see it for what it is - *good news!* But some will, due to their spiritual blindness and hard-heartedness, fail to see it for what it is: the 'promise of life'.

12 Yet this is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him (*or, 'what he has entrusted to me'*) until that day.

- **Gospel-centred leaders know that God is always for the gospel and therefore it will never fail.**
  - Note: Eaton says that 'what I have entrusted to him' is the wrong translation, and should rather be translated, 'what he has entrusted to me'. This changes the meaning completely. If Eaton's translation is correct, then what is it that God has entrusted to us? The answer is 'the gospel' - since this is what Paul was speaking about (see verse 10-11). Paul had faced some setbacks because of the gospel, but he did not see this as a setback for the gospel itself. This is because he knew that behind the gospel was a powerful God (the one in whom he believed) who is able to guard the gospel until the time comes for the world to end.
  - Today, like Paul, we must never lose confidence in the gospel, nor in the God who gave it to us. God has entrusted the gospel to our care, but it is still *his* gospel. He is committed to seeing it do its work in this world. Nothing and no one can destroy the gospel, because God himself guards it, and is committed to impacting on this world, and in the lives of millions and billions. The gospel will never become irrelevant to humankind regardless of the passing of time, since it is a timeless message, guarded by a timeless God. Like Paul, we should refuse to let temporary rejection of the gospel discourage us. The gospel will prevail, because the God of the gospel prevails!

13 What you heard from me, keep (or 'hold onto') as the pattern of sound teaching (or 'healthy words'), with faith and love in Christ Jesus. 14 Guard the good deposit (or 'beautiful deposit') that was entrusted to you – guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

- **Gospel-centred leaders have an ever-tightening grip on the gospel-message, and give themselves to exploring its many facets more and more deeply.**
  - The 'sound teaching' and 'the good deposit' mentioned in these verses refer to the gospel message, for this is the theme of these verses (see verses 10-11). In verse 12, we saw that God guards the gospel, but now we see that we too need to 'guard' or 'keep' or 'hold onto' the gospel message. We need to grow in our understanding and grip of it.
  - The gospel message can be said in summary form, as in verses 9 and 10. But this is really just the tip of the iceberg. Beneath the surface, the gospel has a wonderful multi-faceted complexity - which can be described as 'the apostle's teaching' (Acts 2:42). When the gospel is proclaimed to unsaved people, a shortened form of it is usually used. But once people become Christians, they need to be taught the lengths, breadths, depths and heights of the gospel. So where do we find these? Where do we find the 'apostle's teaching'? The answer: the New Testament, as it builds upon the Old Testament, explores the gospel message in all its lengths, breadths, depths, and heights.
  - This gospel message comes in the form of a pattern, and in the form of words (v13). But what does pattern mean? By *pattern* we mean that it can be systematically arranged into various sub-themes such as God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, humanity, sin, salvation, judgement and end times, church, Christian living, the mission of the church and more. And each of these themes can be unpacked with words. They have content that is clear. This pattern is elsewhere described by Paul as 'the whole counsel of God' (Acts 20:27). Today it is sometimes called a 'systematic theology'. Under the surface of the New Testament documents, we find a pattern of teaching - a systematic theology. As Christians, we need to find it, hold onto it, and be able to teach it to others. That is why we should, first of all, give ourselves to read, study and understand the whole New Testament seeking to grow our personal systematic theology. Secondly, we can supplement our own Bible study insights by reading a trusted Systematic Theology book.
  - In sermons, our main message should not so much be about 'the Bible' but rather the message *within* the Bible, which is the gospel. Every time a Christian gets to preach a message, or lead a Bible study, they need to explore some of the gospel. The gospel *is* our message. It is the teaching on which we build our faith and our lives. For example, if we are teaching on a moral question, we do not just teach new moral guidelines on the issue - we speak

about how the gospel shapes our approach to this issue.

- **Gospel-centred leaders teach and preach in a very life-giving way.**
  - Often we polarise the experience of the Spirit and the teaching of the Bible. Sadly, we sometimes think of Bible teaching as dry and intellectual - something that has to be done, but which is not very energising, transforming or life-giving. We may think to ourselves that it is really in prayer, praise and worship, and the operating of the gifts of the Spirit that life and energy flows into our lives. But these verses tell us how transforming and energising the Bible's message can be.
  - To understand the importance of gospel-centred preaching look at the four phrases: 'sound teaching' (v13), 'good deposit' (v14), 'faith and love in Christ' (v13) and 'help of the Holy Spirit who lives inside us' (v14) In each case we will notice that as we teach and preach the gospel, there is a release of spiritual life and vitality in those who hear.
  - 1) *We need to preach and teach in a way that helps people experience spiritual health.* The phrase 'sound teaching' can also be translated as 'healthy words'. In other words the way to spiritual health is to regularly hear the gospel in all its multi-faceted beauty and depth. Sadly, people can become spiritually damaged and diseased if the gospel truths stop burning in their hearts and minds. And dangerously, teaching in a church can fail to be healthy. That's why we can say that teaching that fails to emphasize the gospel is, according to this verse, unhealthy and damaging.
  - 2) *We need to preach and teach in a way that helps people experience the 'beauty' of the gospel.* The phrase 'good deposit' can also be translated 'beautiful deposit'. There is a beauty about the gospel. There is a beauty about the Word of God being clearly taught, with the gospel at its centre. A person who has not heard the gospel is starved for real spiritual beauty, and preachers who fail to help people see the beauty of the gospel, ultimately deprive them of the glory God wants to shine into their hearts.
  - 3) *We need to preach and teach in a way that helps people experience 'faith and love in Christ Jesus' (v13).* As we preach and teach the many facets of the gospel, people need to find themselves trusting Christ more and loving Jesus more and experiencing the Holy Spirit more. This kind of teaching is *experiential* in nature. It is not expecting them to change *after* the message is done. It is anticipating a change *while* they are hearing the message. Tim Keller writes, 'We wrongly think that a person is saved through believing the gospel, and then begins to change through the application of Biblical principles. The truth is that a person is saved through believing the gospel, but then is changed through believing the gospel more and more deeply.' Whenever we preach and teach we should help people to believe and experience the gospel more and more deeply! This is the key to spiritual vitality in the Christian life.

- 4) *We need to preach and teach in a way that helps people experience 'the Holy Spirit who lives' within them (v14).* The Holy Spirit helps us to love the gospel message, and the Bible that contains this message. It is a false spirituality that says, 'We don't need teaching - we just need to experience more of the Spirit.' Not true. We need both the Bible and the Spirit, especially considering that the Spirit inspired the Bible and keeps on pointing us to the Bible. After all, verse 14 makes it clear that the Spirit wants to help us guard the Bible and its healthy and beautiful gospel truths.

***In summary, Gospel-centred leaders ...***

- *seek the Spirit's power in order to advance the gospel.*
- *are able to communicate a shortened form of the gospel to non-Christian people.*
- *announce the gospel, start communities around it, and explore its depths.*
- *soberly understand that not everyone will be happy to hear the gospel.*
- *know that God is always for the gospel and therefore it will never fail.*
- *have an ever-tightening grip on the gospel-message, and give themselves to exploring its many facets more and more deeply.*
- *teach and preach in a very life-giving way.*