

LEARN TO LEAD IN 2 TIMOTHY

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

PART TWO

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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.

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

Introduction

Jesus set the ultimate example of spiritual leadership during his three years of ministry. And like all good leaders he attracted followers, but what made him an exceptional leader was his ability to multiply his own influence by reproducing himself in others. He may have attracted followers, but he worked hard at developing them into leaders. And, to this day, we cannot improve on his approach: *good leaders may attract followers, but great leaders develop other leaders.*

Please read 2 Timothy 1:15-2:2

- **Leader-making leaders put their hearts into other leaders-in-training.**
 - Paul was a great leader because he identified people with leadership potential, and then through a process, raised them up to be leaders. What was this 'process'? Let's briefly observe how he raised up Timothy as a leader in answering this. Firstly, he formed a friendship based on loyalty and love. Then, he invited him to be a co-worker in God's work. And then, he urged him to step out into some leadership opportunities. But notice that he did this all in a way that was highly relational. He poured his life into Timothy. Notice also, that he desired that Timothy would become all that God wanted him to become, and achieve all that God wanted him to achieve.
 - In the following verses (1:15-2:2) we will look at some of the co-workers that Paul invested his life and heart into, and who he invited to partner him in God's work. We will see that some of these people did not fulfil God's calling on their lives, but some did.

15 You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes.

- **Leader-making leaders sometimes experience the pain of some leaders-in-training 'bailing out'.**
 - Paul was in trouble with the Roman authorities and hence, in prison. It's not hard to imagine how much Paul must have longed for his co-workers - the people in whose lives he had invested, to be there for him in his greatest hour of need. Sadly, Paul was deserted by them. This must have broken his heart for those who he had hoped would be there for him, had left him.
 - In verse 15 Paul makes special mention of Phygelus and Hermogenes. Either they had backed off from gospel-proclamation because of fear, and were therefore staying away

from Paul, or they may have been led astray by one of the many false teachings around at the time. Alternatively, they may have taken offence at Paul, and instead of remaining his loyal workers and brothers, had become his critic.

- Even Jesus experienced the pain of desertion. In John 6:67, when disciples started leaving him, he said, 'Will you also leave me?' One of the hardest things to come to terms with as a leader who seeks to raise up other leaders, is that some of the people we have high hopes for will back off from us, or worse still, back off from the gospel and the call of God on their lives. This point is made not to discourage us, but to help us to be realistic in our expectations.

16 May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. 17 On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me until he found me. 18 May the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day! You know very well in how many ways he helped me in Ephesus.

▪ **Leader-making leaders deal honourably with those leaders-in-training that have fallen away.**

- Why was Paul praying for mercy for Onesiphorus 'on that day' - meaning Judgement Day? Probably, it was because he believed that Onesiphorus had made a really bad decision and was therefore, in trouble with God. By saying that he was in trouble with God, I do not mean that he had lost his salvation, but that he may have 'lost what he has worked for' (to use the phrase in 2 John 8) - that is, his heavenly reward.
- These verses can seem misleading because Paul seemed to have spoken so highly of Onesiphorus. But in verse 15, Paul had started listing how everyone had deserted him. It is most likely that he was continuing with this same subject of desertion. However, he spoke of Onesiphorus differently to Phygelus and Hermogenes because: 1) he honoured Onesiphorus for all that he had done for him while he was still on track, and 2) he prayed for him now that he was off-track.
- When people let us down, betray us, become our critics, fall away from God, or fall away from God's call on their lives, we can experience great pain. And we can be tempted to speak badly about them. Instead, we should begin to pray that God will lead them to repentance. In this passage, we see that, despite feelings of betrayal, Paul honoured his former co-workers, saying the best things he could about them, and graciously praying for them. We too need to be honouring and gracious towards people that have let us down. Like Paul, we need to be more concerned about people's relationship *with God*, than with their relationship *with us*. Paul understood that, though Onesiphorus' salvation was secure, he was forfeiting his heavenly reward and inheritance.

Two Timothy Chapter Two

1 You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

- **Leader-making leaders build affectionate and affirming relationships with their leaders-in-training.**
 - Paul called Timothy ‘my son’. It seemed that Paul was genuinely fond of Timothy, affectionate towards him and affirming of him.
 - The church is in desperate need of ‘father-leaders’. Unlike any other kind of leader, fathers sincerely long to see their sons and daughters succeed, and hopefully even surpass them. It is true that siblings may compete with each other, but fathers never compete with, or feel threatened by their own children. Fathers help their children to get rid of a survivor- orphan mentality and the need to prove themselves. They replace these with a deep sense of affirmation, strength and security. There is the danger of raising up leaders who are competent (which is good), *but not secure*. The best way to develop security in leaders-in-training is to invest in their lives in a fatherly way.

- **Leader-making leaders urge their leaders-in-training to find their strength at the well of God’s grace, especially when feeling tempted to quit.**
 - In 1:15-18 we see that Phigelus, Hermogenes and Onesiphorous, were initially strongly held in God’s grace, but somehow had wandered away from the source of grace they needed to push them through their ‘quitting point’. As a result, when the tests came, they simple faded away. In contrast, Paul urged Timothy to stay strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. That’s why he starts with ‘you then’.
 - The best thing we can do for those we love, for those Christians who we want to see succeed in all that God has for them, is to tell them to stay strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. If they succeed in doing just this, they will go into every day knowing and trusting that Jesus is there for them. There is no situation they cannot handle with the help of Jesus who will make them strong. He will send them support and supply whatever their current circumstance requires - whether it’s a difficult decision to make, a painful emotion to deal with, or a challenging situation to face. God will either release grace into their hearts to bear with the situation, or his grace may even change the circumstances altogether.
 - Paul is not our only New Testament role model in this regard. Barnabas, when finding a new community of Christians, ‘saw the evidence of the grace of God in their lives, and was glad, and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts’ (Acts 11:23). Interestingly, it was Barnabas who had raised

up Paul into leadership - no doubt, teaching him the importance of raising up leaders in a fatherly way.

2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.

- **Leader-making leaders model ministry to their leaders-in-training.**
 - Paul, in this letter, had already spoken twice of the things Timothy had heard him often say (1:13 and this verse). It seemed that when Paul was ministering, he was not only focusing on the people he was ministering to, but also on setting an example for Timothy who was watching how he did it. In other words, every ministry opportunity for Paul was also a modelling opportunity for those leaders he was training.
 - We saw Jesus doing the same. He called twelve disciples and ministered to people in front of them - as a way of training them. One of the best ways to teach people leadership and ministry is to *show* them how to do it. This is why the best leaders often invite leaders-in-training to 'shadow' them, when ministry opportunities come along.
 - In God's kingdom, leaders make other leaders through on-the-job training. That's why sending people off to academic institutions to be trained by people without leadership gifting and experience is perhaps not the best approach to raising leaders. Academic institutions can supplement training, but they certainly cannot substitute the need for *on-the-job* training with real leaders investing in the lives of their sons or daughters.

- **Leader-making leaders seek and invest their lives into the right people**
 - Jesus was highly selective about the people into whom he invested his life. He would minister to almost anyone, but he would only invest his life into carefully- chosen leaders-in-training. Paul encouraged Timothy to do the same. Timothy was to 'train reliable people who would also be able to teach others'. From this verse we learn a few things about what to look for in potential leaders. If the attributes mentioned below are missing in a potential leader, then as a general rule, do not train them up as leaders - not until they've demonstrated these qualities.
 - 1) *They should have some basic character.* They are to be 'faithful' to God, to their commitments and to their relationships. The single most important quality in Christian leaders is their character. This does not mean that they are perfect. But it means that they are committed to changing when and if God wants them to change. They will refuse to excuse darkness in their life. They will learn to stick to their commitments. They are willing to lay down their lives in faithfulness to the call God has on them.
 - 2) *They should have some basic competency.* They will need to be

able to lead and able to teach. Again, this does not mean that they are finished products. It does however mean that they are willing and able to learn to lead, and to learn to teach. If a person claims to be a leader, but no one is following them, they are not a leader.

- 3) *They should have well-developed social skills* They should be able to relate warmly to their leaders, with other leaders-in-training, and with the people they are to lead. If they do not have social abilities and the ability to get on with different kinds of people they are not ready to lead.
 - 4) *They should be part of a company of leaders-in-training.* Paul encouraged Timothy to train several people at the same time. The wisdom behind this is that it is not wise to invest only in one person, who may default. Rather train many and you will have more leaders. Besides, Jesus trained a company of twelve, and used the very relationships between them as effective training tools to sharpen their characters and skills.
- **Leader-making leaders seek to multiply themselves in their specially chosen leaders-in-training.**
 - In Luke 6:40 Jesus said, 'Everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.' We see Jesus taking twelve disciples and multiplying himself in them. That is why, once he had gone, people said of Peter and John, 'these men have been with Jesus' (Acts 4:13). Similarly, Paul said to his disciples, 'Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me - put it into practice' (Philippians 4:9).
 - Good leaders seek to multiply themselves into others, so that instead of doing all the work themselves, there are more to do the tasks. Billy Graham realised this too late. When asked, if he could do his whole ministry again, what he would do differently, he replied, 'I would find ten other men with gifts of evangelism and I would train them, so that instead of their being just one Billy Graham, there would be a lot more Billy Grahams.'
 - The power of this approach to ministry is that instead of the church growing by addition, it has the potential to grow by multiplication. One leader could multiply into five people, who in turn multiply into a further five, and so on. After a few years you could have 156 leaders, not just one! This training of leaders thus grows the church (and the advance of God's kingdom) exponentially. Each leader should always have some other leaders-in-training into whom they are seeking 'to multiply' their heart, character, lives, skills and knowledge.
 - In this single verse of 2 Timothy 2:2 we see four generations: Paul, who invested into Timothy, who invested into faithful people, who invested into others. This is true legacy - raising up leadership, so that your impact not only continues once you are gone, but even increases! This is God's timeless method of reaching the world.

In summary, leader-making leaders ...

- *put their hearts into other leaders-in-training.*
- *sometimes experience the pain of some leaders-in-training 'bailing out'.*
- *deal honourably with those leaders-in-training that have fallen away.*
- *build affectionate and affirming relationships with their leaders-in-training.*
- *urge their leaders-in-training to find their strength at the well of God's grace, especially when feeling tempted to quit.*
- *model ministry to their leaders-in-training.*
- *seek and invest their lives into the right people.*
- *seek to multiply themselves in their specially chosen leaders-in-training.*

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

Introduction

Every leader faces a temptation to quit from time to time. These times are often marked by exhaustion, confusion and doubt. We wonder whether God is really with us. We look in vain for the fruit that we were hoping for. The price we have paid does not seem to be shown in the results we have achieved. The people we hoped would have encouraged us have instead criticized us. This experience of a 'quitting point' is universal. But there is one thing to do. We can *endure*. A useful definition of endurance is this: *to crash through the quitting point*.

Please read 2 Timothy 2:3-14

3 Join with me (or 'Take your share') in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 4 No one serving as a soldier gets involved (or 'entangled') in civilian affairs (or 'the affairs of everyday life'); rather, they try to please their commanding officer (or 'the one who recruited him as a soldier'). 5 Similarly, anyone who competes as an athlete does not receive the victor's crown except by competing according to the rules. 6 The hard working farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops.

From these three analogies based on familiar professions we will draw six insights into spiritual leadership...

- **Enduring leaders know that life is tough - and they're tough to life.**
 - The three professions used as examples in these verses are 1) a soldier, 2) an athlete and 3) a farmer. All of these kinds of people understand that life is tough. It's just part of the deal. They are ready to 'take their share' in suffering. They are not surprised that life is difficult.
 - Similarly, enduring Christian leaders understand that suffering is normal, for all people, and more so for all Christians, and even more so still for all Christian leaders. Life is tough - and we need to toughen up to that fact.
 - Like farmers, athletes and soldiers - we need hard feet (towards life) - yet tender hearts (towards God and people). Sadly, many Christians have hard hearts (towards God and people) and tender feet (towards life). So many have bought the lie that our culture-at-large throws at us: 'life is meant to be easy'. Or we have bought the lie our sometimes-deluded church culture throws at us: 'God wants to make life easy for us'. Believing these lies will leave us totally ill-equipped for the suffering that is sure to come our way.

- **Enduring leaders know that it takes effort to achieve something for God.**
 - Soldiers must fight. Athletes must run. Farmers must toil. Success only comes through effort.
 - Similarly, God has ‘good works planned in advance for us’, says Ephesians 2:10, but it is followed by these two words: ‘to do’. Success won’t fall into our laps. It will require much effort, exertion of energy, and pro-active co-operation with God. It is wonderful that God provides much motivation, strength, guidance and support, but he still insists that we actively co-operate. There is a part that we play that God refuses to do for us. We are not passive in the adventure of God’s using us - we exert energy and effort in partnership with God’s empowering grace. We fight. We run. We toil. We play a key part.

- **Enduring leaders know that success requires a single-minded concentration.**
 - Two of the three analogies make this point: soldiers must not be entangled in civilian affairs (or as Eaton translates it ‘the affairs of everyday life’) (v4) and the athlete must wear light clothing and gives their sole focus to running toward the winning post. Both the soldier and the athlete employ focus, single-mindedness and concentration, along with a readiness to shake off distractions.
 - Similarly, Christian leaders are in real danger of losing focus on what it is God calls them to do. Too often, they are pulled in too many directions. Instead of being loyal to Jesus, and seeing Jesus as their ‘commanding officer’ (or as Eaton translates it ‘the one who recruited them as a soldier’), they listen to other voices of distraction. They are carrying too much ‘weight’ and are hence heavy-laden and confused as to what to really do with their lives. The winning post is not clear. In contrast, enduring leaders have a clear sense of what the winning post is (what God has called them to do and achieve for him). They see it. They can describe it. They dream about it. They train and work with it always in mind. And everything else (every other agenda, good idea and distraction) is peripheral to it.

- **Enduring leaders submit themselves to some biblical ‘rules’ of success.**
 - This point is drawn from the athlete analogy. It is this: the athlete can only win if he/she competes according to the rules (v5).
 - Similarly, Christian leaders need to align their lives to the ‘rules’ of success in God’s kingdom. The whole of 2 Timothy, when looked at from a certain angle, speaks of various ‘rules’ of success. Being Spirit-filled, being gospel-centred, being a leader-maker and now becoming an enduring leader - these are the ‘rules’ that when followed, will help us to succeed. They are also rules that, if ignored, may cause us to fail.
 - Let us briefly refer to two other rules of success that are latent in

these analogies: 1) The athlete analogy highlights *'the rule of training'*. Long before the day of the big race comes, we need to be getting ready for it. 1 Corinthians 9:25 says, 'Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training.' Tragically, too many Christian leaders do not pro-actively train before great opportunities arise. When these opportunities then suddenly appear (as they so often do), they are not ready to 'match the moment'. 2) The farmer analogy also highlights *'the rule of sowing and reaping'*. In trying to positive impact on people, we seldom see immediate results. We usually need to sow into people's lives or into a specific context, for a season. At a later date, we will begin to reap the harvest of changed lives. We're reminded of Galatians 6:9 which instructs us to keep doing good, with the promise that at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

- **Enduring leaders are motivated by the terrible possibility of missing their calling.**
 - This point is derived from the athlete analogy. The athlete can lose the crown if he/she does not abide by the requirements of the contest (v6). 1 Corinthians 9:26-27 similarly says, 'I do not run aimlessly... I beat my body, making it my slave, so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified from the prize.'
 - As Christian leaders we get a good start, but there is a real danger that we may not finish well. Discouragement, pride, sexual immorality, financial corruption, dishonesty, insecurity or false teaching are all factors that threaten to knock us out of the race. It is possible to 'lose the reward for which we have worked so hard' (2 John 8). The possibility of such indiscretion should, however, motivate us to be especially disciplined and determined to finish without falling into the many pot-holes that will seek to trip us up along the way. Our inheritance, our destiny, our calling, and our heavenly reward is all at stake.

- **Enduring leaders are motivated by the wonderful promise of succeeding in the sight of God.**
 - The soldier thrills at the thought of winning the war and rescuing the captives. He thrills at the sight of his commanding officer standing tall in victory. The athlete longs to win that crown. The farmer gets to enjoy the harvest. There is a goal to their efforts. And this goal deeply motivates them.
 - Similarly, Christian leaders need to be deeply motivated to achieve all that God wants them to achieve. Every Christian leader needs to seek God with the question, 'God, what will success in my life look like in your sight?' Then, once we become clear on what success is for us in the sight of God, we must give ourselves to achieving it with whole-hearted abandon. And it is not just the joy of success that motivates us, but the joy that God himself experiences as we 'glorify him by completing the work he

gave us to do' (see John 17:3).

7 Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.

- **Enduring leaders are energised daily by Spirit-enabled revelation from God's word.**
 - Revelation (or the Spirit-inspired insights we have into God's Word) is the fuel that energises our endurance. Making a similar point, Romans 15:4 connects 'endurance' with 'the encouragement of the Scriptures'. Endurance is rooted in revelation from the Bible. Said inversely, our endurance-levels drop as our revelation-levels drop. Getting revelation from the Scriptures and the Spirit is a daily requirement for Christian leadership. We cannot run the race, fight the fight, nor reap the harvest without the necessary energy that revelation brings us. We need the nourishing, motivating 'food' of fresh revelation from God's word to sustain us.
 - In this verse in 2 Timothy, Paul tells us the two things that are needed for us to experience Spirit-empowered revelation on a consistent basis: 1) *We need to reflect on the Scriptures.* Revelation doesn't come to the lazy mind. It does not just appear to the person who does not read the Bible, or who does not take time to think about what it is saying. 2) *We need to be asking Jesus to give us insight while we reflect on the Scriptures.* It is not enough just to think about and study the Bible. We need to be like AW Tozer who read the Bible 'on his knees,' desperate to be taught by the Spirit as he read. We don't need to literally be on our knees, but in our hearts we must be bowed in humility and receptiveness to Jesus himself. In our age of limitless information, we must be careful that we do not approach the Bible like we would any other book, and assume that through our own intelligence we will be able to understand it completely. No, the Christian must approach God's word in humility. It is living and active. It is a hammer, a light, a sword and a scalpel. We do not just read God's word, we must allow it to read us and work in us. This is how God gives us insight as we reflect on it.

8 Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel ...

- **Enduring leaders know that God's purposes will prevail, no matter how impossible it seems, or how long it takes.**
 - This verse, much like 2 Timothy 1:9-10, again serves as a summary of the gospel. In it we see that 1) Jesus rose from the dead, and 2) Jesus is the promised Messiah in the line of David. But why does Paul quote the gospel here? The answer is that he has just spoken of the need for God-breathed revelation, and now he wants to

make it clear that, more than anything else, we need revelation of the gospel itself. And this revelation of the gospel inspires endurance. Let's ponder the two aspects of gospel described in this verse - and how they inspire endurance in us ...

- 1) God had a purpose in sending Jesus to the cross. But his great purpose faced a great obstacle - death. To anyone who saw Jesus die on that cross, it would have seemed as if God's purposes had failed in Jesus. But then the resurrection happened - and God's purpose, no matter how impossible it seemed, prevailed. So how does this inspire endurance in us? Answer: it assures us that God's purposes will prevail, no matter how impossible they may look. When God declares his purposes in our lives, there will be times when it could seem that circumstances themselves are destroying them. But it is often these very times that pave a way for God's purposes to be fulfilled in our lives. If we keep on trusting in the resurrected Jesus, then he will turn the situation around for his glory, and ultimately his purpose will prevail. This calls for enduring faith.
- 2) God promised in 1000 BC that a descendant of David would be king forever. When the Davidic line was at its most obscure, Jesus came to this world and the promise was fulfilled. So how does this inspire endurance in us? Answer: It reminds us that God's purposes will prevail, no matter how long it takes. Sometimes it will seem to take a long time for the purposes of God to unfold in our lives, but ultimately God will do what he has promised in and through us. So let's not quit!
- Through reflecting on the gospel again and again, enduring leaders come to understand that God will fulfil his purposes in their lives, no matter how impossible it looks, and no matter how long it takes.

This is my gospel, 9 for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained. 10 Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

- **Enduring leaders know that their suffering cannot really hinder the gospel, but can in fact increase the gospel's impact.**
 - In verse 9, Paul was chained, but he reminded Timothy that 'God's word' (which does not mean 'the Bible' but rather 'the gospel') can never be chained up.
 - In verse 10, Paul then says that he understands that his suffering is connected to the salvation of certain people, 'the elect' - those chosen by God to be saved.
 - He says he endures everything (and by this he means all kinds of suffering) that they may obtain salvation. This truth comes as a surprise: we know that Paul's gospel preaching would lead to the salvation of people, but who would have thought that Paul's

suffering would lead to the salvation of people too!

- Today, let the Christian leader who suffers in God's work say by faith, 'I don't know how God will do it, but I believe that God will not waste the pain that comes from obeying him, and that somehow, my pain will result in more people being saved.'

11 Here is a trustworthy saying:

If we died with him, we will also live with him;

12 if we endure, we will also reign with him.

If we disown him, he will also disown us;

13 if we are faithless, he remains faithful,
for he cannot disown himself.

14 Keep reminding God's people of these things.

- Paul gave Timothy four 'sayings' that he knew would both encourage Timothy to endure, and would serve as easy-to-remember sayings that Timothy could use to keep encouraging the churches under his care (v14). *From these four sayings we will draw four insights that inspire endurance ...*
- **Enduring leaders know that resurrection life follows crucifixion suffering.**
 - Paul gave Timothy four 'sayings' that he knew would both encourage Timothy to endure, and would serve as easy-to-remember sayings that Timothy could use to keep encouraging the churches under his care (v14).
 - The first saying is this: 'If we died with him, we will also live with him.' The context of this verse is endurance. Paul was referring to Jesus' pattern of achieving resurrection life. The point he makes here is that first he went through the cross of suffering.
 - Today, resurrection power awaits us on the other side of God-ordained suffering. This does not mean that we must necessarily suffer to experience Christ's resurrection power. But it is the testimony of Christian leaders throughout history that a season of great pain often precedes a season of great fruitfulness. A famous Christian leader who was familiar with both pain and being powerfully used by God penned the words, 'Those whom God uses most powerfully he often first hurts most deeply.'
- **Enduring leaders know that God-ordained endurance is the path to increased spiritual authority in ministry.**
 - Paul's next saying is this: 'If we will endure we will also reign with him.' 'Reigning' here refers to our spiritual authority in ministry.
 - The point is this: different Christians move in different degrees of effective spiritual authority. God wants to train us to reign. He wants to increase our authority in ministry. And he has a specific strategy to do it: he allows us to experience different kinds of trials, and mysteriously, as we persevere through them, he

increases our authority.

- **Enduring leaders know that if they fail to own up to their love for Christ, they will lose so much that God has for them.**
 - Paul's next saying is this: 'If we disown him, he will disown us.'
 - This is a verse for Christians, not non-Christians. God wants us to own up to our love for him. Opportunities to profess our love for and faith in Christ will come, and in many of them, the Spirit will encourage us to own up to our love for Christ. But if we fail to do so, we will experience a measure of loss (this is what 'he will disown us' means). This does not refer to the loss of salvation, but the loss of joy, the loss of many blessings, the loss of ministry.
 - This principle is seen in Peter's denial of Jesus during his arrest (see Mark 15:66-72). Peter did not lose his salvation, but he lost his joy. He lost so many blessings the Father had for him during that time. He lost his authority and credibility in ministry - *until* he was ready to publicly own up to his love for Christ.

- **Enduring leaders know that their faith-wobbles won't change God's commitment levels toward them.**
 - Paul's last saying is the most encouraging of all: 'If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself.'
 - All Christian leaders will lose faith from time to time. They will have doubts whether God is really there for them. They will doubt whether all their obedience has been worth it. We would think Paul would have said, 'If you lose your faith, then God will lose faith in you.' But astoundingly, he didn't! The great surprise is this: just when our faith-grip starts to loosen on Christ, his faithful-grip tightens on us. We have seen in the previous saying that God can disown us, or say 'no' to us (which means he withholds blessings) - but here we see that God will not disown, or say 'no' to himself. Once he makes a promise he keeps it - and he will not deprive himself of the joy of keeping his own promises. John 10:28 reminds us that, 'No one will snatch us out of Christ's hand.' This verse tells us that God has made a promise to hold us in faithfulness, regardless of our temporary faith-levels. Our faith-wobbles don't change God's commitment levels toward us. How encouraging!
 - We see this principle in how Jesus gently restores Peter in John 21:15-19. Peter had disowned Jesus, and had, for a short season, lost his faith. Then - to Peter's great surprise - Jesus moves in on him and freshly affirms his faithfulness to him despite his temporary loss of faith.

In summary, enduring leaders ...

- *know that life is tough - and they're tough to life.*
- *know that it takes effort to achieve something for God.*
- *know that success requires a single-minded concentration.*
- *submit themselves to some biblical 'rules' of success.*
- *are motivated by the terrible possibility of missing their calling.*
- *are motivated by the wonderful promise of succeeding in the sight of God.*
- *are energised daily by Spirit-enabled revelation from God's word.*
- *know that God's purposes will prevail, no matter how impossible they seem, or how long it takes.*
- *know that their suffering cannot really hinder the gospel, but can in fact increase the gospel's impact.*
- *know that resurrection life follows crucifixion suffering.*
- *know that God-ordained endurance is the path to the increase of spiritual authority in ministry.*
- *know that if they fail to own up to their love for Christ, they will lose so much that God has for them.*
- *know that their faith-wobbles don't change God's commitment levels toward them.*

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

Introduction

Imagine cups could speak. And imagine that you needed a cup to drink from. And as you walk past a cup, it says, 'Use me.' You do, only to find that the cup is filthy. Of course, it is commendable that the cup wants to be used, but unfortunately the cup is not usable. The better thing for the cup to say is, 'Clean me - and then you'll be able to use me.' Similarly, it is commendable for us to ask God to use us, but it is even better for us to say, 'God, do whatever it is you want to in my life so that I will be usable.' We need be willing, with the help of God, to develop whatever character traits, attitudes, habits and skills that will make us usable.

Please read 2 Timothy 2:15-23.

14 Keep reminding God's people of these things. Warn them before God against quarrelling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen.

- **Usable leaders are discerning about which conversations to avoid.**
 - The churches in Ephesus had experienced the rise of false teaching. It seemed that a false Christian sect was trying to 'convert' many of the Christians. We do not know exactly what they believed, but they thrived on debating with the Christians. Paul was instructing Timothy to tell Christians to avoid those conversations with these kinds of people. Debating about 'words' was useless, and it could be damaging to Christians who were listening in. New Christians, especially, might walk away saying, 'I'm so confused. I don't know what to believe.'
 - Most of us know what it is like to have a theological discussion with someone that causes more heat than light, and more confusion than clarity. Discerning, and therefore more usable, leaders need to know when not to take the bait around some controversial theological conversation that will end up being a heated quarrel, and leave some people confused.

15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

- **Usable leaders live and minister before the audience of One.**
 - 'Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved.' Paul is telling Timothy that his priority should not be to earn people's approval, but rather to single-mindedly live in such a way as to gain God's approval. He is to live before the audience of One. Success in God's kingdom is not about being applauded by people,

but rather, being affirmed by God. That is *real* success, and it requires hard work to keep as the focus of our lives and ministry. God can't use us for long if we fail to keep on presenting our lives to him, first and foremost.

- **Usable leaders diligently pursue both the character and the insight into the Scriptures that God can approve of.**
 - We are to be 'workers who do not need to be ashamed' (this refers to our character), 'who correctly handle the word of truth' (this refers to our insight into the Scriptures, which comes from our dedicated study of them). This is how a Christian leader gains God's approval. This verse paraphrases 1 Timothy 4:16 which says, 'Watch your life and doctrine closely.' It is very difficult for God to sustainably use people who have not worked to develop their character and their knowledge of the Bible and its doctrine. Without the required character and the doctrine, we can often be more dangerous than helpful.
 - On this point about 'correctly handling the word of truth', here are some ways to do this:
 - Diligently, regularly, routinely, consistently give yourself to reading, studying, meditating on and understanding the Bible. Don't rely solely on *inspiration*, but embrace the necessary *perspiration* to really understand the Bible and its multi-faceted message.
 - Seek the best translations you can. The English Standard Version is recommended as a word-for-word translation, whereas the Today's New International Version is recommended for a slightly more dynamic, thought-for-thought translation.
 - Develop a good approach to interpreting the Bible, being careful not to take verses out of context. Be very careful of 'using' chosen verses to make your point. Often, if we pre-decide the point we're trying to make, we can look for a verse that seems to back it up, even if it means we super-impose meaning on it that the original author never intended. This is the wrong way to use the Bible. Instead the two questions that should govern our interpretation should be:
 - 1) What was the original author trying to say?
 - 2) What is the timeless truth that we can apply to our lives now?
 - On the whole, emphasise what the Bible emphasises and avoid the danger of the imbalanced teaching that comes when we always preach our favourite 'doctrines' and hardly ever touch on the doctrines that the Bible, as a whole, seems to emphasize. It is possible to be a preacher who never teaches heresy, and yet be a teacher who is unbiblical. This happens when we fail to emphasize what the Bible, as a whole, emphasizes. What does the Bible emphasize? The answer is the gospel message, with Christ

at its centre. It is for this reason that we should always stay gospel-centred in our theology and teaching.

16 Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly (or *'will only 'progress' in further ungodliness'*). 17 Their teaching will spread like gangrene (or *'cancer'*). Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, 18 who have departed from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some.

- **Usable leaders are ready to correct any teaching that contradicts or distorts the true gospel message, before it brings ruin to people's lives.**
 - We have already seen Paul's understanding of the gospel in summary form (1:9-10). Timothy was facing a situation where many who once believed the gospel and were involved in the church, had departed from the truth of the gospel. They had come across a teaching which seemed to be 'progressive' (which is why Paul uses the word 'progress' mockingly in verse 16) but had only destroyed real faith in many people (v18). One of their teachings, for example, was that the resurrection had already taken place - suggesting that heaven had already started and that there is no resurrection when one dies. This teaching, which disguised itself as being 'progressive', caused people to stop living in a godly way. False ideas spread like 'cancer' or 'gangrene' (v16) from one area of life to another, and from one person to the next.
 - Today, there are many popular ideas and teachings that contradict and distort the truths of the gospel. These ideas can come in the form of some new best-selling book, or website, or sect of Christianity. Although a discerning Christian will quickly sniff out a dangerous heresy, less mature or biblically grounded Christians are very vulnerable to these ideas. One of the major responsibilities of all Christian leaders is to discern these heresies (which usually disguise themselves under the banner of being 'progressive') and to face these lies and claims head on.
- **Usable leaders understand that what we believe determines how we will live.**
 - These verses show us that certain beliefs that claimed to be 'progressive' actually had a 'regressive' impact on people's characters and lifestyles (v16). Leaders must put great energy into thinking correctly themselves, and helping those they lead to think correctly too. If we fail to understand reality as it really is (and this is what the gospel helps us do) then we will be more prone to live wrongly. Positively stated however, if we do believe correctly we will also begin to live correctly. This is because what we believe determines how we live.

19 Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness."

- Usable leaders seek, with the help of Christ, to keep themselves and the church from being dislodged off the secure foundation of the gospel.
 - The 'solid foundation' mentioned here refers to the gospel message upon which the church rests. It reminds us of Ephesians 2:20, which speaks of how the church is built upon the teaching of the earliest apostle and prophets, and upon Jesus himself.
 - A 'seal' is something which keeps something else safe. Just think of a wax seal used to enclose a letter - it is primarily there to keep the letter's contents safe, and its message - unaltered. In the metaphor that Paul gives in this verse, there is an inscription stamped onto this seal, an inscription that indicates the two things that keep the church safe and securely on its foundation of the gospel message. Here are the two things that keep the church from being deceived ...
 - 1) *The church is kept safe from being deceived because of Jesus' commitment to keep his people safe.* This is what 'The Lord knows those who are his' means. Although the devil is capable of greatly deceiving people, Jesus is even more capable of keeping them from being deceived. Jesus promises to lead his own people in the right path.
 - 2) *The church is also kept safe from deception when God's people take responsibility for turning away from wicked teachings.* This is what 'Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness' means. In other words, we as Christians must be ready and prepared to turn away from anything which contradicts the gospel. We play an active role in not being deceived.
 - So we have two 'seals' at work to keep the church from being dislodged off its foundation of the gospel - and that is firstly, Jesus, and secondly, us. This is a classic example of the combination of divine sovereignty mixed with human responsibility. When we think of the role Christ plays in keeping us from being dislodged off the foundation of the gospel, this should encourage us. But when we think of the role that we ourselves play in keeping ourselves free of deception, this should sober us to whole-heartedly cling to the gospel message and to accurately handle the Bible.

20 In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for disposal of refuse (or 'some for honour and some for dishonour'). 21 Those (individuals) who cleanse themselves from the latter will be instruments for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.

- **Usable leaders confront those who need to be confronted as a way of developing themselves for the future.**
 - Eaton says that the 'large house' refers to the sum of all those who claim to be part of a specific church. This does not mean that they really are Christians, just that they claim to be. The 'articles' represent all the individual people that are part of the 'large house'.
 - 'For honour and for dishonour' suggests that some people are being used by God to bless and strengthen the church and keep it on track. They, like Timothy are 'for honour'. Some people however are bringing destruction, division and distortion of the gospel. They, like Philetus and Hymenaeus (mentioned in verse 17), are 'for dishonour'.
 - Verse 21 is commonly misunderstood to mean, 'those people who cleanse themselves of everything dishonourable will be useful to Christ.' Of course this is true, but it is not what Paul is really saying in this verse, especially when we consider that the subject at hand is dealing with false teachers. According to Eaton, the better interpretation is, that one part of being noble and honourable is to take responsibility for challenging and confronting *those dishonourable people* who are undermining the gospel, and to urge them to either repent or leave (verses 24-26 will tell us how to do this). In other words Paul is urging Timothy, who is one of the honourable 'articles' in the 'large house' of the church that he oversees, to cleanse himself and the church of those who, claiming to be Christian yet undermining the gospel, do great damage to the church.
 - And Paul tries to motivate him to do this by saying that if he does this, he 'will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work'. It is as though he is saying, 'Christ wants to develop and train you for greater and greater responsibilities in the future, and this act of confronting these people is one way he will develop and train you for the future.'
 - So how does this apply to us? Firstly, all Christian leaders need the courage to confront those people who are part of the church, and yet are being destructive in undermining the faith of others. Secondly, if they are willing to do this, the act of courage and obedience is part of their training for future good works - this prepares them 'for every good work'. God has his special training programme for every leader in his kingdom. And part of this training is that God will call them, from time to time, to lovingly

confront someone or some people in their church who need confronting. If a leader is too fearful to do this, or lacks the wisdom to do this well, it will greatly shrink their leadership capacity in the future.

22 Flee the evil desires of youth...

- **Usable leaders flee temptation.**
 - There are some temptations that last a whole lifetime and there are some temptations that, though they continue into old age, are often greater when one is young. Two such temptations are 1) sexual temptation and 2) the temptation to arrogance, because one has not yet been humbled by life's challenges and one's own limitations.
 - Leaders need to own up to their sinful tendencies - whatever they are - and they need to pro-actively flee those temptations. Be inspired by young Joseph who, avoiding Potiphar's wife and fleeing from her when she wanted to sleep with him, ran from temptation like his very life depended on it (see Genesis 39:11-12).
 - Although verses 20-21 do not primarily refer to personal godliness, it is a good picture nevertheless of how we need to cleanse from our lives and characters those 'articles' that bring dishonour to God. Our ability to confront our own temptations correctly results in God's using us more powerfully in the future. After all, private victory over sin usually precedes God's giving us public victory in leadership.

...and pursue righteousness, faith (*or 'faithfulness'*), love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

- **Usable leaders pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace in dependence on Christ.**
 - Leaders need to 'flee' some things and they need to 'pursue' other things. We must actively pursue certain character traits...
 - Righteousness is 'all-round integrity of character.' Faithfulness is 'the keeping of one's word and one's commitments' Love is 'total unselfishness and benevolence to everyone everywhere.' Peace is 'a commitment to avoid all *unnecessary* conflict with others.' All these character traits should be pursued!
 - One major way of pursuing these character traits is to keep prayerfully dependent on the Lord Jesus. We need to 'call upon the Lord'. That is why our levels of godliness will not usually surpass our levels of prayerfulness. Our intimacy with Jesus leads directly into an imitation of Jesus.

- **Usable leaders seek out a band of like-hearted leaders with whom they can develop supportive relationships.**
 - Paul does not need to tell Timothy to stay in Christian community. That is already taken for granted. But Paul urged him to seek out those who were like-hearted within the community. He should seek out other leaders-in-training who are also prayerfully pursuing their leadership call and godly character traits. This is what the phrase 'along with those' refers to.
 - One can tell so much about a person, their character and their destiny simply by looking at their choice of closest friends. And leaders, although certainly having close friends who are quite different from them, would be wise to seek out other leader friends. Their character and destiny demands it.

In summary, usable leaders ...

- *are discerning about which conversations to avoid.*
- *live and minister before the audience of One.*
- *diligently pursue both the character and the insight into the Scriptures that God can approve of.*
- *are ready to correct any teaching that contradicts or distorts the true gospel message, before it brings ruin to people's lives.*
- *understand that what we believe determines how we will live.*
- *seek, with the help of Christ, to keep themselves and the church from being dislodged from the secure foundation of the gospel.*
- *confront those who need to be confronted as a way of developing themselves for the future.*
- *flee temptation.*
- *pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace in dependence on Christ.*
- *seek out a band of like-hearted leaders with whom they can develop supportive relationships.*