

# **LEARN TO LEAD IN 2 TIMOTHY**

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

**PART THREE**

**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.***

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## QUALITY 7: BECOMING *DISCERNING* LEADER (2:23- 3:13)

### Introduction

Isaiah 11:1-4 prophetically describes the ministry of Jesus while he was on this earth. Notice that, with the help of the Spirit, he enjoyed wisdom, understanding, counsel and knowledge. His priority was to live before the audience of One. And he did not judge by what he saw with his eyes, nor did he decide by what he heard with his ears - rather he discerned situations and people by seeing with the eyes of the Spirit, and hearing with the ears of the Spirit. In the same way, the desperate need today is not just for committed and enthusiastic leaders, but *discerning* ones. This section of 2 Timothy vividly opens our eyes to the shocking realities of evil at work in this world, and in the church - and teaches us to respond effectively with the same kind of discernment that Jesus modelled.

***Please read 2 Timothy 2:23-3:13.***

23 Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments (*or 'speculations' or 'questionings'*), because you know they produce quarrels.

- **Discerning leaders are clear and emphatic about those things that the Bible is clear and emphatic about.**
  - The false teachers in Ephesus seemed to regularly approach Timothy with a number of philosophical questions, and then would speculate on the answers. And Timothy was tempted to get into an argument with them. But Paul told him not to.
  - Today, through the Scriptures, God has revealed the answers to so many questions. When the answers are clear in the Scriptures, especially in the New Testament record of the apostles' teachings (Acts 2:42), the only correct response is to whole-heartedly believe those revelations. Even so, sometimes the Bible does not answer certain philosophical questions. When this happens, then a few guidelines are necessary:
    - *1) Always esteem that which is clear in God's word over that which is obscure in God's word.* After all, the Bible answers the most important questions clearly and often either does not answer completely, or does not answer at all, that which God perceives to be peripheral.
    - *2) Never second-guess God's clear revelations in the Scriptures.* The moment you begin to speculate about what God is clear on in the New Testament, you're on dangerous ground. This happens especially when we exalt our own opinions and intellects above the revelation in Scripture. This is a form of pride.
    - *3) Keep the gospel at the centre.* Anyone who wants to build their faith and lives on peripheral issues and philosophical insights is making a mistake. Christians are to be gospel-centred, which

means that they keep the gospel revelation as the primary foundation of their faith and life. In certain contexts, it is appropriate for Christians to discuss and debate these peripheral issues. But it is usually fruitless when people make a side-issue their major cause, or when they build their faith and life on it. When conversing with such people, the best option is to try to help them see that they are focusing on what is less important, and that if they had the right centre (i.e. the gospel) then the peripheral matters would not be so important to them.

- 4) *Emphasise what the Bible emphasises*. In response to the many questions that we as humans have regarding God, faith, purpose, the nature of reality, and truth, it is wise to adopt a saying: 'What the Bible is clear on and emphatic about, I am clear on and emphatic about. And what the Bible is *not* clear on and *not* emphatic about, I am *not* clear on and not emphatic about.' By embracing this position, we are more likely to build our lives on *solid revelation* than on *unstable speculation*. This way, we keep what should be central, central.

24 And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful (or ' <i>patient when wronged</i> '). 25 Opponents must be gently instructed...
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- **Discerning leaders handle potentially destructive conversations in a very skilful way.**
  - Verses 14 and 23 of this chapter have already instructed us to avoid conversations that will most likely result in quarrels or the damaging of the people present. But there are times when these difficult conversations need to happen. This verse gives us some guidelines on how to have the necessary conversations with people who are caught in sin, or who are caught in error.
  - 1) *Be kind*. This means that we stay warm and personable. Although we may disagree with what they're saying, or even feel personally wronged, we are still to find the grace in God to be genuinely warm towards them.
  - 2) *Be patient when wronged*. Often, while speaking to someone who disagrees with us, they will turn from the subject matter and say something that seems to personally attack us. At that moment, we must not take the bait but rather extend grace. Don't return the attack, or feel the need to defend yourself.
  - 3) *Be gentle and meek*. This will mean not raising our voice, and not getting heated, emotional or aggressive.
  - 4) *Explain the gospel again*. We should be 'able to teach' and ready to 'gently instruct' - meaning that we develop ways of explaining core Bible truths in a simple, intelligible, and attractive way.

...in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, 26 and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

- **Discerning leaders are not naïve about the spiritual warfare dynamic of ministering to people caught in sin or deception.**
  - There are two forces at work in a person who has become deceived:
  - 1) *They have become proud (v25)*. The Bible says that God opposes the proud (1 Peter 5:5). Pride makes us blind to truth. This is because our proud commitment to be right blinds us to the possibility that we may be wrong. This is why verse 25 reveals that 'repentance' (i.e. humbly admitting we could be wrong on this and other issues) precedes 'a knowledge of the truth'. Only a humbling of ourselves before God's revelation and God's will can enable us to change.
  - 2) *They have been trapped by the devil (v26)*. This is a sobering verse that reminds us that even Christians can be deceived by the devil's reasoning. Not only this, but when they deviate from being gospel-centred, they can not only become trapped themselves, and lose their senses, but tragically the devil can begin to use them to do his will, which includes undermining what God is doing, attacking leaders that God is using, bringing division to the church, and leading other people astray. The nature of demonic deception is such that they might even think God is using them, but really, Satan is the one using them.
  - In response to these two forces, Christian leaders need to remember that there is a spiritual warfare dynamic in many of our attempts to set people free. We must trust that God will grant them repentance from pride, so that they can see the truth, and that the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, will powerfully set them free from Satan's trap. Of course, there are no guarantees, but we trust God for this miracle in their hearts.

## Two Timothy Chapter Three

1 But mark this: There will be terrible (*or 'difficult'*) times in the last days.  
2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy (*or 'disrespectful'*),  
3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal (*or 'without restraint'*), not lovers of the good,  
4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God  
- 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power.

- **Discerning leaders are not naïve about the wickedness of the human heart and the kind of culture that sinful humans create.**
  - Verse 1 speaks of 'the last days'. This refers simply to the time

between Jesus' first coming and his second coming. In other words, Paul was already in 'the last days'. Hebrews 1:1 also speaks of 'these last days' - implying that they had already begun.

- This verse also speaks of 'terrible (or 'difficult') times in the last days'. This refers to the hardships the church will inevitably face because of the wickedness that is in the world, which tries to seduce the church and oppose its mission.
- There is a pattern in verses 2-4. It is as though Paul inserts a kind of poem into his writings. This is seen if you separate the verses onto separate lines...

- Line 1 - lovers of themselves, lovers of money
- Line 2 - boastful, proud, abusive
- Line 3 - lacking parental-obedience, gratitude, holiness, love, forgiveness
- Line 4 - slanderous
- Line 5 - lacking self-control, restraint, love for the good
- Line 6 - treacherous, rash, conceited
- Line 7 - lovers of pleasure (not God), having a powerless religion (loving religion rather than God)

- From this we notice a few things...

- Line 1 and 7 go together. This speaks of idolatry (or misplaced affections) - what we value and love in place of, or above, God. Sadly, we love ourselves, money, pleasure and religious reputation more than we love God himself.
- Line 2 and 6 go together. These six adjectives all have to do with the hardness of heart that comes from pride. Devastatingly, sinfulness evidences itself in boasting, pride, abuse, treachery, rashness and conceit.
- Line 3 and 5 go together. They are all the things lacking in the character of people who are idolatrous (line 1 and 7) and hard in heart (line 2 and 6). Not surprisingly, our idolatry and hard-hearts make us lack parental-obedience, gratitude, holiness, love, forgiveness, self-control, restraint and love for the good.
- Line 3 is one word - 'slanderous' - which has the same root word as the word translated from Greek into 'devil' (who has just been mentioned in 2:26).

- When we look at the way Paul arranged these descriptions, we realize that Paul is in effect saying, 'A life that is characterised by misplaced affections or idolatry (*lines 1 and 7*), and hardness of heart (*lines 2 and 6*) will lack so much in character (*lines 3 and 5*) and will, in the end, be devil-like (*line 3*).'

- **Discerning leaders have a love for God as the flaming, integrating centre of their lives.**

- Verses 2,4 and 5 speak about four common idols:
  - 1) The love of self (narcissism) - when gripped by this, a human will see themselves and their own will and happiness as the centre of their own existence and purpose.
  - 2) The love of money (materialism) - when gripped by this, a person will see profit, and the accumulation of possessions, as the goal of their lives.
  - 3) The love of pleasure (hedonism) - when gripped by this, a person will live chasing one thrill after another.
  - 4) The love of reputation (religiosity) - when gripped by this, a person will seek to do that which makes people think they are spiritual and religious, but actually their 'religion' or 'spirituality' lacks any power to change them in the depth of their being.
- The antidote to all of this is to have a Scripture-informed, heart-vision of who God really is. Once we see God for who he really is, and perceive his beauty and immeasurable value, our hearts melt. Much like a solar system needs a sun to hold it together, so a love for God, the only worthy focus of our worship, becomes the flaming, integrating centre of our lives. We are set free from the gravitational grip of lesser attractions like self, money, pleasure and reputation.
- And wonderfully - when we begin to love God as he really is, with the help of the Spirit, we begin to experience life-changing power. We truly become *new* people. Our hearts soften and humble before God and people. We no longer lack in all the traits that are mentioned in these verses. And, instead of being devil-like, we begin to become more Christ-like.

Have nothing to do with them.

- **Discerning leaders try to put an end to nominal Christianity.**
  - Interestingly, verses 1-7 do not just speak about people in general. Paul is referring more specifically to the shocking reality that some people claim to be Christians, and yet live as described. Paul has already begun to see a rise of 'nominal Christianity' where people think they're Christians, but really have not understood the gospel. They have a warped understanding of faith, and they treat it like a little religious system which is meant to enhance their life, and which gives 'an outward show of religious respectability'. Today, nominal Christianity is fully evident.
  - Paul's advice to Timothy was this: 'Have nothing to do with them.' By this he did not mean that Timothy should be unkind to them, or ignore them (since he had just told him in 2:24-25 to be kind and gentle with people, trying to help them see the truth of the gospel). The phrase, 'have nothing to do with them' means 'refuse to accept them as Christians, and let them know, in the

gentlest and most helpful way possible, that they are *not* real Christians at all. Then try to explain to them the real gospel - a gospel of an undeserved salvation from sin that comes by trusting in Jesus, the Saviour and King'.

- This is our challenge today: so many people think they're fine because they have some kind of faith in Jesus, but when explored closely it is not a genuine faith but just a *cultural* faith, one inherited from others, but not properly understood or owned by the person themselves. We need to help people understand the difference between a cultural faith in Christ, and a genuine, Spirit-enabled faith in Christ, which comes from exposure to the gospel message preached in the Spirit's power. Having said that, we must not assume that we will always be able to tell whether a person is really saved. So we should tread carefully and humbly as we seek to help people upgrade from cultural faith to authentic faith.

6 They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over gullible women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, 7 always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. 8 Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these teachers oppose the truth. They are men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected. 9 But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone.

- **Discerning leaders are not naïve about the dynamics related to the spreading of false spiritualities and teachings.**
  - Verses 2-5 speaks of nominal Christians, people who claim some kind of connection to Christ, but who in reality are not saved at all. Verses 6-9 reveal that within this nominal Christianity, many false spiritualities and teachings emerge. These four verses describe how false spiritualities and teachings spread:
  - Verse 6 exposes false teachers who prey on vulnerable people. In this case they 'worm their way' into people's lives and, through relationship and teaching, begin to gain control of them.
  - This verse also speaks of what makes the people they 'reach' with their false teaching so vulnerable. They feel guilty, described as being 'loaded down with sin' and are powerfully swayed by their 'evil desires' for security, attention, relief from loneliness, etc. This guilt and sense of neediness makes them easy prey for false spiritualities.
  - Verse 7 says that the people who are drawn to these false teachings are those who are very interested in the latest spiritual ideas. They like to ride the religion-rollercoaster, where their passion is not so much in finding the truth, as much as it is in experiencing novelty. But this approach to faith will never help uncover the truth about Jesus. They are always seeking, but never finding. Sadly, this is seen in Christian circles too - where people

chase the latest teacher or teaching, the latest miracle-worker, the latest revelation, and the latest personality. Their Christian walk is reduced to chasing the latest fads. If these people were really honest with themselves, they would admit that they are more interested in experiencing something novel than in pursuing the truth. This makes for a highly unrooted - and therefore *unfruitful* - faith.

- Verse 8 refers to 'Jannes and Jambres opposing Moses'. Ancient historical sources show us that these are the names of Pharaoh's court magicians who stood against Moses. They assured Pharaoh that their powers matched Moses' and that people should not take Moses seriously. This is what false teachers are always like: they boldly say that what they have is as good, if not better, than what we claim to have in Jesus and the gospel. We speak of our experiences of the Holy Spirit, and they are quick to claim that they too have had the same experiences. But the reality is that they oppose the truth of the gospel. Their thinking is warped. And they are shut out from salvation.
- In verse 9 Paul says that they will have limited success, simply because these false teachings and spiritualities lack the power to really change people's lives, including their own. Eventually people will notice that even the teachers themselves are still captive to sin. Only the gospel can truly change a person's heart and life.
- The point of all these verses is this: discerning leaders are not to be naïve about the dynamics related to the spreading of false spiritualities and teachings.

10 You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, 11 persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them.

- **Discerning leaders are inspired by other leaders who powerfully live out their gospel-faith.**
  - The previous verses spoke of the kind of people the false teachers were. Now Paul calls Timothy to be something very different from them. And he points to himself as an example. As Timothy reflected on Paul's life and ministry he would have noticed:
    - His **teaching** - which essentially was the gospel, not a 'pet' philosophy, but a message from God.
    - His **way of life** - which showed that what he believed actually impacted on the way he lived.
    - His **purpose** - which was to 'advance the promise of life' (1:1).
    - His **faith** - Paul trusted that God his Father was looking after him no matter what happened to him.
    - His **patience** towards enemies who treated him badly.

- His **love** towards all people.
- His **endurance, persecutions, sufferings** - unlike the false teachers, Paul was willing to embrace great suffering in his convictions. In contrast, false teachers typically embraced ideas which were currently popular.
- His **being rescued by God** - which showed that God was with him, endorsing his message and gospel.
- In Paul, Timothy had a living example of what Christianity looked like when lived out. It was a belief in the gospel that radically and positively impacted on the way he lived.
- Today, we need living examples of people who live out their faith. Just viewing their lives will give us great confidence in the reality of the gospel. And it will give us a model to follow. Not only that, we need to become those role models to others. Our lives increasingly need to be marked by faith in the gospel: a life that expresses this faith, a sense of purpose, a readiness to trust God, patience and love to all, endurance in the face of difficulties, and an experience of God's delivering power!

12 In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, 13 while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

- **Discerning leaders are not naïve about Satan's inevitable tantrums and retaliations.**
  - Paul has just given us an overview of his life (in verses 10-11). Now he draws out a principle (v12) and gives a prophecy (v13).
  - In verse 12 the principle is this: 'everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.' The more God stirs up a passion in us to live changed, godly lives, the more we can expect to face a backlash from Satan as we make progress. Every time the kingdom of God moves forward in our lives or through our lives, the kingdom of darkness is unsettled. Satan, who is angered, retaliates in one way or another. This is normal and should be expected. It should not bother us too much.
  - In verse 13 Paul's prophecy is this: 'The demonic resistance and opposition through people will go from bad to worse. It will get worse as the years, decades and centuries move on.' We need to remember that both Paul and Jesus share wonderful prophecies of how the church will powerfully advance in the years, decades and centuries to come (Jesus: Matthew 16:18 and 24:14, Paul: Romans 11:12,15,25-27 and Ephesians 4:15-16). But this prophecy reminds us that the more the light of the gospel advances, the more the darkness that is being invaded by light, will lash back. This is normal and should be expected. It should not dampen our expectation of great kingdom advance, just ready us for some of the counter-attacks from the enemy. Notice that it is not us who are really under attack - it is Satan's camp that is under attack.

His attack is merely a defensive counter-attack. The church moves forward not backwards.

- Notice also that the backlash usually, but not always, comes through people 'who the devil has taken captive to do his will' (2:26). These people can be deceived Christians or non-Christians. They can be from outside of the community ('evildoers') or from within the community ('imposters').
- To keep us from being intimidated by the thought of demonic counter-attack, however, we have the example of Peter, who experienced demonic reprisal as he made progress, but quickly found out that Jesus had allowed this as a way of strengthening him for even greater impact (Luke 22:31). Even the tantrums of Satan are under the control of Jesus, and he promises to use them for good.

**In summary, discerning leaders ...**

- *are clear and emphatic about those things that the Bible is clear and emphatic about.*
- *handle potentially destructive conversations in a very skilful way.*
- *are not naïve about the spiritual warfare dynamic of ministering to people caught in sin or deception.*
- *are not naïve about the wickedness of the human heart and the kind of culture that sinful humans create.*
- *have a love for God as the flaming, integrating centre of their lives.*
- *try to put an end to nominal Christianity.*
- *are not naïve about the dynamics related to the spreading of false spiritualities and teachings.*
- *are inspired by other leaders who powerfully live out their gospel-faith.*
- *are not naïve about Satan's inevitable tantrums and retaliations.*

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

### Introduction

If God sent you a text message would you open it? Amazingly, most people in the world, it seems, have no real interest in hearing what God would have to say. But this should not be the case with those who love Christ. The Bible is God's giant text message to humanity. We'd be crazy not to read and re-read it with a heart ready to hear what God has to say.

It's wonderful that so many people own Bibles. But it's sad that so few of us who own Bibles *are owned by our Bibles*. We need to hungrily give ourselves to study, read, meditate upon, memorize, affirm, believe, understand and obey God's word. If we want to grow our ability to lead others spiritually, we need to grow our ability to be led by the Bible itself.

***Please read 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5.***

14 But as for you, continue in what (*or 'the things'*) you have learned and have become convinced of,

- **Bible-rooted leaders are unshakably convinced of the gospel message.**
  - The phrase 'but as for you', is a call to Timothy to be radically different from the teachers of false spiritualities that have been spoken of in the previous verses. They had distorted or rejected parts of the gospel, no longer continuing in what they once believed (2:15). They were preoccupied with debates and religious disputes (2:14). Some were lazy (2:15). Some embraced a religious veneer but they did not experience the reality and power of the gospel (3:5). Timothy has to be different to them all. He needs to 'break from the pack.' He needs to blaze a new trail.
  - The phrase 'the things you have learned' refers to 'the multi-faceted gospel message as passed on to us from the first-generation apostles' (which is summarised in 1:9-10). This is 'the apostle's teaching' (Acts 2:42) as recorded in the New Testament to which we devote ourselves.
  - The key word is 'continue'. This suggests that there will be pressure to shrink back from our conviction that the gospel is true, and is true for all. But we must not. Rather, we must continue to be convinced that the gospel really is from God, and really does change lives both now and forever. We need to continue to read and believe the New Testament, and continue to preach its message in the power of the Spirit.

because you know those from whom you learned it,

- **Bible-rooted leaders know it is not enough to just believe the gospel - it needs to be lived out.**
  - Timothy had seen the way that confidence in the gospel had affected several people close to him, most notably Paul himself (3:10-11) but also his mother and his grandmother (1:5). Timothy could see that their lives had been very positively impacted by their faith in Christ. In contrast to this, Timothy had also seen the way confidence in the false teachings had impacted on the lives of false teachers - the way they were depraved, deceptive and hostile. Paul is in effect saying, 'One of the reasons that should convince you of the gospel is the way it positively impacts on people's lives.'
  - What we believe determines how we live. That is the point this verse makes. Today, we must be weary of any spiritual teacher whose life is corrupt. A godly life is one of the main signs that a person's message is the correct one. Having said that, this is not the only test. Today, we need to realise the responsibility we have as Christians to live out the gospel, and not just to believe in it. It is sobering to think that spiritually-seeking onlookers may reject our message if they see inconsistency, ungodliness, ungraciousness and hypocrisy in our lives. What a responsibility we carry in having to live compatibly with the message we preach.

15 and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures,

- **Bible-rooted leaders know that the best gift one can give a child is knowledge of the Bible.**
  - Timothy's mother and grandmother had taught him from the Scriptures (which here refers to the Old Testament, since the New Testament had not been written completely yet). This rooted him in scripture from an early age.
  - Today, parents and church-leaders need to teach children the Bible. We need to choose those parts that are suitable for their age. So it is best to start with the great Bible stories, and to pull out the truths that these stories illustrate. As they get older, we should introduce them to the more complicated sections of the Bible, like the epistles for example.

which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

- **Bible-rooted leaders are very clear about the main purpose of the Bible: to point people to salvation through faith in Jesus.**
  - The Bible consists of 66 books. Together, they make up a multi-faceted message. This message is 'the gospel'. The Old Testament lays the foundation for it, and even reveals parts of it. The New

Testament explores it in greater depth. It is when one is exposed to this gospel message in the power of the Spirit, that salvation can happen. The Bible does not automatically save us. We don't just get saved through reading or hearing the gospel message. Rather we need to be enabled by the Spirit to trust in Jesus Christ (who is the essence of the gospel). In this sense, the Bible does not save us - but it does point us to the One who can save us.

- Today, one of the desperate needs in the church is the *gospel-centred* exposition of the Scriptures. I say this because not every chapter in the Bible reveals the gospel-message. So it is possible to preach a message, or even a whole series of messages from the Bible, without showing how these sections of Scripture fit into the larger context of the Bible's message, which is the gospel. When we fail to bring out the gospel in our Bible teachings - we fail to 'make people wise for salvation'. This hurts both non-Christians and Christians in different ways.
  - What a tragedy that non-Christians, who may only visit a church meeting once or twice, may hear the Bible being preached, but not hear what they need to hear to be saved. As leaders and preachers, we're called to do more than just preach parts of the Bible. We need to select and teach those parts that specifically refer *to the whole gospel message*. We need to preach in such a way, that in any sermon, or at least in any series of sermons, there are enough references to the gospel for a hearer to be saved! If we do not continue to weave the gospel of grace into our messages, non-Christian hearers will merely hear 'moralism'. They will wrongly think that Christianity is an attempt to do all the good things the Bible tells us to do. And it will leave them not only bored, but unsaved. The Bible's message is first and foremost a call to receive salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.
  - Christians also need to hear the gospel again and again. A common misconception is that 'people are saved by believing the gospel, but then mature through applying biblical principles'. Although this is partially true, the far more emphatic truth of the New Testament is this: people are saved through believing the gospel, but then mature through believing the gospel more and more deeply. This is why Christians need to keep on hearing the gospel. Without an ongoing, fresh revelation of the gospel of grace, a Christian is dangerously prone to falling into a joyless, legalistic and moralistic faith.
- (If you wish to explore this line of thought more deeply see the following article, and be sure to see its subsequent pages too: ([www.redeemer2.com/themovement/issues/2004/june/postmodernity\\_1\\_p3.html](http://www.redeemer2.com/themovement/issues/2004/june/postmodernity_1_p3.html)))

- **Bible-rooted leaders believe the whole Bible is inspired by God.**
  - God created the universe ‘by the breath of his mouth’ (Psalm 33:6). His breath speaks of his creative power. Similarly, the Bible is a creation of God.
  - Our speech is created by the movement of breath over the vocal chords. In this sense, breath originates speech. That is why we can say that the Bible is God’s word - since it is God-breathed. Through the Bible we get to hear God speaking to us.
  - The ‘Scripture’ that Paul refers to here is probably the Old Testament alone, since the New Testament had not yet been completed or collected. So this begs the questions: Is the *whole* Bible inspired? The answer is ‘yes’. How do we know? The following five reasons substantiate the inspiration of the Bible:
  - First, *Scripture is consistently called the word of God*. Psalm 119 best demonstrates this by using ten different terms for God’s word. What’s more, the prophets indirectly identify their writings as God’s word by using introductory phrases such as ‘The Lord said to me,’ and ‘The word of the Lord came to ...’. The authors knew they were speaking God’s words (Deuteronomy 18:15-22; Jeremiah 36:27).
  - Second, *Scripture states directly that it is inspired by God*. While only 2 Timothy 3:16 uses the word ‘inspiration’ (‘God-breathed’), this truth is strongly supported by other passages. Second Peter 1:20-21 teaches that Scripture was written by men ‘moved’ (‘carried along’) by the Holy Spirit. In this way, Peter explains what inspiration is: God choosing to communicate his message through men.
  - Third, *Jesus Christ fully supported all of Scripture* (Matthew 5:17-19). He confirmed its historical accuracy, down to the tense of a verb (Mark 12:26). He declared that Scripture is permanent (Matthew 5:17-18), inspired by the Holy Spirit (Mark 12:36), contains enough information to support our faith (Luke 16:29-31), is unbreakable (John 10:35), and agrees with His teachings (John 5:46, 47; Luke 24:27, 44).
  - Fourth, *the New Testament writers viewed both Old Testament and New Testament writings as the word of God*. Peter affirmed that the Old Testament was inspired by the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:25). He compared the commandments of Jesus Christ, which were spoken by the apostles, with the words spoken by the holy prophets (2 Peter 3:2). He declared that the gospel, which was preached to them, is the word of the Lord (1 Peter 1:23, 25). Peter also recognized Paul’s writing as part of Scripture (2 Peter 3:15-16). The New Testament authors knew they were entrusted with God’s word (1 Timothy 4:1-3; Titus 1:3; Revelation 1:1-3).
  - Finally, *Scripture claims dual authorship*. That is, it is the message and words of *God* expressed through *people* without canceling out their personalities. This is confirmed by Jesus Christ

(Mark 12:26) and by Scripture itself (Acts 4:25; 2 Peter 1:21). As the various writers and editors of the Bible were writing, the Holy Spirit was guiding them. Their words, although being their own, were the exact words that God wanted to be written. The Holy Spirit was using their research, their vocabulary, their writing style, their personalities, their experiences and even their level of education. What was written, therefore, was on the one hand, the words of men, and at the same time, the words of God.

- **Bible-rooted leaders seek to properly understand the Bible.**
  - The Scriptures, *properly understood*, are God's inspired word to us. That is why we must work so hard to *properly understand* them. After all, it is possible to wrongly interpret Scripture and come up with a meaning that God never intended. That is why we must give ourselves to the very best interpretation of the Bible passages.
  - The primary question isn't, 'What does this say to *me*?' Instead, the question we need to ask is, 'What did *God* mean when he wrote this?' Take the famous statement by Jesus, 'The truth shall make you free' (John 8:32). I could come up with a number of *misinterpretations* of that verse. But in the end, it doesn't matter what *I* want that verse to mean. As we read the Bible, we need to keep asking, 'What did *God* mean by this statement?'
  - Although God speaks to us through other means (such as prophecy, dreams, gifts of revelation) these are always secondary to the primary way God speaks to us - through his written word. The written word should always be the test to see if what we think God is saying to us through other means is trustworthy. If what we believe God is saying to us - through a prophecy or guidance from the Spirit for example - in *any* way contradicts what the Bible says, then it must be rejected as not being the voice of God.
  - It is our responsibility to take the necessary time to ponder, study and understand the Bible - its words, sentences, paragraphs and themes. Once we understand what various sections of the Bible mean, then we move on to the challenge of asking what it means to *us now*. Most parts of the Bible were the Spirit's words to other people in other times and other situations. But as we prayerfully and humbly seek to understand the Bible, we will begin to appreciate its timeless wisdom and instruction for our time and unique situation.
  - One of the main rules of good interpretation is to read the verse in context. God wrote every word and verse in context. He didn't write in a random, arbitrary manner. God has clearly communicated the meaning of most words and virtually all sentences and paragraphs within the same chapter, book, or section of the Bible. In the Gospels, Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35). Without even reading the context, we know Jesus is using a figure of speech. Every figure of speech has a known meaning. We can determine that meaning by reading what Jesus said in context. The immediate context tells us that

Jesus was saying, 'I have come from God to offer you new, eternal life. You can receive that life by believing in me.' When we can't figure out the meaning of a statement in its immediate context, we may need to look at the broader context. Like any great book, the Bible is meant to be read over and over. Better yet, think of it as watching one of your all-time favorite movies. Remember all the 'Aha!' moments you had the second time you watched the movie? You can have 'Aha!' moments every time you read through the Bible if you keep looking at the context.

and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

- **Bible-rooted leaders seek to apply the Bible to their lives.**
  - We have already seen that the main purpose of the Bible is to communicate to us the gospel so that we can be saved if we trust in its message about Jesus the Saviour (v15).
  - But it also reveals to us much more than just the gospel-message and the promise of salvation in Jesus. It also speaks to Christians about how to live out their salvation. In other words, it disciplines us and guides us in how to live our lives now that we are saved. That is what the above verse so powerfully shows. It is a very 'useful' book. It practically and positively has the power to impact on our lives unlike any other book.
  - This verse also shows us how the many verses and chapters of the Bible practically guide our lives by:
    - Teaching = telling us how to think.
    - Rebuking = telling us how not to live.
    - Correcting = telling us how not to think.
    - Training = telling us how to live.
  - In other words, the Bible is God's how-to manual for us, firstly to help us receive salvation, and secondly, to help us live out that salvation. It does this by telling us how and how not to think, and how and how not to live. This way, it trains us for 'right living' or 'righteousness'.
  - Notice that the Bible is not a manual for other things. It is not primarily a history book, nor a science or philosophy book. Rather it is a life-book. It teaches us how to live and think in relation to God. Through it, God by his Spirit speaks to us, instructing us, encouraging us, challenging us, re-directing us, warning us, lifting us up, humbling us and energising us.
  - The Bible does not create our lives, rather it intersects with our lives. It meets us while we're living, while we're on the move, wherever we may be on our journey, whatever circumstances we may be facing. It guides us from there, sometimes spurring us on, sometimes stopping us in our tracks, sometimes letting us see our situation in a brand new light, sometimes changing our direction altogether.

17 so that all God's people (or 'the godly person' or 'the person of God') may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

- **Bible-rooted leaders enjoy the *adequacy* of the Bible.**
  - The Bible is for all God's people. And it equips us for every good work that God intends us to do. In order to be *thoroughly* equipped, and not *partially* equipped, we must give ourselves to all of God's word - not just our favourite parts of it. All 66 books of the Bible are useful and necessary in teaching us how and how not to think and live.
  - Here are four tips for giving yourself to the whole Bible:
    - First, get a good translation, such as the TNIV (which is a thought-for-thought translation) or the ESV (which is a word-for-word translation).
    - Second, read through the whole Bible, book by book. Perhaps put 3 bookmarks in your Bible - one at Genesis 1, one at Psalms 1, and one at Matthew 1. Read from each bookmark. On some days, you could just read from one of the bookmarks. On other days, you could read from two or even three. I also suggest you read twice as much from the New Testament as from the Old Testament, because it is so much more 'jam-packed' with insight and truth. Also it's much shorter.
    - Third, after reading through a portion of the Bible, sit back and ponder the *themes* you've encountered. Give yourself to the in-depth study of *whole books* of the Bible - always trying to discern the flow and structure of the whole book, as well as the context in which it was written. Also, consider *characters* of the Bible - the good, the bad and the ugly. Study *key words* of the Bible too. A suggested tool to do this is E-sword (freely downloadable from [www.e-sword.net](http://www.e-sword.net)). And most importantly, always keep this question in mind, '*In what ways are these truths applicable to my life now?*'
    - Fourth, and most importantly, read, apply and preach the Scriptures *in dependence on the Spirit*. We need both the Word and the Spirit. Regarding preaching, the Spirit longs to come down in power upon the preaching of the Word, but we must have something to say. He cannot bless teaching that is devoid of what God has so clearly said to us and emphasised in the Bible.
  - Everything we need for Christian living is there in the Bible. The Scriptures are *adequate* to equip us to work out our salvation, to serve God, and to fulfil our destiny in him. But we need to give our lives to mining its riches, or else we will fail to be equipped, and miss so many opportunities to count for God and live for God's glory.

## Two Timothy Chapter Four

1 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: 2 Preach the word;

- **Bible-rooted leaders should be gripped by this God-given responsibility - to get the gospel message out there.**
  - Let's consider verse 1 phrase by phrase: By using the phrase 'in the presence of God and of Jesus Christ,' Paul was claiming that he was speaking to Timothy with the authority given to him by God and Jesus. The phrase 'who will judge the living and the dead' depicts Jesus as the final Judge, who will judge the living people when he returns and will raise those who are dead so that he can also judge them. The reason Paul used this phrase was to remind Timothy that he had the power to prepare people for judgment day by preaching the gospel. The phrase 'in view of his appearing and his kingdom' refers to how Jesus who is now proclaimed by faith will be experienced as reality when he returns and fully ushers in his kingdom.
  - Paul's dramatic appeal climaxes with this clear challenge to Timothy: 'Preach the word'. The 'word' mentioned here does not refer to Scripture as much as it does to the gospel message.
  - Though centuries have passed since Paul gave Timothy this invocation, it is still as relevant and vital to us leaders today. The primary responsibility of the church in the world is to be a herald of the gospel message. The eternal destiny of people everywhere hangs in the balance. It is our job to get the message out there. But be encouraged, we have the authority of heaven backing us. And although Jesus has not yet appeared and ushered in his full reign, we can take heart that he will do so!

2 Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. 3 For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine (*or 'healthy teaching'*). Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. 4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. 5 But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry (*or 'fulfil your ministry'*).

- **Bible-rooted leaders keep declaring the gospel, even when it is unpopular to do so.**
  - These verses hammer home one single point: keep declaring the gospel in this world and in the church.

- The phrase ‘be prepared in season and out of season’ refers to the changing receptiveness to the gospel in a culture or place. Paul had initially experienced ‘a considerable number’ of people responding to the gospel in Ephesus (see Acts 19:26). But in later years, he said that ‘all who are in Asia had turned away from him’ (2 Timothy 1:15). The gospel had gone from being ‘in season’ to ‘out of season’, from ‘popular’ to ‘unpopular’.
- In verse 2, Paul encouraged Timothy to keep declaring the gospel in the world and church, and to do it in such a way that people who believed in false gospels would be corrected and rebuked and encouraged to believe the correct gospel. Paul reminded him to be patient with those who disagree, or those who take time to understand, and all the while, to ‘keep his head’ (which means to stay focused, and not to waver).
- In verse 3, Paul warns that the gospel (here described as ‘sound doctrine’) will not always be warmly received in the church and in the world. Instead, people will start looking for other teachers who preach a false gospel. There are two main reasons that some people, and sometimes whole cultures, reject the truth and embrace the false:
  - 1) *It suits their own desires.* The reality is that the gospel - with its call to own up to our sinfulness, to receive something undeserved, and to submit to a new King - is a very challenging message. Some people, to suit their desires for ease, for sin, or for comfort will simply push it away and turn to something easier, something that accommodates their sin and allows for a life orientated around comfort and self.
  - 2) *It appeals to their craving for novelty.* This is what is meant by ‘itching’ ears. Sadly, some people grow tired of, bored with, or over-familiar with it, and start looking elsewhere for their spiritual ‘kicks’. They prefer the novel to the eternal. They pursue that which intrigues rather than that which changes them, that which entertains rather than that which edifies them. Sadly, one look at many the best-selling books in the Christian world today illustrates this view.
- As people turn from the gospel to novel, less-challenging myths, philosophies and spiritualities (v4) they, in a sense, ‘lose their heads’. But Timothy, unlike them, is to ‘keep his head’ (v5) - and he is to fulfil the ministry God has given him, one that has the gospel at its centre, regardless of any setbacks and sufferings that may come his way (v5).
- What does the phrase ‘evangelist’ mean in verse 5? Some say it means, ‘the apostle’s assistant’. But this is not likely. Some say it means ‘someone with an unusual gift of evangelism’ (as in Acts 21:8 and Ephesians 4:11) - but we do not have any reason to believe that Timothy was unusually gifted in this area. Some say it means, ‘though Timothy is not unusually gifted in evangelism, the most pressing responsibility he has is to promote the gospel both

within and outside of the church'. Given the context, this is the correct meaning.

**In summary, Bible-rooted leaders ...**

- *are unshakably convinced of the gospel message.*
- *know it is not enough to just believe the gospel - it needs to be lived out.*
- *know that the best gift one can give a child is knowledge of the Bible.*
- *are very clear about the main purpose of the Bible: to point people to salvation through faith in Jesus.*
- *believe the whole Bible is inspired by God.*
- *seek to properly understand the Bible.*
- *seek to apply the Bible to their lives.*
- *enjoy the adequacy of the Bible.*
- *should be gripped by this God-given responsibility - to get the gospel message out there.*
- *keep declaring the gospel, even when it is unpopular to do so.*

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

### Introduction

Eugene Peterson wrote a book entitled, 'A long obedience in the same direction.' Although I have since forgotten the contents of that book, the title has stuck in my mind. As we look at the church today, we see many leaders rising up, but sadly many of these leaders seem to fall away after a few years or decades, either in a dramatic moment of moral compromise, or in a slow fade that comes from discouragement or distraction. The desperate need today is for leaders who give themselves to *a long obedience in the same direction*. We should not sprint off in this direction then that direction, but rather discern the direction God has called us to, and then, like a long-distance runner, steadily and unwaveringly give ourselves to running the race till the finish line.

***Please read 2 Timothy 4:6-22.***

6 For I am already being poured out like a drink offering,

- **Long-distance leaders plan on finishing their sacrificial life strongly.**
  - This 'drink-offering' refers to 1) how a cup of wine would be poured out to the gods at the end of a Roman meal and 2) how a cup of wine was poured out as the last part of a Jewish animal sacrifice (see Numbers 15:1-10).
  - Paul saw his life as a sacrifice to God. Although it may have looked like his life was being taken from him - by the Romans - the truth is that he had already given his life to Jesus. His death was just another way of giving himself to Christ. Today, a leader in God's kingdom is called to give their whole lives away to Christ, every drop, whatever that means.
  - Paul was strongly finishing his life of sacrifice. The last part of the sacrifice - the pouring out of wine - was a dramatic way of finishing a sacrifice. Paul, in his last months, did not want to end weakly, in a spirit of self-preservation or self-pity. Today, leaders in God's kingdom should hope to live well, and die well too! Like skilled long distance runners, we should seek to finish our race strongly.

and the time for my departure is near.

- **Long-distance leaders know that life on earth is short.**
  - Paul knew that his life on earth would soon end - and he knew he would then shift to a new eternal location. In this sense, his true home had never been on earth at all - it was always in heaven. This simple mindset - that we are pilgrims passing through - is

absolutely necessary if we are to be long-distance leaders. It will cause us to make all our life-decisions around such things as life-partners, careers, use of money, goals we pursue, etc - against the backdrop of eternity. This is why Paul could say in Romans 8, 'All the suffering I have experienced *here* is nothing compared to all the glory I will experience *there*.'

7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept (or 'guarded') the faith.

- **Long-distance leaders see their lives as a fight, a race and a guarding responsibility.**
  - Paul had seen his life as a fight. He knew that to fulfil God's call on his life he would have to face opposition, delays, weaknesses, failures and disappointments from such sources as the world, the devil and his own sinful nature. And despite all this, he would have to prevail! Today, too many leaders are naïve about the fact that life is a perpetual war.
  - Paul had seen his life as a race. He knew that it was a long marathon, and he aimed to run it well, and finish strongly. Today, too many leaders think that their call is a sprint, or a mere walk.
  - Paul had seen that his mission in life was to be a guard. He knew that the gospel message was his major trust, and that it was in real danger of being lost, stolen and corrupted. Today, too many leaders are simply not gospel-centred, nor aware of their God-given responsibility to guard it.
  
- **Long-distance leaders see their call as a marathon, not as a sprint.**
  - Paul was finishing strongly. This was because he had seen his whole life as one long marathon. Instead of seeking to sprint (and thereby peaking for a short-while) he had sought to grow in momentum as the decades went on.
  - He was a long-distance leader - committed to being most fruitful in the last decades of his life. And he ran in such a way so that in his final laps, he would be running at his best. This kind of thinking impacted on his whole life. He knew it was pointless to start strongly if he did not aim to finish even more so.
  - This is the challenge all leaders face today: to stay in the race for their whole lives, and to be *most fruitful* in the last decades of their life. Sadly, so many leaders seem to peak in their twenties or thirties, and start to fade from there - all because they see their leadership-call as a sprint, and not a marathon.

8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

- **Long-distance leaders are reward-motivated.**
  - Once we're saved, we need to faithfully 'do the good works which God prepared in advance for us to do' (Ephesians 2:10). If we are faithful in fulfilling God's call on our lives we are promised heavenly reward on 'that day'. The picture is of an ancient athletic competition where the victors are publicly crowned. We will be visibly rewarded in heaven for our level of godliness and faithfulness.
  - If we succeed in doing God's will, we will receive a crown of righteousness. What does Paul mean by a crown of 'righteousness'? It is not simply a crown of 'salvation' that comes by *initial saving faith* - but rather the crown of 'a life of obedience' that results from *life-long persevering faith*.
  - If we succeed in doing God's will, Jesus himself will be our Rewarder. He will be the one to look us in the eye and say, 'Well done.' He won't give this awarding opportunity to some angel. He will personally congratulate and reward us. If we succeed in doing God's will, we will be rewarded fairly / righteously. All controversies will be settled, all arguments will be brought to a close, every dispute will be decided. The truth about our lives will be clearly seen, whether good or bad.

9 Do your best to come to me quickly, 10 for Demas, because he loved (*or 'has fallen in love with'*) this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. 11 Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry. 12 I sent Tychicus to Ephesus.

- **Long-distance leaders place high priority on living and ministering in a team.**
  - Seven different men are referred to in these verses:
  - **1) Timothy.** Paul longs for his company (v9). Today, leaders need other people surrounding them. Leadership can be lonely. It is not a sign of weakness to need others, and to express that need to them. In fact it is a sign of Christlike humility and strength.
  - **2) Demas.** Paul was aching for Timothy because Demas had abandoned him. Demas is mentioned four times in Paul's writings, and always in conjunction with Luke. Many people had left Paul (see 1:15) but usually because they had fallen into false teaching. Demas was different. He had fallen in love with the world. Working with Paul in the promoting of the gospel and the planting and strengthening of local churches had come at too greater cost for Demas, and he deserted. Today, if we are not willing to deny our needs for comfort and convenience, we will also eventually

give up.

- 3) *Crescens*. We know nothing about him.
- 4) *Titus*. He was a co-worker of Paul, and had overseen the work in Crete. But now it seems he was settling down in Dalmatia. Today, we must avoid the tendency to settle down, since as long as God's heart beats for the whole world, we need to be ready to go wherever God sends us.
- 5) *Luke*. He was the beloved physician (Colossians 4:14) and gospel-writing historian (see Luke 1:3). Perhaps he helped Paul write some letters - such as Ephesians, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. Luke was faithfully there for Paul when he needed him. 'Only Luke is with me.'
- 6) *Mark*. He had gone on a mission trip with Paul before (Acts 12:25) but had deserted him (Acts 13:13). His desertion had even split Paul's relationship with Barnabas (Acts 15:39). Mark then worked with Barnabas (Acts 15:39) and Peter (1 Peter 5:13). Now, somehow, Paul had restored the relationship with him. As the son of the woman who owned the house where the church met in Jerusalem, he had been active from the earliest days, perhaps even having met Jesus. Working closely with Peter, he was the writer of the gospel of Mark.
- 7) *Tychicus*. He took the letters to the Ephesians and to the Colossians (see Eph 6:21 and Col 4:7). It seems that he was meant to be a temporary replacement for Timothy, since he was being sent to Ephesus (v12) while Timothy was being told to visit Paul in prison (v9).
- These verses give a powerful picture of and six different insights into team-work:
  - 1) *Great leaders (like Paul) don't try to fulfil the mission God has given them alone*. They build a team around themselves - for both personal support, and multiplied fruitfulness.
  - 2) *Great teams need a team-leader*. Paul is the leader of the team, and he speaks with authority as he tells them what to do, and where to go.
  - 3) *Teams can take some knocks*. Paul's team has its leader in prison, and many of them baled out from the team. But nevertheless, it should still remain a team. A team called by God should not dissolve when some desert it, but must continue, regardless.
  - 4) *Teams are built around relationship not just a mission*. Paul here longs for the *company* of Timothy, not just for his usefulness.
  - 5) *In the life of the team leader, different people play different team roles*. Although Luke is with Paul, he still longs to see Timothy, 'his son'. It seems that Paul had a deeper friendship with Timothy than with Luke.
  - 6) *In a team, sometimes someone can disengage for a while and then return* - as was the case with Mark.

- **Long-distance leaders build according to the New Testament pattern of leadership.**
  - From this passage we see Paul, who is an apostle, leading what can be described as an apostolic team. Not everyone on the team is an apostle, but together they form an apostolic team. This team works into many areas and churches. They do a fair amount of travelling. From the letters to Titus and 1 Timothy we see that it is not the job of the team to lead individual churches, but to raise up, ordain and guide elders and deacons (see Titus 1:5 and 1 Timothy 3) - who then lead a local church. The elders 'direct the affairs of the church' (1 Timothy 5:17) meaning that they are the highest authority of that church. Even after they have been established, they continue to invite the input and help of some of the apostolic team.
  - How does this apply to us today? If we were to follow the same pattern, we'd make sure that every local church is sandwiched between a local eldership and deacon team on the one side, and a translocal apostolic team on the other side. Could it be that this is still the superior model for 'discipling the nations'? For those of us who are church leaders: we only have one life to give to building churches - do we really want to experiment with other methods, when the early church chose this pattern? Is the New Testament not just authoritative in what we believe as a church, but even in how we structure our leadership? If it is (and I believe it is), then the local church needs both local and translocal servant-leaders involved in it.

13 When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.

- **Long-distance leaders keep developing their capacity for future ministry.**
  - We need to be giving ourselves to ministry now, but at the same time, we need to be developing our *capacity* for future ministry. This simple principle is often overlooked by leaders. Farmers understand this - we can't just reap harvest year after year, without developing the land's capacity for future harvests. The saying, 'if your output exceeds your input then the shortfall will be your downfall,' captures this truth well.
  - *We need to develop our physical capacity for future ministry.* Paul wanted his cloak. This was to keep him warm. He didn't overlook his physical needs. Today, leaders need to keep healthy and fit: eating well, exercising regularly and sleeping sufficiently.
  - *We need to develop our mental capacity for future ministry.* Paul wanted his scrolls. These were the books that would stimulate him. Paul wanted to stay fit intellectually. This would greatly sharpen his ministry in the future. Today, leaders should be constantly sharpening their minds by reading and studying.

- *We need to develop our practical capacity for future ministry.* Paul wanted some parchments too, which were probably the equivalent of blank paper. Perhaps he wanted these so that he could write more letters such as 2 Timothy. Leaders need to be practically-minded about those things that will facilitate ministry - whether it be a home, a car, a computer, or notebook.

14 Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. 15 You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message.

16 At my first defence, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. 17 But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. 18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

- **Long-distance leaders know that, though people sometimes let us down, Jesus never will.**
  - In verse 14 we see that Alexander was probably the person who got Paul into prison in Rome this second time. Paul stays calm and takes comfort in that Jesus will repay Alexander in due time. In verse 15 he warns Timothy to be on the lookout for him too - since he hates the gospel, and obviously has connections with authorities who can imprison gospel preachers. Today, there are some individuals who can do great harm to the church, and to its leaders. We need to be careful of them (not living in fear but rather with wise caution). And we can take comfort that God will repay them for any damage done to us and the forward movement of the gospel.
  - In verse 16, at Paul's first trial in prison, no one came to support him. Paul was deeply hurt - but asked that Jesus would not hold this against them. Paul's friends and fellow co-workers knew that if they supported Paul in court, they too might be imprisoned and executed. Matthew 10:23 says that it is appropriate to flee persecution, but in this situation Paul felt that at least some of them should have remained loyal to him. Today, leaders can expect to be let down by people from time to time. If it happened to Jesus and to Paul, it will happen to us too! And like Paul and Jesus, we should take on an attitude of grace - not bitterness - even praying for those that let us down.
  - In verse 17 Paul tells of how, sometime around his trial, Jesus powerfully revealed himself to Paul - and this renewed his strength to freshly proclaim the gospel to the Roman authorities in prison and in the trials. He was even temporarily delivered from execution (which is what is meant by 'the lion's mouth' - see Psalm 22:20-21). Today, when we are in desperate trouble, we

can expect God to give us unusual supernatural ability to cope with the trial, and sometimes to even help us escape it.

- In verse 18, Paul, having freshly experienced the powerful help of Jesus, had a renewed confidence that Jesus would continue to deliver him. He knew that the deliverance on this earth is temporary, and that eventually he would be executed. But his reinvigorated encounter with Christ gave him great confidence that his death would merely be a transfer into heaven. And this makes him want to worship God - 'to him be glory forever and ever'. Today, a leader needs to know that the very worst thing that can happen to us as we serve Jesus is that we are executed but then, we are transferred into heaven.

19 Greet Priscilla (or 'Prisca') and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus. 20 Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus sick in Miletus. 21 Do your best to get here before winter. Eubulus greets you, and so do Pudens, Linus, Claudia and all the brothers and sisters.

22 The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you all.

- **Long-distance leaders stay friendly and courteous until the very end.**
  - Priscilla, Aquilla and Onesiphorus are all in Ephesus with Timothy. He sends greetings to them.
  - Erastus, the city treasurer of Corinth (Romans 16:13) who had travelled with Timothy before (Acts 19:22) was in Corinth. Trophimus was sick in Miletus.
  - Paul knew he had at least a few weeks left, so he asked Timothy to get there soon.
  - Paul sent greetings from three people in verse 21. Linus, according to other historical sources, was later the leader of the church in Rome.
  - Paul was a man who made friends everywhere. And he loved to keep them in touch with each other too. Today, leaders need to be highly relational - and need to stay friendly and courteous until the very end.
  - We know through early church records, how Paul eventually died. On 19<sup>th</sup> July AD 64 most of Rome was burnt. Nero blamed the Christians, many of whom were arrested and killed. During this time 'Paul bore testimony before the rulers, and so departed from the world and was taken up into the holy place - the greatest example of endurance' (1 Clement 5:7).

**In summary, long-distance leaders ...**

- *plan on finishing their sacrificial life strongly.*
- *know that life on earth is short.*
- *see their lives as a fight, a race and a guarding responsibility.*
- *see their call as a marathon, not as a sprint.*
- *are reward-motivated.*
- *place high priority on living and ministering in a team.*
- *build according to the New Testament pattern of leadership.*
- *keep developing their capacity for future ministry.*
- *know that, though people sometimes let us down, Jesus never will.*
- *stay friendly and courteous until the very end.*