

Leadership Includes Modeling—Leading by Becoming More and More Like Jesus
Guidance from 2 Timothy 2
Rev. Edward D. Seely, Th.M., Ph.D.

1. Attend to careful leader selection and training. (2:2)
 - a. “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able [Greek, *ἱκανοί* (*hikanoi*): able, competent, fit; NIV: qualified] to teach others also.” (2 Timothy 2:2; NASB)
 - b. Notice these three key dimensions of leadership that the Apostle Paul mentions.
 - 1) Knowledge (“The things [cf. the context, chapter 1, 1 Timothy, and the many times they were together] which you have heard from me....”). In this case, knowledge involves the basics of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
 - 2) Faithfulness (“faithful men,” [generic]). Faithfulness involves ongoing belief, commitment, and acting daily in accord with the Lord’s Word and will. It is not enough to know, and even believe, the Gospel of Jesus Christ; *we must daily obey*. We are saved by grace, but our ongoing obedience *gives evidence of the genuineness of our saving faith*. This obedience is what sets us apart (the root meaning of holiness) from unbelievers (cf. Matthew 7:15-23) and from the demons. Remember, “Even the demons believe—and shudder” due to their unwillingness to obey. (James 2:19)
 - 3) Ability, and also gifted (“able to teach;” cf. Ephesians 4:11). Consider what ministry position you are looking for someone to fill, and consider whether he or she has the gift(s) needed for that task. Provide continuing education for this person, formal, nonformal, and informal, including modeling and mentoring to develop that, or those, gift(s). For more on spiritual gifts, see the PowerPoint presentation, [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology—With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions](#).
 - c. Consider carefully how these people are selected.
 - 1) The Lord brings some to you; they volunteer. At the same time, be careful; sometimes a person will come to you and offer to serve in that position who is not sent by the Lord, even if he or she says so.
 - a) Be sure to do proper vetting. Pray, asking God’s guidance in the process; he knows each person best and who will serve most effectively in his church. Interview and continue to talk with all who volunteer, and come to know them.

Involve other trusted leaders in the decision, especially in higher, more crucial, positions of leadership.

- b) Church leaders must not be recent converts. (1 Timothy 3:6) New Christians are often eager to serve, but lack much knowledge and wisdom. Allow them to serve, but not yet in leadership. Allow sufficient time for you and your fellow leaders to discern evidence of the necessary knowledge, wisdom, commitment, and maturity, as well as the other characteristics the Apostle Paul identifies, e.g., in his first letter to Timothy, 3:1ff., to be clearly observed in action.
 - c) For those who seem like they will be a good fit for potential leadership, ask them to function in a more basic task at first and see how they do. For those who do well over time, then give them more responsibility and authority.
 - d) With prayer, the involvement of one or more other trusted leaders, and when an interview and/or introductory work indicates a person has a good track record, you have a strong likelihood the person will do well.
 - 1- Nevertheless, always monitor and continue to support leaders in their work for the Lord.
 - 2- Always, “be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.” (4:2 ff. Cf., Acts 20:31; Romans 15:14; Colossians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 14; 2 Thessalonians 3:15) Historically, this has always been a part of church discipline.
- 2) Often we have to reach out to others and ask them to serve in a particular ministry position.
- a) Again, begin with prayer.
 - b) Consult other trusted leaders. Ask them who they know who might serve well in this ministry.
 - c) Use that information in your contacting potential leaders.
 - d) Keep in mind key “Do’s” and “Don’ts” of leader selection.
 - 1- Do...
 - a- Make an appointment. Respect people’s time; don’t show up unexpected.

- b- Meet at a time and place where you can talk one-to-one and not be interrupted or where background noise makes it difficult to talk, hear one another, and concentrate.
- c- Begin with caring questions of how the person is and what he or she is doing that he or she is finding most enjoyable; the body of Christ cares about and for one another. It is important to establish and/or develop a cordial and caring relationship with a person for such a leadership position. This conversation can also give you clues as to whether this person may be unable to serve, at least at this point in time.
- d- Be positive. Emphasize the importance of the work you are asking the person to do. All people who are leaders value their time; they do not want to waste their time on something that is unimportant.
- e- If one or more of the other leaders whom you have consulted recommends this person, mention that other(s) highly recommend him or her for this position. The favorable opinion of leaders about them has significant influence on people.
- f- Always tell the truth, “speaking the truth in love.” (Ephesians 4:15) Don’t say any of the above that is not true.
- g- Assure the prospective leader that he or she will have all the help and support needed, including substitutes when required.
- h- If a qualified candidate hesitates, ask him or her what is causing his or her concern. Maybe you can help allay any concern(s). For example, lack of experience in such a position and/or fear of not being successful are common feelings of reluctance to accept the offer of a position. In this case, you can assure the person that as much help will be provided as needed. If you are asking someone to teach, you can mention that you meet regularly with the teachers; that you are willing to visit their classroom and meet with them as much as they would like; that they will have a user friendly curriculum; that they have many teaching aids; or that they could start out assisting another teacher to gain experience. You could also assure the prospective teacher that you or a former teacher will be willing to be a mentor, walking alongside this new teacher, helping him or her to have all the help needed. Be sure to talk with anyone who has concerns; knowing those concerns can, with God’s help, overcome those concerns. Reluctant people have become outstanding teachers as a result of such conversations.

2- Don't...

- a- Don't fail to pray.
- b- Don't ask people for a ministry position without prayer and proper consideration of the above matters.
- c- Don't ask just anyone who is willing to "do the job." Filling ministry positions with "warm bodies" is not in the best interest of the Lord and his church. Immature people do not facilitate the sanctification, the growth in Christlikeness and holiness, of God's people, which is what church leaders are called to do.

2. "Endure hardship...like a good soldier of Christ Jesus." (2:3) This is Paul's main admonition.

- a. As Paul writes this letter, he is in prison, a cold dungeon, chained like a common criminal under the cruel Roman Emperor Nero (ca. A.D. 66-67); he knows he's at the end of this phase of his life here on earth. (4:6-8)
- b. Don't be discouraged or ashamed by opposition; expect it. (Cf. 3:12) Also always remember Jesus' words, "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad [Luke includes that Jesus also said "leap for joy" (6:23)], because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Matthew 5:11-12) One reason we are blessed with such opposition is that we have here assurance that we are in fact opposed to the world's values, that we are not of the world but of God and in accord with his Word and will, and that we are pleasing him, which is our goal. (2 Corinthians 5:9). Compare what Luke recorded Jesus as also saying: "Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets." (6:26)

3. Avoid distractions; keep your focus on Christ and pleasing him. (2:3-5)

- a. The main point of vs. 3-5 is that focused and committed effort with the Lord's help will produce the desired results, if not right away surely over time, as the Gospel of Jesus Christ changes lives, helping people come to Christ and mature in Christ-likeness, becoming sanctified.
- b. Paul commands us to reflect on what he is saying. As the Biblical scholar, R.C.H. Lenski explains, Paul is saying his words "must be correctly understood. **Be understanding what I am saying!** The present imperative is in place: 'be applying your mind'... [The verb is a command that we do this continually.] The idea is not that Paul's figures are

dark and difficult; they are quite lucid. But so much is concentrated into them that one must pause and think to apprehend it all. The words are so brief, one might read them too hastily and not comprehend all that they contain....The Scriptures are intended for our νοῦς or mind, which God has given us so that we may use it.”

- c. Leaders teach by being obedient themselves. As leaders, we don't function with a double standard; we, too, obey. (“according to the rules.” 2:5)
4. “Remember Jesus Christ,” who is both 100% God (“raised from the dead”) and 100% human (“descended from David”). (2:8)
- a. Both of these aspects of Jesus Christ's being, his being completely divine and completely human, are essential to our salvation and to our teaching, other leadership, and witness for the triune God.
 - 1) Since Jesus Christ is God, he was able to withstand the Satanic and demonic temptations and not sin. In this verse (2:8), Paul mentions Jesus first to indicate that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah.
 - 2) Since Jesus Christ is fully human, he is rightfully qualified to substitute for us. (Hebrews 2:9-18; 9:1-28)
 - b. Paul commands us to remember Jesus Christ. Doing so will help us endure the hardships that come as we proclaim the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.
5. “Keep reminding” those we teach of these truths. (2:14)
- a. Paul is telling Timothy, who is the head of the churches in Asia, to remind all the churches of “these things” he has been saying. The verb is an imperative, a command, and the present tense indicates that Paul is telling Timothy to keep doing what he is doing.
 - b. The application to us is that we need to keep reminding one another, and those we teach and lead in other ways, of these realities that are the heart of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and that encourage us and help us overcome adversity.
6. Avoid “quarreling about words.” (2:14)
- a. Don't allow yourself to be drawn into unnecessary controversies.
 - b. The controversy only ruins those who listen, especially those who are relatively new to the faith and those who are not yet Christians.

- c. Such quarreling is unproductive, wastes time, and confuses many people, especially those who are immature in the Christian faith.
7. “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, who rightly handles the word of truth,” God’s Word, the Bible, and its essence the Gospel of Jesus Christ. (2:15)
- a. The verb translated “rightly handles” is literally, “straightly cutting.” It is a figure meaning that when teaching the Word of God, the teacher should avoid crooked exegesis, interpretation of the text, and cut straightly through the teaching of the Word, as a tentmaker would cut straight the camel hair fabric, thus “rightly handling” God’s Word.
 - 1) The text also indicates that when we present ourselves to others, as we teach God’s Word, we are also presenting ourselves to God, so let’s be ever conscious of being sure we do so in the way he approves, and the tense of the verb indicates that we should do so continually.
 - a) We must be careful to avoid twisting God’s Word to make it say what we want it to say about some contemporary issue, such as many teachers and pastors are doing to try to find a Biblical justification for some current cultural practice that is popular, which many want the church to approve. For just two examples:
 - 1- The false prosperity gospel, i.e., all you have to do is just believe in Jesus and you’ll become wealthy.
 - 2- The teaching that some sexual practices God calls abomination in the Bible, are now OK in these people’s minds.
 - b) We must teach all of God’s Word, not just favorite parts. Since the Bible was not written in a systematic manner, i.e., it doesn’t teach everything about a certain subject in a specific passage, when we teach specific texts, we need to refer to other passages in the Bible that have more information on that subject than in the text we are teaching; the people need to know “the rest of the story” about what the Bible teaches on that subject elsewhere.
 - c) Then we need to make appropriate applications for our daily lives. Answer the question, “What does the Lord want us to do with this information?”
 - 2) Hear how Lenski interprets the original Greek and applies the text:

The aorist imperative mood (“Do your best”)] and its aorist infinitive [express past action that continues] and is viewed as a unit, the present participle [rightly handling] at the end spreading it out in its progress. Thus the aorist

imperative also comes with more force. When we present ourselves to [people] ("those hearing us," [v. 14](#)) as preachers of the Word we must ever be conscious of the fact that we are also presenting ourselves to God in everything that we say or do (doctrine and practice) in regard to his Word. How this thought ought to drive out even loose carelessness, to say nothing about arrogant opinions, following human authorities, popular errors and practices! One concern should possess us completely: to be diligent to present ourselves...to God "as tested" (predicative accusative), a favorite term of Paul's. We should be as coins that are tested for purity of metal and for adequate weight and are accepted only after such a test ("approved," our versions).

- b. Notice a great benefit for us who are faithful in rightly handling God's Word: not needing to be ashamed. One day we will appear before the Lord in the final judgment, and, in the words of James (3:1), "we who teach will be judged more strictly."
 - This doesn't mean to resist a call from God to teach his Word; it does mean **be careful**. Continually ask God for his help in understanding and applying the text. One of my prayers is for God's help to make pleasing him my, my family's, and the church's greatest desire, objective, and accomplishment.
8. Avoid "profane and empty babbling," (Greek) especially about views contrary to God's Word and will; turn away from wickedness. (2:16-18)
 - a. The wording of verses 14-18 indicates that the reference is to an early form of the heresy of Gnosticism, in particular that form called Docetism.
 - b. Avoid such babbling and philosophies so as to not become influenced by that evil which spreads like gangrene and leads people (like Hymenaeus and Philetus, v. 17) to wander from the Gospel truth and teach a false gospel.
9. Turn away from wickedness. (2:19-23)
 - a. Flee the evil desires of youth. Closely monitor younger people to watch over them so they don't go astray. At the same time, avoid micromanaging, controlling, and being overbearing. Caring oversight is a principle to help find the balance between too much and too little leader management and guidance. Provide freedom within limits, allowing more as responsibility is demonstrated. Structure that respects and trusts but continually oversees, provides stability, security, and success.
 - b. Pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace with others who call on the Lord with a pure heart.

- c. Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments that produce quarrels.
 - d. Do not quarrel; instead be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.
10. "Gently instruct" those who oppose you and the Gospel of Christ Jesus in the hope and prayer that God will intervene and lead (2:25), "teaching the truth in love." (Ephesians 4:15)
- a. Recall how Christ Jesus gently but firmly confronted (pastoral care professor David Augsburger would say "care-fronted") the Jews who believed in but opposed him, and even tried to kill him, as recorded in John 8:12-50.
 - b. Such gentleness can be difficult at times, especially when those opposing us are mean-spirited and abusive. For help recall Proverbs 15:1, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."
 - c. We are to admonish one another when we step out of line. (Acts 20:31; 1 Corinthians 4:14; Colossians 3:16; 2 Thessalonians 3:15)
 - d. In another reminder of the unseen but very real spiritual warfare behind all that is visible (cf. Ephesians 6:10-18; Revelation 12-20), the gentleness for which we should strive is also to be done in the hope and prayer that God will use our approach to help those in opposition, that they are led to repentance which will lead them to a knowledge of the truth and escape from the devil's trap.