

Leadership Principles & the Pastoral Epistles - 2015

WEEK 1: TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Explain the format

75-90 minutes teaching (answer questions as needed)

Whole group prayer

30-45 minutes focused discussion of the lecture

Informal fellowship for whoever wants to stay (BYO snacks and drinks)

The vital importance of high-quality spiritual leadership

The most important factor in healthy churches, home groups, and all ministries within the church is high-quality spiritual leadership. We can infer this from the large amount of biblical material devoted to spiritual leadership. This is part of the reason why Paul says 1 Tim. 3:1 (read). We assume that you are in this class because you aspire to be a good spiritual leader. We also hope this aspiration includes becoming a home group leader, because this is what we need most.

What are some essential features of high-quality spiritual leadership?

- **It is *not* being transactional, autocratic, managerial, or charismatic**

“*Transactional*” means prioritizing giving the people you lead what they want. While good leaders understand the importance of building consensus, they look to God and his Word for what people need and lead them into it (1 Thess. 2:4). In the extreme, transactional leadership is “ear tickling” and a betrayal of biblical servant leadership (2 Tim. 4:3).

“*Autocratic*” means being strongly self-willed, trying to bend people to do what you want them to do. Good leaders are willing to courageously call people to change, but they are humbly submitted to God and they call others to submit to God, not to them (1 Pet. 5:3). And their motive is God’s glory and the people’s good—not their own ego.

“*Managerial*” means being adept at maintaining systems—scheduling teachings, meetings, events, etc. Good leaders understand the importance of being organized, but they are centrally focused on drawing people into the life-transforming power of the gospel in the context of personal investment (1 Thess. 2:8). For this reason, managerial leadership is inadequate.

“*Charismatic*” means spiritually gifted to lead others (Rom. 12:8)—the God-given ability to attract, influence, and envision people even without spiritual maturity or integrity. Of course, this is a wonderful gift to have! But without spiritual vitality and integrity, it is dangerous. And with spiritual vitality and integrity, we can lead people spiritually even if we are not charismatic. (Note that this gift is not required for elders or deacons.)

- **BUT it *is* being transformational. Transformational leaders intentionally attract others to God’s transforming influence by communicating, incarnating and championing God’s love and truth.**

Transformational leadership is foundationally and intrinsically connected to the leader’s own vital personal spirituality—being consistently filled with the Spirit (Acts 6:3,5). And since we can *all* become genuinely spiritual people, we can *all* become transformational leaders! Our fruitfulness will vary according to many factors (gifting; experience; opportunity; field; other team-members with whom we lead, etc.), but we can *all* be fruitful (Jn. 15:5; Lk. 8:15)!

What are the key elements of transformational leadership? What does it look like in action? 2 Tim. 2 summarizes 6 key elements, and we will spend a week on each of these. But tonight we will look at three other Pauline passages that shed light on this question.

1 Timothy 4:7-16

1 Tim. 4:7-16 provides us with a *key*, a *challenge*, and a *promise*. Before we read this passage, let's remember Timothy's situation. The Ephesian church is wracked with false teaching and division (even into the eldership). Timothy is younger than most people in this church (a big disadvantage in a society that valued age). He is probably not a charismatic leader—but rather tended toward timidity (cf. 1 Cor. 16:10,11). Yet Paul charges him to rectify this situation so that the church prospers. So this is a passage that speaks to *most* of us!

- THE PROMISE: Read the passage. What an amazing promise in 4:16b! If Timothy follows Paul's advice in this passage, he will "ensure salvation both for himself and for those who hear him." What does this mean?

"Salvation" cannot refer to justification or glorification, because Timothy is already justified and guaranteed to be glorified. More likely, it refers to sanctification or spiritual growth (like 1 Pet. 2:2). Also, "hear" must refer to more than just physically listening to what Timothy says; "hear" carries with it the idea of listening with a receptive heart or *heeding*.

So, Paul is saying: "If you follow my advice, you will ensure both your own spiritual growth and positive spiritual influence on those who are receptive." In other words, if you follow my advice in this passage, you will be an effective leader, and God will cause growth through you in all who are receptive .

- THE KEY: Paul's challenge is for Timothy to keep making spiritual progress evident to all those you lead. "Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness" (4:7). "Pay close attention to *yourself* and your teaching" (4:16). ". . . so that *your* progress may be evident to all" (4:15). We may think that as leaders, our main job is to see that *they* are making progress. But Paul tells us that our main job is that they see *our* spiritual progress!

The primary factor in facilitating spiritual progress in others is to keep making spiritual progress ourselves. "Would I follow me?" "Would I be happy if everyone in our group is doing as well as I am?" We cannot lead others into spiritual growth unless we are growing ourselves. If we aren't growing in our own spiritual lives, our ministry will lack the spiritual power to influence others to grow. But if we are making progress, we will positively impact those within our sphere of influence!

"It is true that God does take up those who are not worthy and permit them to speak His words years before they fully understand their import; but He does not wish any of us to stop there. We may go on in that way for awhile, but is it not true that, from the time when He begins in us His work of formation through discipline and chastening, it growingly dawns on us how little in fact we knew of the true meaning of what we had been saying and doing? He intends that we should reach the place where we can speak, with or without manifest gifts, because we are the thing we say. For in Christian experience the spiritual things of God are less and less outward, that is, of gift, and more and more inward, of life. In the long run it is the depth and inwardness of a work that counts. As the Lord himself becomes more and more to us, other things—yes, and this must include even His gifts—matter less and less. Then, though we teach the same doctrine, speak the same words, the impact on others is very different, manifesting itself in an increasing depth of the Spirit's work within them also."¹

Notice that Paul urges Timothy to make evident progress in three important areas:

¹ Watchman Nee, cited in Miles Stanford, *The Green Letters*.

- 4:12 refers to godly character. 2 Pet. 1:5-8 makes the same point (to *all* Christians). If you are growing in godly character, you will inspire responsive people to progress in this area! **We will spend a whole week on this in Week 6**, but consider:

“Speech” – This probably refers not to your teaching (see 4:15), but to the way you communicate and relate to people (home group; spouse & children; work associates; neighbors). Is Eph. 4:29 & 5:4 something you aspire to and are making progress in? Are you losing the cynicism, jabs, self-pity, complaining, gossip, etc.? Are you gaining in the ability to edify others and give thanks?

“Conduct” – This probably refers to your overall behavior as a representative of Christ (Col. 3:17). Does your behavior at home and at work commend the One you represent? Or are you one kind of person at meetings, when discipling, etc.—and another kind of person at home and at work? Are you becoming more respectful and hard-working at work? Are you more engaged and engaging with your spouse and children?

“Love” – Are you more convinced of Jn. 13:17 and Acts 20:35? Are you becoming more other-centered—and more sane and happy because of it? Do you delight in knowing and serving others because you delight in God’s love for you—or are you living self-protectively and/or using others to get your sense of identity? Do you thrive off of giving yourself away to others for Christ—or is this a burdensome drudgery that you resent?

“Faith” – Are you more focused on God’s promises than a year ago? Is your prayer life more laced with affirmation of God’s goodness and power, and with praise and gratitude? Have you improved in persevering through trials with a good attitude? Have you taken more scary steps of faith and seen God come through?

“Purity” – This refers to sexual purity (5:2). Are you in hidden sexual sin (pornography; flirting; etc.)? Are you fatalistic about sexual sin? Are you strict with your thought-life in this area? Is your sex life with your spouse satisfying? If not, what are you doing to improve it? Who are you accountable to in this area? If you are married, is your friendship deepening, and is your sexual relationship healthy?

“Robert Murray McCheyne (1813-1843), who was mightily used by God to bring revival to Scotland . . . said, ‘My people’s biggest need is my personal holiness (i.e., sanctification).’ Always our biggest battles in ministry are with ourselves. Only our disobedience can thwart God’s desire to bless us and make us fruitful.”²

- 4:13 refers to God’s Word. It is God’s Word that has the power to effect spiritual change in people (Col. 1:6). Spirit-empowered communication of God’s Word is far more important than our personalities, intelligence, formal education, etc. **We will spend a whole week on this in Week 5**, but we can all make progress in this area in two ways:

We can make progress in our own *intake* of God’s Word (4:13 “reading;” 4:6 “nourished”). Many of us limp from teaching to teaching, and then wonder why we lack the ability to spiritually influence others. Are you reading the Word regularly? Are you getting fresh revelation from God’s Word? Are you reading quality Christian books? Are you a life-long learner and lover of revealed truth?

We can make progress in our *communication* of God’s Word (4:13 “exhortation and teaching”). Some of us (like Timothy) have Word gifts (teaching; preaching; exhortation; counseling; etc.). If so, are you using and improving those gifts? If

² Ajith Fernando, *Jesus Driven Ministry* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2002), p. 158.

you do not have word gifts, you can still share God's Word in a variety of contexts (e.g., home group discussion leading and sharing; encouragement; cell discussion). Are you growing in your reliance on God's Word in your communication with others?

- 4:14 refers to exercising your spiritual gift(s). We don't know what Timothy's gift was, but Paul is afraid that he will neglect it because of his many leadership duties. He reminds him to stay intent on using and developing it.

Why is this important for effective leadership? Because our spiritual gifts are unique avenues for the Spirit's influence through us to others. And because God also grants you confidence in his power as you use your spiritual gifts to serve others—and this confidence helps you play your leadership role more effectively.

We're going to spend part of Week 8 thinking through how we can do this.

In the meantime, are you asking God for more clarity on where you are gifted? Do you seek input from your fellow-leaders and other trusted Christian friends? Are you exercising your gifts consistently, both in your home group and beyond your home group?

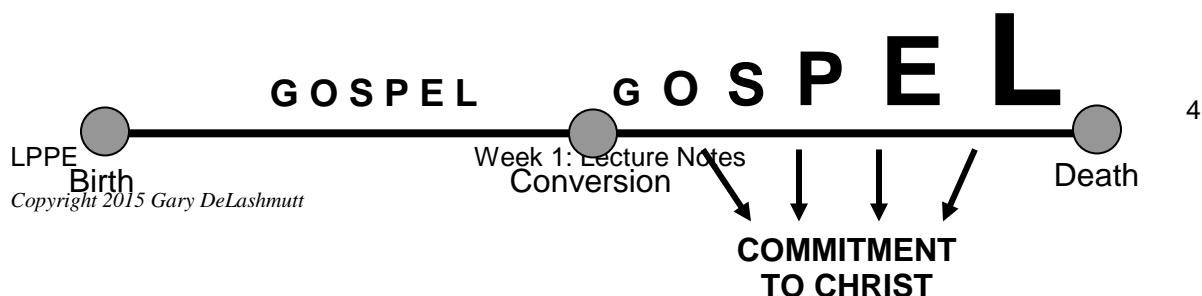
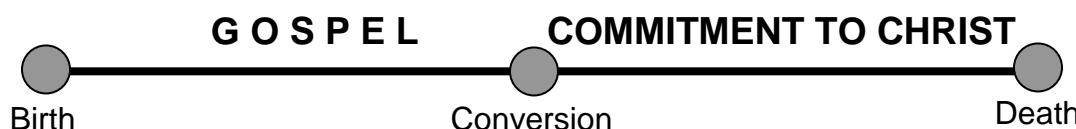
- **THE CHALLENGE:** God can enable *all* of us to make progress into effective leaders (as defined above)—but he will not do this without intense and sustained effort on our parts. Look at the verbs Paul uses: "discipline yourself" (*gymnazo*); "labor" (*kophino*) and "strive" (*agonizoma*); "take pains with" (*melatao*) ; "be absorbed in;" "pay close attention to" (*epecho*); "persevere in" (*epimeno*). But since we can be strengthened by God's grace (2 Tim. 2:1 – NEXT WEEK), *this is doable!* We can all make progress—and therefore we can all become more effective leaders. Hence, the only one who can prevent you from becoming an effective leader is – you!

1 Thessalonians 2:1-13

In this passage, Paul reminds the Thessalonians how God used him and his team as catalysts of the explosive birth and growth of their church. "Catalyst" is a good synonym for transformational leadership. Notice the three things he emphasizes—his *message*, his *motive*, and his *manner*.

His *message* was the gospel (2:2,4,8,9). Four different times Paul emphasizes that he was intent on communicating the gospel to them ("speak;" "impart;" "proclaim").

Paul is referring to the gospel not only as the basic message of salvation that he communicated in his evangelism, but also to the in-depth unpacking of the gospel to them once they received Christ (see Eph. 3:6-8, where Paul refers to the gospel as "the gift of God's grace" and "the unfathomable riches of Christ"). Evangelicals sometimes view the *gospel* as central to evangelism, but *commitment to Christ* as central to Christian development (expressed through consistent participation in the means of growth, ministry, etc.). Commitment to Christ is critical, but the context for healthy commitment is our people's ongoing growth in their understanding, appreciation, and application of the gospel (see Col. 2:2,3,6).



This is what Paul points out in 2:13 (read). It is the gospel alone (here called “the Word of God”) that has the ongoing power (“performs”) to transform people’s lives and make them spiritually fruitful. Do you believe this—or do you think your intellect, talent, personality, spiritual gifting, etc. are the real keys?

How can we stay gospel/grace-focused ourselves, and lead our people into a similar focus? That’s what a lot of the class is about—especially **Weeks 2 & 5**.

His *motive* was to please God (2:3-6). Notice how Paul contrasts this motive with two other motives: He was *not* motivated to please people, and he was *not* motivated to seek his own glory.

Although these sound like different wrong motivations, they are actually two sides of the same coin. Unless we are motivated by the desire and commitment to please God, we will always seek our own glory from the praise of other people. And this motivation will prevent us from trusting in God (Jn. 5:44) and corrupt our ministries. We will compromise God’s standards to keep their acceptance (2:3,5), or we will lord it over them to feel significant (2:6).

This *motive* is inextricably connected to Paul’s *message*. It is only God’s grace that frees us from seeking our own glory through people’s praise. When we live focused on God’s undeserved acceptance and approval, we no longer need people’s approval or admiration to “be somebody;” we are already God’s beloved children. Then we can serve others as his representatives—for their good and for God’s glory.

Are you aware of these carnal motivations in your heart? If you aren’t, you are probably dangerously self-deceived! Your reactions to peoples’ critique or non-compliance to your initiatives is a great clue to your motives! Do you judge these motives as God convicts you of them—or do you deny them or rationalize them? Are you learning how to use the gospel to mortify these carnal motives?

His *manner* of relating to them was love, expressed in three key ways:

He gave his heart to them in nurture and affection (2:7,8). Paul speaks of this affection welling up in him and overflowing into their lives. The gospel of God’s love must be incarnated by our love for our people. People can tell whether you really love them—you can’t fake this. If you view your people with disdain or indifference, you cannot lead people into God’s will for their lives. Pray that God remove your heart of stone and give you this heart of flesh—and then choose by faith to invest in them until you feel affection.

He set an example of a sacrificial and godly lifestyle (2:9,10). “You recall . . . you are witnesses.” Paul and his companions were models of integrity—no shady behavior, no difference between public and private behavior. This kind of positive godliness gives credibility to our message and inspires people to give their lives to Jesus.

On the basis of his affection and example, he challenged them to be good representatives of Christ (2:11,12). You might think that affection and example are sufficient—but they are not. We must be willing to call on our people to commit themselves to Christ, to repent from sin, and to take practical steps of faith in him. Adult leaders often fail to do this. Sometimes it is because we know that we have not personally invested and/or set a good example. We sense that strong challenge would be hypocritical. This is true—but then we should repent of our own cold-heartedness toward God and our people, apologize for our lack of love, and love them in this key way. **We will spend Week 7 on this element.**

Paul emphasizes these same exact qualities to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20. Because he knew he would never see them again, he wanted them to remember what made him a transformational leader. While they could not imitate his gifting, they could emulate these qualities. Think of your own early Christian lives. Were these not some of the key factors that influenced you to aspire to be a servant-leader?

1 Corinthians 3:5-4:2

Transformational leaders focus more on being faithful to their roles than on measurable results, and actively depend on God to cause growth. In 1 Cor. 3:5-4:2, Paul emphasizes this important point.

On the one hand, we should care passionately about the growth of God's church—both for God's glory and for people's good. This is presumed by this passage! And if we care passionately about this, we will keep track of progress (Acts; EXAMPLES). These things are important because the numbers represent eternal souls, because they provide a "snapshot" of our effectiveness, and because they can surface areas we need to work on.

On the other hand, only God can cause growth (3:6,7). If we focus primarily on what only he can accomplish, it will make us ineffective leaders. And there are far too many variables (e.g., responsiveness of the field; gifts & degrees of giftedness; experience; etc.) to expect uniform results. Therefore, usurping God's role to cause the church to grow ("taking possession of the ministry") will make us ineffective leaders. We may become *arrogant* when things are going well. We may become *angry* and/or *despairing* during "out of season" periods. We may then become *negligent* in our roles as an over-reaction to usurping God's role.

Instead, we should focus primarily on being faithful to play our small-but-significant roles, trusting God to play his big role and to cause the growth. God will evaluate us on how faithfully we played our roles (3:8b-15), not how people responded to us, whether our part of the church grew more than others, etc. 4:2 defines success as personal faithfulness.

When you have this focus, you work hard at your role—but you are careful not to intrude into God's role. This is what Jesus is talking about in Matt. 11:28-30. He is not inviting us to inactivity, but to work with him—depending on his leadership and power. When you serve in the yoke with him, you will experience fatigue and concern—but with soul-rest and peace rather than the anxiety that leads to spiritual exhaustion (EXAMPLES). It is difficult to get in this "zone," and difficult to stay there—but you must learn how to do it to stay in the battle for the long haul!

How can this class help us become more effective as spiritual leaders?

It can help us to learn and internalize the *principles* of spiritual leadership emphasized in the Pastoral Epistles (especially 2 Tim. 2—overview the principles)

Since we need to be creative and flexible on home group methods and structures, it is especially important to understand and be deeply committed to the timeless biblical principles which our methods and structures need to facilitate.

We hope that these passages will come alive to you in a new way, and that they will become a key part of your "manual" of leadership instruction in the future.

It can help us to stay focused on God's grace in our own lives, work with others under grace, and help them learn how to do the same.

What is the purpose of the assignments?

For those who have not carefully read "The Glory of the Gospel," this is mandatory. These readings focus on different facets of the gospel, which is the core of spiritual vitality and leadership. Keep a separate journal to record the personal insights God gives you through these readings (e.g., conviction of sinful attitudes; discovery of a new aspect of grace, or a deeper understanding of this aspect; applications to your own life and ministry; concerns and questions; etc.). Pray that God will open the eyes of your heart as you read these articles!

For those who have already read "The Glory of the Gospel," read the assigned chapters from Jack Miller's *Outgrowing the Ingrown Church*. This book applies key features of grace-motivated transformational church leadership to stagnant churches—which is what many of us are dealing with. You can purchase this book at the Study Center. Read the assigned chapters and answer the selected questions at the end of the chapters.

Note syllabus & class requirements—QUESTIONS?