




5TH GENERATION

THE NEW TESTAMENT IMPERATIVE

THE GENIUS OF
2 TIMOTHY 2:2
By Canon David Short



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IF OUR AIM IS TO FILL CANADA WITH THE TEACHING OF GOD'S WORD, IT IS NOT JUST A GOOD IDEA TO IDENTIFY AND TRAIN YOUNG PEOPLE WITH GIFTS FOR THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD OF GOD. IT IS IMPERATIVE.

Near the end of the New Testament era the Apostles wrote to local churches shaping them as incubators and greenhouses for growing Christian believers in all kinds of ministry. The foundation for the flourishing of spiritual gifts and growth into the image of Christ is the gospel, taught by those who are set aside for the ministry of the word. The Apostles' letters expect congregations to train some for the ministry of the word, for the health and growth of the whole church.



Artizo has made this widely recognized mandate our own. Writing to his beloved younger co-worker Timothy, the Apostle Paul commands him in the following terms:

“ You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.” [2Tim. 2:1-2]

When you consider that this letter closes with a plural greeting “Grace be with you,” [2Tim. 4:22] it is clear that the Apostle expects the letter to be read aloud and treasured by the entire congregation. This is important because it takes a church to raise up teachers of God’s word. It is not merely the work of the current minister

to find a replacement or provide succession planning. Nor is it primarily the role of denominational bodies to ensure a secure future. **It is of the utmost importance that this work is carried on by congregations to ensure the spread of the gospel and the ongoing health of the local congregation.**

In 2 Timothy, the Apostle knows he is going to die soon. He writes to ensure that the gospel will not be damaged or lost, for there are many challenges. He knows it is not enough to merely believe the gospel as taught; nor merely to proclaim the gospel clearly in this generation—it must be passed on to the next generation by entrusting the gospel to others, who will be able to teach others also.

This means the gospel is death defying. Not just because it brings us eternal life through Jesus Christ, but because we defy the power of death by training up others who are able to pass the gospel of life to the next generation. It is a critical investment of our time, prayer and resources. It is a clear New Testament expectation, priority and imperative.

Many commentators point out the four-fold link chain involved to move the gospel forward through time.

LINK 1

The initial link was unique and unrepeatable. It is the day when **the risen Lord Jesus Christ himself revealed the gospel to Paul on the road to Damascus.**

This is why, earlier in the letter of 2 Timothy, the Apostle calls the gospel **“my gospel,”** and the gospel which “has been entrusted to me.” He pictures the good news about Jesus as a precious package to be delivered whole. When you are ‘entrusted’ with something, you simply must protect it and pass it on undamaged, entire and whole. Children were ‘entrusted’ to parents and guardians! The Apostle never forgot that day when he met the risen Christ on the road to Damascus. On that day, Jesus himself entrusted the gospel to Paul. So the gospel is not a human invention but comes directly from Jesus Christ himself. This is the first link in the chain.

LINK 2

The second link is from the Apostle Paul to Timothy: **“what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses.”** Young Timothy heard the gospel directly from the Apostle. But it was in the presence of many witnesses, which means that Paul was not just a talking head, passing on information. His life was open to Timothy and to other witnesses. They were able to see the reality of Paul’s faith in Christ in the different circumstances of his life. This second link was not a secret covert communication, passed on privately. It included public instruction over a number of months and years.

Timothy worked beside Paul, travelling with him and watching him react under stress. In it all he saw the power of the gospel at work. The Apostle uses the same language to describe this second link when he encourages Timothy to **“guard the good deposit entrusted to you.” 1:14.**

LINK 3

The urgent command Paul gives Timothy is to **take what he has heard from the Apostle and entrust [it] to faithful men.** Each link is crucial, but this third link is vital for Timothy to grasp and put into practice. It is not enough for Timothy and the congregation to know the gospel. It is not enough for him to preach or even just to suffer for it. He must take the gospel and entrust it whole to others. Without this link the gospel will not move forward to the generation after Timothy. It is the New Testament imperative for equipping and training leaders for teaching the word of God.

The Apostle instructs Timothy that he should be looking for a particular kind of leader with two qualifications. The first qualification is that they are “faithful.” Not the tallest, smartest, best looking; not the most gifted, charismatic, attractive; not those who have the gift of the gab, or who can draw a crowd or who are impressive outwardly: but the faithful. This means more than simply believing the gospel or having Christian faith. It means having a life that demonstrably conforms to that faith. People who you can see are under the rule of Christ, whose lives demonstrate the dynamic of the gospel. This is ordinary Christian consistency. People who exhibit the fruit of the Spirit.

Whatever gifts these **“faithful men”** have they must be accompanied by depth and reliability of Christian character, which is the fruit of the gospel in their lives. It is no use seeking to equip and train people to lead, feed and guard congregations in the gospel through thick and thin, if their lives are not under the control of that same gospel. It is why apprenticeship is so important. Link 3 is not so much mastering content, but being mastered by Christ. In the busy round of ministry Timothy is to find time and to prioritize the work of entrusting the gospel to other leaders.

LINK 4

The second qualification Timothy is to look for is that these younger leaders **“will be able to teach others also.”** In all the lists of qualifications for bible teachers in the New Testament there is only one gift mentioned: the ability to teach others. This makes sense. If the gospel is the revelation of Jesus Christ which Jesus entrusted to Paul; then Paul entrusted it to Timothy; now Timothy must entrust this same gospel in its entirety to those who will be able to do the same. This is how the gospel defies death. When Paul dies he leaves Timothy, and when Timothy dies he leaves **“faithful men”**. And when they die they leave **“others also”** who are able to entrust the gospel right down the generations until it reaches us.

LINK 5

The challenge then, for every fresh generation of Christians, is to be link 5. If others had not passed on the gospel faithfully to us, we would still be in darkness. We have heard the gospel and believe the gospel because of the long chain of **“others”** who have continued the work of faithfully entrusting the gospel to those who are able to teach others.

This is why Artizo exists. To enable us to obey this New Testament imperative to entrust the gospel to the next generation. To identify, train and send young leaders equipped with the same gospel Jesus entrusted to the Apostle Paul, for the health of the church and the saving of many. For this we depend on each other and on Christ Jesus. The Apostle is entirely aware that this is a supernatural work and the resources for it are not our natural gifts. So he writes with affection and urgency to Timothy **“You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”** This is the grace which is revealed in the gospel, and comes to us today from the living Jesus. We thank God for those who have taken part in this chain over the years – and for what he has done through Artizo. And we look to Christ for our future.

Artizo
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Artizo aims to renew the culture of churches in Canada to effect the New Testament imperative to proclaim the gospel and entrust it to future generations.

Artizo provides an intensive hands-on 2-year apprenticeship program. The comprehensive curriculum focuses on mentoring and equipping future ministers and leaders to faithfully proclaim the gospel and in turn entrust it to others.

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