# Looking Back to Move Forward

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Preacher: Dave Turner

[0:00] Lord, we are so grateful to be with you this morning. Lord, we don't deserve to be yours. We're not Christians because we're clever.! And so we bring you ourselves this morning.

Say, Lord, won't you open your word? Won't you help by your spirit that it would be implanted in us and be useful in our daily lives and in our worship? We ask that in Jesus' name.
Amen. All right. Now, I have to do something with our technology. Ta-da! All right. And yes, that is me with my cap on back to front.
Everybody laughs at me, but it is how it works. All right? Okay. At this time of the year, most of us are kind of thinking, if you're like me, like what happened in December? It was just such a blur.
I think the sugar rush from Christmas meals and all that stuff will be over in about February for me.
But the reality is we need to take stock from time to time.
[1:18] So it's not just looking backwards. We also need to look forward. It's a great Christian thing to do. In fact, it's a biblical thing to do. What God has done in the past and looking forward. If God did this, if God is like that, then we can trust God for this.

But there's also very practical applications. Not just theoretical. It's practical. So I want to turn with you to a text in 2 Timothy 4, verse 1 to 5.
And I'm going to read it for you. Now, Paul's writing this. I'll give you a little bit of context. To a younger, not young anymore, but a younger pastor who's been ministering, brought up by Paul in the faith, and put in place in ministry by Paul.
And now, in Paul's later years, probably the mid-60s of the first century, Paul knows he's not got much longer to live.
It's probably written from one of his imprisonments. And it wasn't his first. It was probably his second imprisonment. The one from which he didn't survive. And he writes to this younger pastor in whom he's invested time and energy and sees fruitfulness and wants to encourage him.
[2:31] And that's the context in which this charge comes. It's not just flying out. It's coming from a long relationship. When you read the letter, it's full of connection and relationship.

Paul is very warm, fatherly and brotherly relationship with Timothy. And he writes this to Timothy. It's almost like Paul's last will and testament for this younger pastor.
I charge you in the presence of God and of Jesus Christ, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom, preach the word.
Be ready in season and out of season. Reprove, rebuke, and exhort with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.
As for you, always be sober-minded. Endure suffering. Do the work of an evangelist. Fulfill your ministry. And the very next verse, which we're not going to read, Paul says, For I'm already being poured out as a drink offering, and I know that my time is not much longer.
[3:49] So he's coming to that place where he's wanting to distill into a single statement something that this younger pastor can run with and can pass on to the next generations.

And I feel a little bit like a fraud because I've got two other very senior pastoral workers and guys who have been in ministry for a long time here.
So I hope I'm not taking coals to Newcastle, Hillmar, Ashley. But for younger people, I want to say to you, don't live your life waiting for something to happen.
Ask God what he wants you to do and go and do it. Okay, I'm going to just, you know, I can stop now. Now, it's time for boldness and courage.

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It's not time to just be an also-ran, part of the herd. Find out what God's got for you. Right. Now, looking backwards, this is my matric class from 1974.
[4:49] Right? I'm not going to ask you to spot where I am. But that was my matric class, how we were in 1974. And two years ago now, we had our 50th reunion.

And that's how we are. You know, I must admit that it was more easy to get down and need at the front than it was to get back up again. And between those times, there are seasons of life.
And as we were reconnecting with each other, I hadn't seen most of those guys for the best part of 50 years. And just reconnecting with guys and seeing what we were and what we are.
There have been seasons. Some guys, I have to say, it didn't seem to have changed much at all. I mean, physically, yes. But maturity-wise, the jokes were the same old tired, nonsensical jokes.
And some guys were just totally wrapped up in how much they'd accumulated. And everybody was posturing about how much money they had or didn't have. And it was very irritating.
[5:52] Because I don't have much money to posture about. So, and it doesn't really interest me. But the reality is I looked at some guys and I thought, there's a difference.

There's one guy, he's a farmer in Namibia now.
And it was always his passion to be a farmer. And he's an incredibly successful farmer. But when I knew him, he was a very unsuccessful scholar.
He was not a brain surgeon. But now he's a very successful. He pursued what he felt he wanted to do. Now, I'm not saying we must all become farmers.
But what I'm saying is something that God's put in us that will resonate with his call upon us. Hold that thought. There's something in us that will resonate with his call upon us.
[6:52] So what happens sometimes, I'm not a musician. But I have been on stages a great deal in my life. And I have noticed that when guys play tunes, sometimes a guitar standing by itself begins to hum quietly by itself.

When it's in sync or in tune. It doesn't stand up and play. I'm just saying if you listen, the strings are doing whatever strings do. They're not vibrating. All right? Because there's a connection between this one and this one.
They're on the same wavelength. And what we've got to do is understand when you really catch what we were praying about earlier, God's called us into a mission. There's something in us that begins to hum with the same vibration.
It's not going new agey. With what's in God's heart. Our hearts begin to connect with God's heart. We begin to say, what is this thing? So let's tease out some of the principles that Paul is passing on to Timothy.
I know he's a pastor. Not everybody can be up here. So I'm going to give you an illustration quickly. And then we're going to just run through our text so you can take it into 2026.
[8:01] So that's what I want to do with my life. I can't give you all the answers to your life. You're going to have to work them out with God. When I was at Bible college, I was in Cork Bay at BI.

And I was walking down the road to the harbor on my way to catch a train somewhere. And it was really early in the morning. It was the very first train.
And in those days, Cork Bay wasn't the cool village it is now. It was a fishing village. I'm that old.
And the fishing boats were coming back in. They'd been out from about 3.34 in the morning.
They were coming back into the harbor. And they had their catch with them. And they pulled up.
They tied themselves up to the wharf or whatever they do, whatever boats do.
You know what I'm talking about. I don't know what the correct terminology is. They throw a big rope over and some guy ties it around a bollard. Got that? All right. I'm just making sure you're with me.
[9:03] I know it's New Year and you're all tired, so I'm just trying to keep you awake. All right? And then they just jumped off. The fishermen jumped off and walked.

And there was one or two left on the boat. And then the young guys from the village, the 13, 14-year-olds who were too young to go fishing, they were coming down the hill while these guys were going back to sleep.
And they were the ones under the guidance of some older guys and one or two of the fishermen were pulling the nets off the boat full of fish and were getting everything prepared.
Taking the nets, sorting out whatever they do with nets. And then, that took a little while, and then I noticed the women had come down. Some women had come down and they were putting the fish

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into different boxes. They were sorting.
And there was another bunch of them that came and they were slicing and dicing whatever they do with fish. I'm not a great fish eater. All right? The whole village, the point, and then, by the way, then they spent all the pretty girls to go and sell it.
[10:02] All right? The point is the entire village was involved with the fishing. But nobody would say, I'm a fisherman, other than those that went out.

But the entire village was a fishing village. The church is not individual anglers, each with their own rod, with their thing, trying to catch a fish in the river.
When he says, I will make you fishers of men, he's thinking about the community of fishing. We all have different gifts and different ways of relating. And when we are called out, it's important that we understand our role is to be together as the people of God on this fishing venture of mission to reach the lost.
I will make you fishers of men. So it's a corporate thing. So you've got to individualize and say, where do I fit in? So here Paul is writing to Timothy.
I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearance and his kingdom. Our lives are accountable.
[11:12] So if you are a Christian and a follower of Jesus Christ here, you're accountable to God. This is not a heavy. It's a wonderful thing because I don't know about you, but before I came to Christ, my life was just, I didn't know what I was called to be.

I just knew I liked a lot of things. I didn't know about a lot of things, and I was confused about most things. And then Jesus came into my life, and I suddenly realized there's a whole lot of stuff I never had in the right perspective.
I didn't have it. There was no, my life was like a jigsaw puzzle that had been poured on the floor. All the pieces, and everyone had color, and I didn't know how to fit them together because I had no picture into which I could clip these things and make the picture.
Somebody had stolen the picture. And what's happening in the world, somebody's stolen the picture and substituted an alternative.
And life doesn't work because the bits don't fit. But when you begin to realize that in the will of God, under his word, all the bits of our lives begin to take shape, and we connect to others into a wonderful picture of God's grace.
[12:27] Everybody who knows Jesus Christ is a trophy of grace. That's you, and that's certainly me. I know what I was. And I know what it means to be changed, to be rescued, to be forgiven.

So we have this accountability. So we have purpose. We account to God for the way we reflect his will and his ways into this fallen, broken, beautiful, but really confused and rebellious world.
And so when I was reading that, I thought, look, this actually came out of one of my devotions. I was reading that thinking, okay, Lord, now, how do I do that? This charge, what do I do? We've got to lead a life of proclamation.
Right? Verse 2, preach the word. But not everybody is a preacher. I'm so tempted to tell you a story, but I don't have the time.
All right. Preach the word. Now, there's different ways to preach. You can sit having coffee with somebody and just let it come, let it happen.
[13:35] Or you can be somebody who stands in the pulpit and shares however you do it, whatever your style is, whatever God's made you to be. Right? Okay, I will tell you the story.

I used to have what I used to call third-party evangelism. I had a friend every lunchtime we met together. I was in secular employment at that stage. And we would catch lifts in our building.
We would go up the lift, and he would stand on that side, and we'd wait for somebody to come in. And then we'd pretend to continue a conversation. I'd say, Paul, so how was, how did you find this sermon yesterday? And we just had this conversation about a sermon that had the gospel in it. And he'd say, yeah, but I didn't understand that point about what it means not to come to Christ because you're clever. And we'd have this conversation, and then people overhear it. And then as we were getting up there, I would say, I know you're all laughing.
I know I'm weird. Just get over it. I'm not known as subtle. I don't do subtle very well. And then I would just say to people, I'm sorry we're having this conversation, and you're welcome to chip in.
[14:40] It's just that we're quite passionate about this, so just forgive us, and we'll carry on with our conversation. You'll be amazed how many people stayed in the lift beyond their floor to ask a

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question.

Because there's a hunger out there. That when they see the bait of the gospel, something stirs by the Holy Spirit inside them. I can't convict them.
He convicts them. But our role is to share something and to be an attractional bunch. Say, it's real. It doesn't make us perfect. Our lives need to speak of something.
Let's make sure it's speaking about the right thing. Carrying on in verse 2. We've got to be prepared. It said, be ready in season and out of season. In other words, with preparedness, you've got to, I don't know who plays cricket here, but you've got to learn to be on the front foot.
I'm ready to attack, not just defend. I'm ready to go for it. I'm in the position where if the gap opens up, I know how I'm going to say something and what I'm going to say and what's appropriate for this time.
[15:52] Not going for the jugular, but knowing we're trying to find out where that person's at and where they are, helping them take another step forward. We've got to be prepared, if we're going to do this mission God's called us on, to step onto the front foot.

And help people see where they are, where God wants them to go. Which requires conviction and courage. The very next part of that same verse, verse 2, it says, reprove, rebuke, and exhort.
So reprove means, basically, don't do it like that. Now this is often about Christians. Now remember, this is the discipleship context. Can I just say, it's nothing better than discipleship when you're going to do something for God.
You learn your faults very quickly. But you also learn that God overrides our faults. And he uses, as our young pastor, Bongo, says to us, he uses crooked sticks to draw straight lines.
So if you feel like, I'm still so crooked, he can use you to draw a straight line. Don't worry. You're not going to break the gospel. You're a trophy of grace.
[17:02] You're not perfect. Reprove. Basically, he says, don't do it like that. That clock's broken. How long ago was that battery doing?

Rats. Okay. Moving on. That just means I've got less time than I thought. Which means you're going to waste longer than you want. So, reprove means don't do it like that.
I was, I made a commitment to Jesus Christ on a Friday night. I didn't know what to do. On a Saturday morning, I said, be at this shopping center. We're meeting there. I arrived at the shopping center.
They handed me a very subtle, big banner that says, turn or burn, repent or perish. Something as subtle as that. And it was not subtle. And so, I thought, whoa, I'm in the spotlight.
And so, I went as far away as I could from the guy shouting at people. And I stood on the corner with my banner up. And I thought, I can, you know, I just stand here and hide kind of behind the banner.
[18:06] And then he said, that young man over there, he made a commitment to Christ yesterday. What happened? And I looked around for this young man and I realized he was talking about me. Now, let me help you.

That's not the way to do it. I got through it. I didn't die. I don't think I broke anybody. I don't think anybody stopped being Christian because I've bumbled my way through my little testimony.
But I learned there's better ways of doing it than that. But don't be scared when you step out. You step out where you're comfortable. I certainly wasn't comfortable. All right? So, reprove is, don't do it that way.
Rebuke is, stop doing it that way. And exhort is, do it this way. Make sense? And trust me, if you've been in pastoral work for a while, you will know.
You sometimes need to say to people, stop doing it that way. It's not working. And then you've got to say to them a couple of months later, look, and now you really have to stop. And then you've got to say, do it this way rather because it'll work better.
[19:05] All right, make disciples with complete, sorry, that's the wrong slide. It says, with complete patience and teaching.

So, what happens in this discipleship process when people start falling over because they need to erect a proper worldview? There's nothing more powerful, sadly, than a worldview that is pre-conscious.
I don't want to get too academic because I know it's the early part of January. But our worldviews are most powerful when we're not aware of why we see things that way.

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We all grow up with a worldview. Everybody's got one. But we have to tease out as we come to Christ which bits of our worldview that we've inherited and adjusted and come through culture, experience, etc.
Which bits are good and helpful in the purposes of God and which bits are actually out of balance, out of key, and sometimes downright wrong. And then we've got to actually deal with it.
[20:08] Welcome to discipleship. So, when you're learning, you're trying to erect something that is solid. And if I might just say this, as a pastor, my job is to help people rub out their meh of their mistakes so that I get a stake in their future fruitfulness.

Make sense? I want to make sure by rebuking and correcting and exhorting that what they're doing comes into line with the Word of God so that they can be fruitful. I'm not just trying to create less pastoral issues.
I'm trying to create an effective, balanced, grounded, real believer who knows their weaknesses because, boy, we've all got them.
And when you have somebody who doesn't have them, please look out, they do. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions.
And will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. If there ever was a passage that seems to define, and previously in chapter 2, our generation welcome to it.
[21:26] Read it. She said, well, look, read it. I was going to say read it and weep, but just read it.
The time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions.

And will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. You see, relevance and context is really, really important. We have to know how to share the gospel into the context in which we find ourselves.
And we, the church is no longer, I spent a decade in the UK amongst other places, ministering in the UK. It's a post-Christian country.
The young people growing up have no concept of difference between Buddha and Islam and Christianity and Judaism and any other religion.
They've got no concept. And so you can't use words that we would use here. That once we've learned, because they don't understand them.
[22:33] We have to know how to share our faith in a way that people can receive it without compromising the content. Because that's the world we live in.

And Paul was saying to Timothy, this is not an eschatological, this is not a prediction of Paul about the end times. This is Paul saying, you're going to be in this context, Timothy, and you need to know how to respond to this context.
So it's a very timious word for us. So he says, as for you, always be sober-minded. Don't run after the newest fad.
Recently I was at lunch on a Sunday after, I can't remember why I was there, but after Sunday service. And there was a lady there who had been fully anticipating the return of Jesus two weeks previous to that.
There was a whole thing about it, just in case you missed it. And she had the whole, she got dressed in white, she'd done everything, she was instructed, and she was waiting. And now she's saying, what happened?
[23:38] I said, well, you didn't understand the scripture where it says these are not times for you to know. Be ready at all times. Right? Sober judgment means ground yourself and work out what the scripture says.

Do it as a church within a bunch of believers and get it done. Be sober-minded. Don't be just driven by emotions. And I am pretty emotional, so I know what I'm talking about.
I want to say having to actually make sure your emotions... Emotions make wonderful servants. They are terrible masters. Let me repeat that.
It's quite profound. Servants... Emotions make fantastic servants, but they make terrible masters. You need to be the master of your emotions, not let your emotions master you.
If you can get that right, you will take a big step in maturity. Be sober-minded. Endure suffering. That's Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who died for his stance.

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[25:03] There are going to come times, guys, when we say, why are things so hard? Anybody gone through hard times recently? It's only me. You can put your hand up.

All right? Welcome to ministry. Welcome to living for God in a fallen, broken, and rebellious world. You will have hard times. Hang in there. That's why we need each other in hard times.
All right? Do the work of an evangelist. He doesn't say be an evangelist. He says do the work of an evangelist. Because evangelism is sharing the good news of the gospel with others so that they might place their trust in Jesus.
It's not shouting at people like I had to do on my first day as a Christian. All right? What a rubbish model was put in place. All right? I've soon discovered there were much better ways of doing it. Like catching a lift up and down and talking third party. And the wonderful thing of having people around for dinner because you like them. And just letting them ask why you're a believer.
[26:07] All right? Do the work of an evangelist. Remember, as you're planning your life in 2026, look for the opportunities that come. Fulfill your ministry.

Paul is running into the finishing tape of his own ministry. And as he leaves, he's about to leave. He knows he's not got much time left. He says to himself, what am I going to leave with my young protégé?
So let's go back and just make it. It says, preach the word. Be ready. Have conviction and courage. Make disciples by reproving, rebuking, correcting. Teach them. Be relevant. Be sober-minded. Put up with the suffering. Doesn't say you must enjoy it.
If you did enjoy it, it's no longer suffering. Okay? Do the work of an evangelist. And you will fulfill your ministry. And what we miss often, because we're westernized and individualized, is that happens because we are the church.
[27:17] It's not because me and Jesus. It's we and Jesus. There are some people who are really good at connecting with others. And there's some people who cringe. So if I might just ruin some people's evaluation.

I once went over to the UK to lead a church. And it was what I call a rosterized church. Everybody was on every roster in the church.
It was incredibly well organized on a wall chart. And about the third week I was there, there was a lady on the front door on the Welkin team that day. Her name was Betty.
And I could see she was cringing. Absolutely cringing. She didn't, she was so nervous and shy. She didn't want to shake people's heads.
And she was making all the visitors nervous and shy. So after the service, I said to her, Betty, can we talk? I said, you don't like being on the front door, do you? She says, I hate it.
[28:18] But I'm committed. And I thought, yes, you are. I said, well, what do you like? She said, I love running the kitchen. And I happened to notice that same day, just fortuitous, that the lady in charge of the kitchen was not interested in the kitchen at all that Sunday morning.

So I went to her and I said to her, listen, I don't think the kitchen's your thing, is it? She said, no, I do it all day at home. I want to meet people when I come to church and tell them about Jesus and just make them feel welcome.
I said, okay, you are never going to be in the kitchen again and Betty is never going to be on the door again. Betty's in charge of the kitchen and you're going to be in charge of the front door team. Because that is what you're gifted in.
That's where their little cords are resonating in the picture of the church being on mission. It's not just about, rosters are important.
You have to have organization. But you find where you fit and you do that with all your heart. And in your work, very last story.
[29:22] I once for Standard Bank for some reason gave me a job. And I was working in the Weinberg branch, which was then quite a big branch. And I realized after a while, a lot of these people are really broken who are working here.

It was a double story building. So every morning I'd get in really as early as possible. And I'd pray over every single chair and desk. I'd say, Lord, this person here, I don't know anything about them. If you want to gossip with me, Lord, you can. But just won't you please help them. And I'd go over every desk and just ask God. Before anybody was around. So nobody would see it. And yes, I know I'm a little weird.

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But you'll be amazed. I did a funeral two and a half years, three years ago now. And somebody said, you're not the Dave Turner who was at Weinberg Standard Bank. I said, yes.
My wife still talks about you. I said, what have I done wrong? She said, you were the guy who prayed for everybody. I said, yeah, that was me.
[30:24] She said, no. She made a big impression. And I've become a Christian as I'm at this church now where we were doing the funeral. You'll never know how long it takes for that seed you sow to germinate.

And it may be that you never actually see it yourself. We do it because we're faithful and we're called. This church is the oldest free church in this country.
Union Chapel. It was planted over 200 years ago on the basis of missions and the gospel. The priority of the word of God and the commission of God.
David Livingston, that's the table that he used to teach from over there. The great David Livingston. The London Missionary Society was based in this congregation.
Not in this building because it didn't exist yet. But in that congregation. And what I want to encourage you to do, Union Chapel, is be faithful to the foundations of the scripture and to the call upon this church.
[31:30] Missions and the gospel. Discipleship has those two heartbeats. Two ventricles. Learn to follow Christ and be like Christ. And share the gospel.

Be prepared in season and out of season. Be real. Don't be quite as crazy as I was. I made a lot of mistakes. Alright? Can we pray?
Can we pray? Lord, when we look back, we realize there's a finished work on Calvary.
When we look back, we realize our sins are atoned for. We are at one with God. Atoned. There is no judgment against us because you took our judgment fully upon yourself.
And offer us in return. The freedom and the sonship that you had by divine right. And by living a perfect life down here on earth.
[32:30] And we want to say to you this morning as we come into 2026, we take a step back. And we ask you to help us carry the gospel with us into the highways and byways of this nation.

Help us to be men and women, Lord, who know how to connect with others, with truth, in a way that's relevant, without compromise, but allows other people the dignity of their own journey to faith. Even as we pursue our journey of faith. So we give you 2026. Ask you to lead us. Guide us. And help us to be a fishing village in the purposes of your kingdom.
We ask that in Jesus' name. Amen.

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