

Empowered to Lead with Kevin Turner

Contents:

- Sermon Synopsis
- Sermon Highlights
- Scripture Verses
- Quotes from this episode
- 1 Bible Study – for personal or group study
- 3 Daily Devotions for further reflection

Sermon Synopsis

This episode of World Impact opens on the campus of Oral Roberts University, where Billy Wilson frames a central theme: God calls and equips leaders for influence across every sphere of life. Into that context, he introduces Kevin Turner, whose life journey reflects a progression shaped by both opportunity and conviction. Beginning as a teenage cashier at Walmart in southeastern Oklahoma, Turner's path unfolds through increasing leadership roles, including his rise to president of Sam's Club and later Chief Operating Officer of Microsoft. His work extended across global operations in more than 190 countries, overseeing tens of thousands of employees, and continues today through leadership roles connected to companies such as Albertsons Safeway and Zayo Group, along with ongoing engagement in artificial intelligence. Throughout these transitions, Turner's faith remains a steady foundation, shaping how he approached responsibility, pressure, and decision-making in high-level corporate environments.

The episode highlights practical leadership principles that emerged from Turner's experience. He describes a disciplined work ethic marked by long hours and a commitment to excellence, paired with an expectation of personal accountability. At the same time, he reflects on the cost of such intensity, acknowledging how years of demanding schedules affected his family life and led him to pursue a healthier integration of work and home. A defining practice became weekly family meetings centered on conversation, values, and intentional connection. The death of his father in 2009 is presented as a pivotal moment that deepened his faith and reshaped his priorities. Mentorship also plays a key role, particularly the influence of Stephen Covey, whose emphasis on discipline, listening, and relational leadership informed Turner's approach.

From the interview, a set of guiding principles emerges. Turner speaks of "divine discontent," a continual drive to improve; the balance of toughness and tenderness in leadership; and the importance of coachability over credentials. He emphasizes a progression of listening, learning, and then leading, grounded in the idea that authority without relationship leads to resistance. His practical counsel includes acting in moments of uncertainty, learning quickly when lacking knowledge, and taking responsibility when entrusted with opportunity. He encourages leaders to measure their daily impact

and to cultivate purpose through consistent, incremental progress. In addressing technology, Turner underscores the importance of engaging with advancements such as artificial intelligence, viewing them as tools that expand influence and efficiency rather than threats to be avoided.

Throughout the episode, Dr. Wilson connects these leadership insights to a broader spiritual framework, emphasizing the role of the Holy Spirit in empowering effective leadership. The discussion presents leadership not only as a set of skills but as a calling shaped by character, discipline, and faith. The episode concludes by encouraging viewers to pursue integrity in both personal and professional life, to allow challenges to strengthen rather than diminish faith, and to approach leadership as an opportunity to serve others while remaining attentive to spiritual guidance.

Sermon Highlights

- Relentless work ethic and the extra mile — Kevin made a decision: no one will outwork him. That diligence positioned him for promotion, yet the sermon warns against idolizing overwork; serve the Lord in your labor.
- Work–life harmony and family rhythms — make intentional practices that build legacy: Kevin's Sunday night, no-screen family meetings modeled values, listening, goal-setting, and reconciliation. Lead your home with the same discipline and tenderness you bring to the workplace.
- Faith as foundation and integrity in the marketplace — Kevin refused to compromise his Christian convictions even in high corporate places. Suffering and loss doubled down his devotion and reliance on God's power.
- Practical leadership DNA to adopt now — cultivate divine discontent (relentless improvement), be tough and tender with wisdom, choose coachability over credentials, and follow the sequence: listen, learn, then lead.
- Embrace technology as stewardship — do not fear AI; learn and use it to reclaim time and multiply your impact. Be wise stewards of your gifts and tools so your service to others is increased.

Scripture Verses

- Colossians 3:23 NIV: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters."
- Acts 1:8 NIV: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you..."
- Proverbs 1:5 NIV: "let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance."
- 1 Peter 4:10 NIV: "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others..."

Quotes

- "Most of all, we wanna help you be empowered by God to be a leader in our generation."
- Dr. Billy Wilson
- "I just decided that I wasn't going to let people outwork me." - Kevin Turner
- "It's not about work-life balance, that it's about work-life harmony, that they both have to complement each other." - Kevin Turner
- "The reason I'm bringing that up is that was a seminal moment for me to double down on my faith." - Kevin Turner
- "When God places his hand on you he has a purpose for your life, and when you live that purpose out you will be empowered to lead." - Dr. Billy Wilson

Bible Study

Objectives

- Recognize how God uses ordinary beginnings to raise extraordinary leaders, as seen in Kevin Turner's journey from a Walmart cashier to COO of Microsoft.
- Apply biblical leadership principles—toughness + tenderness, listen → learn → lead, coachability, and divine discontent—to daily life and the workplace.
- Practice work-life harmony rooted in faith and intentional family rhythms (e.g., regular family meetings).
- Take practical steps this week to become more coachable, more impactful, and to steward time and technology (including AI) for Kingdom influence.

Reading and Reflections

- Colossians 3:23-24 (NIV): "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving." — Reflect on Kevin Turner's ethic of outworking others as God-honoring service, not mere careerism.
- James 1:19 (NIV): "My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry." — Consider the sermon emphasis on listen → learn → lead; listening is the leadership foundation.
- Matthew 5:41 (NIV): "If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles." — Reflect on 'the extra mile' habit Kevin described: do more than you are asked; let it be worshipful work.
- Proverbs 22:6 (NIV): "Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it." — Think about Kevin's Sunday family meetings: intentional spiritual rhythms shape a generation.
- Proverbs 27:17 (NIV): "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." — Meditate on coachability and the need for feedback as the 'breakfast of champions.'
- Psalm 34:18 (NIV): "The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." — Revisit the moment Kevin doubled down on faith after his father's sudden death; God meets us in loss.

Key Observations

- God uses humble starts: a cashier's job became a throne-room of influence because faithfulness met opportunity.
- Divine discontent is holy restlessness: a God-given dissatisfaction that drives continual improvement without losing heart.
- Toughness and tenderness must coexist; the leader knows when to apply discipline and when to show compassion.

- Coachability outranks credentials; titles do not exempt anyone from receiving correction and learning.
- Work-life harmony is achieved by design (regular rhythms, family meetings, boundaries), not by accident.
- Listening first builds influence; people follow leaders who connect to both head and heart.
- Technology (AI) is a gifted tool — steward it to multiply time and influence, not to replace kingdom priorities.

Personal Reflections

- I see my own calling when I remember Colossians 3:23-24: my daily work is service to Christ—this reframes pressure into worship.
- When I feel intimidated by a new assignment, I recall Kevin’s practice: leap into action, learn while doing, and trust God for skill.
- I am convicted to create family rhythms that protect my home—one weekly meeting can build trust and values across generations.
- I will intentionally seek feedback this week from a colleague, asking them to sharpen me as iron sharpens iron.
- I must guard against pride: no matter my title, I will remain teachable and quick to listen (James 1:19).

Lessons for Daily Life

- Do the next right thing faithfully: excellence is often quiet and consistent, and God rewards faithful work (Colossians 3:23-24).
- Turn divine discontent into daily improvement: pick one task and be 1% better this week than last week.
- Lead with both strength and compassion: discipline people toward excellence and restore them with grace.
- Practice work-life harmony: set sacred times and boundaries so family and calling reinforce one another.
- Adopt a listening posture: begin meetings asking questions rather than giving directions.

Practical Applications

- Household: Start a weekly 30–60 minute family meeting (no screens). Use Stephen Covey’s simple agenda: check-in, values conversation, goals, and a note-taker.
- Workplace: This week ask three trusted coworkers, "Where can I improve?" and take notes. Thank them for honesty and act on one piece of feedback.
- Spiritual: After a personal loss or trial, lean into Psalm 34:18—schedule time to sit with God and name the pain; invite a mature believer to pray with you.
- Leadership: Identify one process you lead; apply 'divine discontent'—pick one measurable improvement to deliver in 30 days.

- AI/Tools: Spend two 30-minute sessions this week learning one AI assistant (for drafting emails, summarizing meetings, or generating study outlines). Use it to free 2 hours for prayer, mentoring, or family.
- Formation: Build a personal 'read, reflect, respond' routine—read a scripture (5–10 minutes), journal a reflection (5–10 minutes), then list one action to take that day.

Challenges for the Week

- Family Meeting Challenge: Hold your first family meeting this.
- Coachability Challenge: Ask three people (one peer, one subordinate, one supervisor) for honest feedback. Take notes and choose one improvement to implement immediately.
- Divine Discontent Challenge: Choose one work process and improve it by 1% each workday this week — log the change and the time saved.
- AI Experiment Challenge: Spend two 30-minute sessions learning one AI tool and use it to create a time-saving template (email, report, or study guide).
- Sabbath/Boundary Challenge: Enforce one clear boundary this week (e.g., no work email after 8:00 p.m. or an uninterrupted family meal twice this week).

Further Study

- Read Colossians, James, and Philippians slowly this month, journaling how each passage speaks to leadership habits.
- Study Proverbs (chapters 1–31) for practical wisdom on character, discipline, and counsel.
- Reflect on Hebrews 12:1-2 for perseverance: identify one long-term spiritual discipline to renew for the race set before you.
- Read Dr. Billy Wilson's "Empowered to Lead" for Spirit-empowered leadership principles that pair Jesus' model with practical ministry and marketplace application.
- Explore leadership biographies—include stories like Sam Walton's work ethic and Kevin Turner's life—to see how faith and leadership intersect in real lives.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank You for ordinary beginnings and Your power to turn faithful service into far-reaching influence. Lord, anoint us with courage to work heartily for You, wisdom to listen before we lead, and humility to receive correction. Help us steward our time and technology so that our work reflects Christ's kingdom. Give us the strength to be both tough and tender; grant us the discipline to pursue excellence and the grace to restore. Comfort those who mourn as Psalm 34:18 promises, and renew our families through intentional rhythms of prayer, conversation, and service. Send Your Holy Spirit to empower our daily choices so we become leaders who multiply righteousness, mercy, and truth. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

This content available for use under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial license.

