

Empowered to Lead with Kevin Turner

Bible Glossary, People & Places

Kevin Turner

Sermon Reference

Guest of Dr. Billy Wilson on "World Impact." Described rising from a Walmart cashier in southeastern Oklahoma to CIO at Walmart, president/CEO of Sam's Club, and Chief Operating Officer of Microsoft; currently vice director of Albertsons Safeway and chair of Zayo Group. Testified to living Christian faith, family practices (Sunday family meetings), and leadership principles (divine discontent, tough and tender, coachability, listen-learn-lead, work-life harmony, AI).

Background Context

Kevin Turner is presented in the program as a modern exemplar of workplace leadership exercised from a Christian footing. The transcript traces his career arc: starting as a nineteen-year-old cashier in a Walmart in southeastern Oklahoma, rising through Walmart's ranks, then leading Sam's Club as president and CEO, and later being recruited by Bill Gates to serve as Chief Operating Officer at Microsoft. The program emphasizes his operational leadership over tens of thousands of employees and across nearly two hundred countries, framing his story as one of disciplined work, strategic leadership habits, and faith-integrated living.

The program recounts biographical markers given there: growing up in southeastern Oklahoma; family challenges including his mother's departure when he was four and the formative influence of his father; a marriage of thirty-six years and three children; and an account of redoubling his faith following his father's unexpected death in 2009. Turner's practical leadership principles—working the extra mile, refusing to be outworked, family meetings, coachability, divine discontent, and the tough-and-tender balance—are tied to specific anecdotes of his career.

For the believer watching, Turner is offered as a prototype of Christian witness lived in the marketplace: maintaining integrity, prioritizing family rhythms (weekly family meetings), integrating faith after personal loss, and stewarding influence in corporate settings. The program frames his life as testimony that God can use ordinary beginnings to equip leaders who change organizations and industries.

Dr. Billy Wilson (President Wilson)

Sermon Reference

Host of "World Impact," president of Oral Roberts University (ORU). Introduces Kevin Turner, frames the program's goal of empowering leaders by the Holy Spirit, plugs his book "Empowered to Lead," and conducts the interview. Uses first-person pastoral tone and closes the broadcast with prayer and exhortation.

Background Context

As president of Oral Roberts University, Dr. Billy Wilson occupies a role that blends academic leadership, pastoral oversight, and evangelical ministry. He is a seasoned leader who curates conversations on Spirit-empowered leadership, bringing guests from business and cultural life to articulate practical principles that believers can apply in every sphere of influence. Dr. Wilson champions the idea that vocational success and faithfulness to Christian convictions can—and must—coexist, and he models pastoral encouragement and practical counsel.

Dr. Wilson anchors the program in ORU's institutional identity: educating leaders who will take the message of the kingdom into every sphere. He advertises resources (his book) and ORU programs, and he uses the interview to demonstrate how academic institutions can partner with marketplace leaders to form discipleship for vocation and leadership.

Bill Gates

Sermon Reference

Mentioned as the person who personally recruited Kevin Turner to run Microsoft's global operations.

Background Context

Bill Gates is identified in the program as the co-founder of Microsoft and the executive who recruited Kevin Turner to join Microsoft's leadership. In real-world context, Gates founded Microsoft in the 1970s and led the company through the personal-computing revolution; his name evokes the entrepreneurial and technological rise that shaped late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century business.

For believers listening, the Gates anecdote underscores providential openings in professional life—how integrity, competence, and perseverance may bring opportunities to serve in arenas where faith can also be lived out. Gates is not presented as a spiritual figure but as a gate through which vocational influence and platform opened for Turner.

Sam Walton

Sermon Reference

Referenced as the originator of the principle 'divine discontent'—a relentless drive to improve that motivated Walton and helped build Walmart into the largest company in the world.

Background Context

Sam Walton founded Walmart in 1962, emphasizing low prices, operational discipline, and a culture of constant improvement; those attributes are central to how the speaker explains Turner's own work ethic. In the interview Walton's mindset is invoked to explain practical leadership orientation: being insatiably committed to doing things better without letting the drive become a corrosive dissatisfaction. Walton's doctrine of daily improvement influenced the culture inside Walmart and Sam's Club and is used by Turner as a motivating force and cultural artifact that shaped his career.

Walton's role in corporate history places him among the most consequential retail founders in modern American history. His approach to operations, store-level empowerment, and relentless focus on customers made Walmart a defining institution in late-20th-century retail, altering supply chains, pricing models, and labor markets.

Stephen R. Covey (Steven Covey)

Sermon Reference

Described as a mentor to Kevin Turner who advised him to hold family meetings, set values, and practice goal setting—practical counsel Kevin followed for his family.

Background Context

Stephen R. Covey is referenced in the program as a formative mentor to Kevin Turner. Covey, author of 'The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People' and a prominent leadership educator, influenced millions with principles linking character, habits, and leadership effectiveness. Covey's counsel—instituting weekly family meetings with ground rules, note-taking, and annual goal setting—becomes a concrete pastoral practice Turner implemented with his children.

Covey's work rests on integrating moral character with practical habits: clarity of values, prioritization, and relational discipline. Covey's influence in business and church contexts is long-standing. In the program, he serves as a credible source of vocational wisdom whose practices bridge leadership formation and family discipleship.

Oral Roberts University (ORU)

Sermon Reference

Site of the broadcast and the campus where the interview took place. The host (Dr. Billy Wilson) is the university president. Several ORU programs and centers are mentioned (Fenimore and Fisher College of Business, Stovall Center, ORU Flex, the institute for emerging technology).

Background Context

Oral Roberts University is the institutional home of the broadcast, a Christian university founded to integrate faith and learning. In this program ORU serves as both setting and theological frame: leadership is taught as Spirit-empowered vocation, and ORU's academic units are presented as training grounds for marketplace influence.

Fenimore and Fisher College of Business (FFCOB)

Sermon Reference

ORU's college of business preparing students with practical, real-world experience, internships, and partnerships; manages graduate-level opportunities and the student-managed investment fund.

Background Context

The Fenimore and Fisher College of Business is described as the ORU business school that equips students with practical, real-world experience—internships, career fairs, boardroom-style pitch competitions, and a student-managed investment fund. It is presented as a formation environment that prepares students to lead ethically in commerce and finance. The college's offerings—graduate acceleration, Bloomberg Terminal training, and faculty-supported startup incubation through the Stovall Center—establish the college as a bridge between classroom learning and marketplace impact. Its mission is vocational formation for kingdom-minded business leaders.

Stovall Center for Entrepreneurship

Sermon Reference

Named as the ORU center supporting student entrepreneurship, helping teams prepare pitches and connect with real investors.

Background Context

The Stovall Center is presented as ORU's hub for entrepreneurship, mentoring student ventures, organizing pitch competitions, and providing connections to investors and real-world clients. The center's practical support includes mentoring, workspace, and access to networks that accelerate young entrepreneurs. It serves as evidence of ORU's commitment to equipping students to launch businesses that can impact communities and markets. The center's role in facilitating real client projects and pitch competitions underscores a pedagogy centered on applied learning and market testing.

Church of Christ (Turner's upbringing)

Sermon Reference

Kevin Turner is said to have grown up in the Church of Christ and to have been baptized there—his faith tradition in early life.

Background Context

In the United States, Churches of Christ are typically characterized by congregational autonomy, an emphasis on New Testament patterns of church life, and practices such as believer's baptism by immersion. The church helped Turner's longevity in faith practice and to locate his moral formation within a Christian community. Turner's durability of belief and an early grounding in biblical values to this ecclesial background.

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