

Paul's Later Letters

Fully Establishing the Churches According to Christ's Design

Ongoing Shaping of Apostolic Networks

2 Timothy shaped my entire training process.

it started on the back of a napkin, exactly 50 years ago this month, when we came to Ames, about 6 weeks after we were married.

I realize now, that napkin was “the new perspective on Paul” in embryo form.

About the same time, E. P. Sanders wrote the seminal work starting “the new perspective on Paul” movement.

And about the same time, the China house church movements were born.

This is going to be a very interesting session.

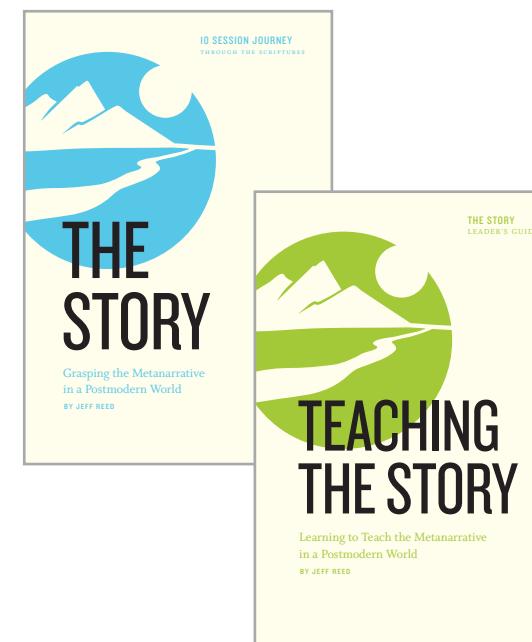
Paul's Later Letters

Issue: Ongoing Shaping of Apostolic Networks

Questions:

1. What did Paul mean when he challenged Timothy to “carry out his ministry fully”? Did it include any of the functions Paul currently carried out in his network of churches?
2. What conditions could Timothy expect as he assumed major responsibility within Paul’s complex apostolic network?
3. What main ministry responsibilities did Timothy have to carry out throughout his ministry, regardless of the current cultural situation or times?
4. In what sense is 2 Timothy a topos within Paul’s later letters? In what sense is it a framework or schema for training all future intergenerational key apostolic leaders?

New Perspective on Paul



Kerygma
Early Acts
Apostles' Teaching
6 months
Paul: 3 years “night and day”

Didache
Body of Acts
Theology of Paul
1½ years

Full Kerygma
After Acts
Apostles' Gospels
1 year



Paul's Later Letters



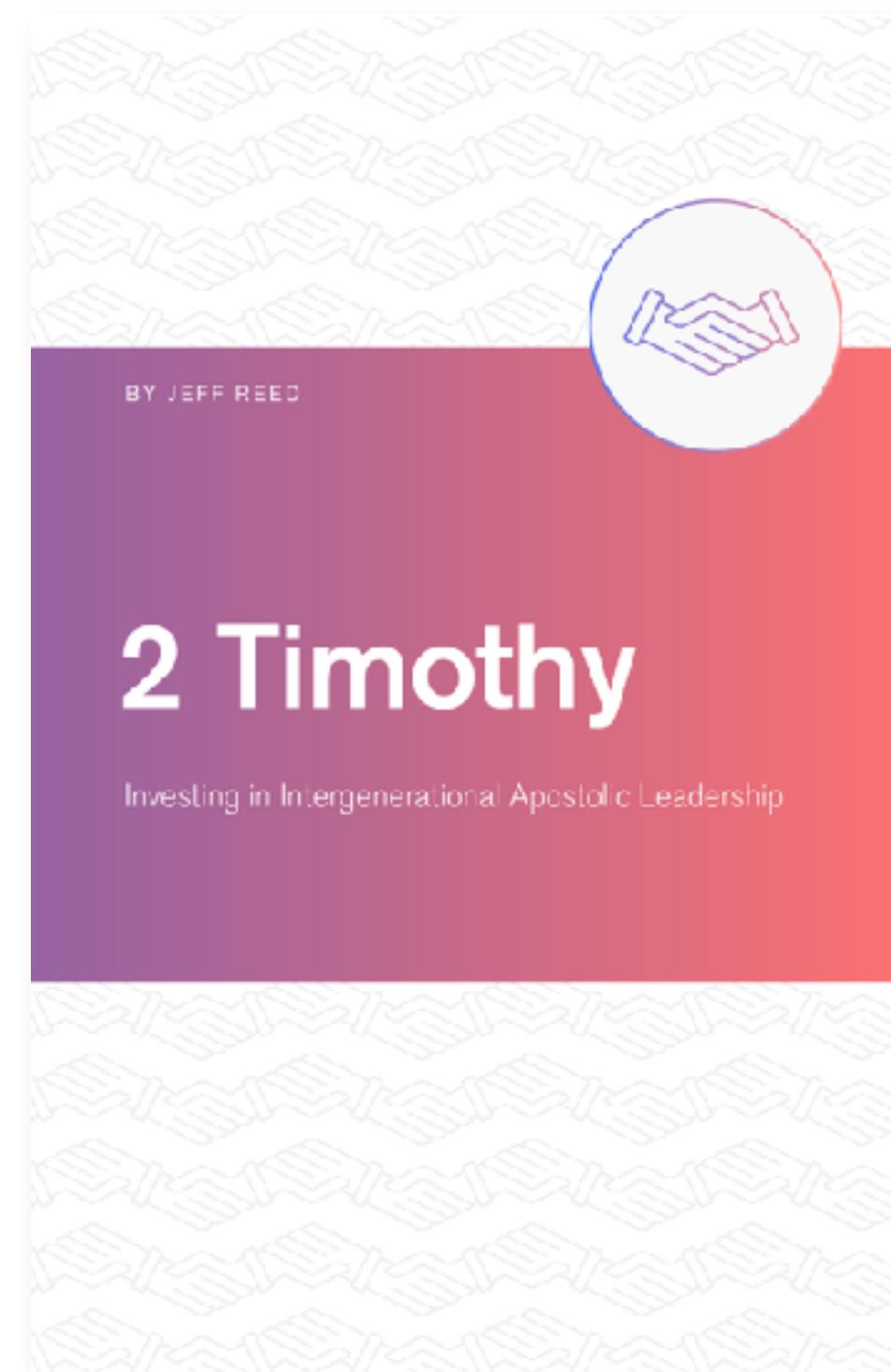
Book 1: Paul's Later Letters: Fully Establishing the Churches
According to Christ's Design

Book 2: 1 Timothy: Ordering the Churches as Households of God

Book 3: Titus: Setting in Order What Remains in the Churches

Book 4: 2 Timothy: Investing in Intergenerational Apostolic
Leadership

2 Timothy



2 Timothy: Investing in Intergenerational Apostolic Leadership

Session 1: Importance of Key Apostolic Leaders to Complex Apostolic Networks

Session 2: Intergenerational Process of Developing Apostolic Leaders

Session 3: Passion for Ongoing Shaping of Apostolic Networks

Session 4: Paul as a Finisher, Fighting the Good Fight

Session 5: The Incredible Network Acumen of Paul

Situating Paul's Second Letter to Timothy

Paul's later letters bring us to the third and final phase of Paul's process of establishing strong, mature, multiplying churches, with solid leadership and high community impact with the gospel.

- 1 Timothy—written to Timothy at Ephesus, autumn of AD 62
- Titus—written to Titus who was in Crete, summer of 66
- 2 Timothy—written to Timothy, fall of 67 (shortly before Paul's death)

Situating Paul's Second Letter to Timothy

In 2 Timothy, we continue Paul's line of reasoning in what it takes his young, emerging apostolic leaders to start assuming his functions more directly.

Titus was more situational than 1 Timothy: I left you in Crete to “set in order what remains” in the churches.

Timothy was written in autumn AD 62, whereas Titus was written in the summer of AD 66, four years later.

While Paul was in Crete in the fall of AD 59, on his way to Rome (where he would be put under house arrest), there is no indication he had an emerging network of churches there. The network in Crete is seen after his release from prison.

Paul was in prison from February, AD 60 to March AD 62.

Situating Paul's Second Letter to Timothy

Situation of 2 Timothy

The implications are significant.

Paul is concerned that Timothy will remain strong and establish an intergenerational process for establishing young, future apostolic leaders.

Paul is seeing cracks in his entire Asia apostolic team of coworkers.

Paul is concerned about the investment of his life in those networks, but he is confident God will preserve what he has entrusted back to Him.

He knows Timothy is key to guarding the deposit of sound teaching, which he entrusted to him.

Importance of Future Apostolic Leaders

What we have learned so far.

In the introduction to 2 Timothy, we saw Paul build on his first letter, addressing the same three issues: his role, Timothy's future role, and leaders on his apostolic team who did not make it.

The Importance of Key Apostolic Leaders to Complex Apostolic Networks

1. Paul invested heavily in future apostolic leaders, Timothy being his main example, so they could assume his task of guarding the sound teaching that he delivered to the churches and continue to establish future churches in that teaching.
2. Paul adds to his earlier focus with a challenge to Timothy to rekindle the gift that was given to him. And he exhorts Timothy to follow Paul's intensity, which includes suffering in the service of the churches.

Importance of Future Apostolic Leaders

The Importance of Key Apostolic Leaders to Complex Apostolic Networks

3. Paul saw his stewardship as delivering *sound teaching* to the churches and properly ordering them in that teaching, the focus of his first letter to Timothy. In 2 Timothy, Paul builds on his stewardship by additionally focusing on his ongoing role of guarding and developing the networks, which he entrusted back to God to preserve until Christ returns.
4. Paul saw the need for his stewardship of ongoing guarding and developing church networks to be passed on to leaders like Timothy. So, in his second letter to Timothy, he created a process for developing these leaders and entrusting them with the functions needed to carry out this very difficult task.

Importance of Future Apostolic Leaders

The Importance of Key Apostolic Leaders to Complex Apostolic Networks

5. Paul saw the emerging cracks in his Asia network and the ongoing need to deal with those cracks, knowing soon he would not be around. So though he saw his work in establishing these networks as a deposit back to God from the gifts entrusted to him, he knew leaders like Timothy and Titus would need to carry on his apostolic functions within the networks.
6. We can rightly assume that the main purpose for writing this last letter to Timothy was to create both an intergenerational process of developing these leaders and to lay out the schema for the process of continuing to guard and develop future networks, according to his apostolic tradition, which was being handed down in his letters.
7. And we can assume that the keys for dealing with the cracks emerging in his Asia networks are embedded in what he was about to tell Timothy about continuing his apostolic functions when he dies.

Developing Future Apostolic Leaders

Paul's Process for Developing Intergenerational Apostolic Leaders

1. Paul begins this section of his letter with a challenge to Timothy to entrust to others in the way God entrusted to him—in the context of ministry; and entrust in such a way that they will continue that same process, creating an intergenerational process of developing future apostolic leaders.
2. Paul calls apostolic leaders to a very specific and demanding lifestyle; a lifestyle he compares to a soldier free from normal entanglements of life, following the rigorous habits of an athlete, and the intense seasonal work of a farmer.
3. Paul builds on this lifestyle challenge by pointing out that the life of an apostolic leader who is truly focused on the network of churches will be filled with hardship. It's a life he has pictured at many points in his letters and will again here, as a life filled with conflicts without and fears within.

Developing Future Apostolic Leaders

Paul's Process for Developing Intergenerational Apostolic Leaders

4. Timothy and all future generations of apostolic leaders need to strive to become master craftsmen of the Word, handling it accurately, which requires a rigorous lifelong discipline in the Word so constant progress in handling the Word is evidenced amongst the churches.
5. By staying focused on becoming a master craftsman of the Word and avoiding endless doctrinal controversies and debates, Timothy will develop into a special utensil in the hand of God, prepared to handle the lifelong task of constantly and patiently correcting the teaching of others, keeping them from developing pathways that will lead to abandonment of their apostolic stewardships.
6. Paul developed Timothy over a twenty-year period. Even though he entrusted Timothy with ministry on his team when Timothy was in his late teens, it took twenty years to completely develop Timothy as a faithful apostolic leader, which is the process illustrated in this brief final letter.

Ongoing Shaping of Apostolic Networks

Now we turn our attention to 2 Timothy 3:1–4:5.

In essence, Paul is making one argument, one big challenge to Timothy.

The importance of key apostolic leaders to complex apostolic networks of churches
(1:1–18)

And the process of developing those key apostolic leaders: Paul's training of Timothy
(2:1–26)

Now Paul turns to his functions that key apostolic leaders must carry out after him (3:1–4:5).

What Paul is doing in this letter, and actually in all 3 letters, is establishing what I am calling the *apostolic traditioning of Paul*: developing key apostolic leaders to establish, shape, and guard a mature multiplying network of churches.

Central to this tradition is the intergenerational training of key apostolic leaders.

Ongoing Shaping of Apostolic Networks

Now let's continue in Paul's second letter to Timothy, focusing on Paul's functions that Timothy is to continue after Paul's death.

¹ You must understand this, that in the last days distressing times will come. ² For people will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, brutes, haters of good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ holding to the outward form of godliness but denying its power. Avoid them! ⁶ For among them are those who make their way into households and captivate silly women, overwhelmed by their sins and swayed by all kinds of desires, ⁷ who are always being instructed and can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth. ⁸ As Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these people, of corrupt mind and counterfeit faith, also oppose the truth. ⁹ But they will not make much progress, because, as in the case of those two men, their folly will become plain to everyone.

2 Timothy 3:1–9 NRSV

Ongoing Shaping of Apostolic Networks

I have included Luke Timothy Johnson's translation here because it is well translated. Together with a long section of his exegetical work and his comments, it is an excellent example of a good, but rare, detailed commentary. I included it in the Consult the Scholars section of the booklet.

¹ But know this: difficult times are approaching in the last days. ² People will be selfish, greedy, boastful, arrogant, blasphemers. They will not be obedient to their parents. They will be ungrateful, unholy, ³ unaffectionate, intractable. They will be slanderers, out of control, wild. They will not care about doing good. ⁴ They will be traitors, rash and crazed. They will love pleasure more than they love God. ⁵ They will have the appearance of piety while denying its power. Avoid these people especially. ⁶ Now from among them are the ones who are sneaking into households and capturing silly women who are beset by sins and driven by various passions, ⁷ women who are always learning but never capable of reaching a recognition of truth. ⁸ In the very way that Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these men oppose the truth. They are corrupted in mind, untested concerning the faith. ⁹ But they will not progress much further, for just as it happened with those men, their stupidity will become obvious to everyone.

2 Timothy 3:1–9 LTJ

Ongoing Shaping of Apostolic Networks

Paul now focuses on his charge to Timothy

¹⁰ Now you have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, ¹¹ my persecutions, and my suffering the things that happened to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. What persecutions I endured! Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. ¹² Indeed, all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.¹³ But wicked people and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving others and being deceived. ¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:10–17 NRSV

Ongoing Shaping of Apostolic Networks

Paul completes his charge to Timothy

¹ In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I solemnly urge you:
² proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching. ³ For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, ⁴ and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths. ⁵ As for you, always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully.

2 Timothy 4:1–5 NRSV

Ongoing Shaping of Apostolic Networks

It is difficult to not get lost in the specifics, with all of the character lists and ministry instructions. Let's get the big idea of 3:1–4:5.

1. Paul is concerned that Timothy fulfill his ministry (“carry out your ministry fully” 4:5); that final phrase unifies the entire section.
2. In this section, though character traits are everywhere, we see a primary focus on his ministry.
3. 2 Timothy serves as a topos within the household of God (*family of families*) topos of all three later letters. The topos is entrusting next generation key apostolic leaders—a central element to establishing churches and networks of churches as families of families.
4. Even though all three later letters are instructions to his key, young apostolic leaders, Paul summarizes Timothy’s ministry in this section in 2 Timothy.

Ongoing Shaping of Apostolic Networks

Let's look at how Paul frames in the ministry Timothy is to fully carry out.

“Carry out your ministry fully”

1. Timothy is to carry out Paul’s apostolic functions (3:10–11), all related to his work of establishing churches and his network of churches.

¹⁰ “Now you have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, ¹¹ my persecutions, and my suffering the things that happened to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. What persecutions I endured! Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them.”

Timothy’s ministry involved this same passion, focus, and endurance, primarily carried out within key churches and in the network of churches as needed.

Ongoing Shaping of Apostolic Networks

Paul frames in the ministry Timothy is to fully carry out (cont.)

“Carry out your ministry fully”

2. Timothy is to deal with conflicts at every level in establishing key churches and networks of churches: correcting those who oppose him with incorrect teaching in the churches (2:24–25); completely avoiding those who demonstrate a counterfeit faith (3:1–9); and equipping the saints for every good work (3:16–17) through the Word, including teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness.

Ongoing Shaping of Apostolic Networks

Paul frames in the ministry Timothy is to fully carry out (cont.)

“Carry out your ministry fully”

3. *Carrying out his ministry fully* is summarized by Paul as proclaiming the word “in season and out.” Paul lists a general set of ministry functions: “convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching.” The context assumes there will be periods of time when it will not be received well by key churches or networks of churches.
4. It also implies Paul’s general understanding that Timothy is fully carrying out his ministry with equipping gifts like Paul’s gifts: apostle, prophet, and teacher (2 Timothy 1, cf. 1 Timothy 4:14) with competencies as an evangelist as needed. The gifts within Timothy were apostolic in nature. He was a key apostolic leader, entrusted by Paul, meaning he had an apostolic gifting of the nature of Paul’s.

Ongoing Shaping of Apostolic Networks

I want to pause and make a few key comments on 3:1–9, an important and yet difficult passage.

1. Paul makes it clear that Timothy is to avoid the people he is specifically describing here; *avoid* meaning to completely ignore them and do not try to win them over; they are counterfeits.
2. Paul chooses a catalogue of terms which he rarely uses. They are called *hapax legomena* (words used only once) and are often difficult to define. Of the 19 traits listed in 3:2–5, there are 7 New Testament and 5 Pauline corpus hapax legomena.
3. This means he is creating a specific profile to help Timothy tell the difference between those opposing him with incorrect teaching and those who are to be completely avoided, often a difficult call to make.

Ongoing Shaping of Apostolic Networks

A little more about the situation. 3:1 and 3:9 have important phrases.

In 3:1 the phrase “that in the last days distressing times will come” (NRSV) is better translated by Luke Timothy Johnson, “difficult times are approaching in the last days.”

According to Johnson, in light of Paul’s phrase *last days* (also a hapax legomenon)—while it may be true in the last days before Christ, the total phrase “is not so much a prediction of the future as a diagnosis of the present.”

Now the phrase in 3:9 referring to this time, caused by these leaders Timothy is to avoid. The phrase “But they will not make much progress” (NRSV), now Johnson’s “But they will not progress much further” (LTJ).

The idea seem to be: difficult times are approaching, as seen already in the cracks in Paul’s Asian network. These counterfeit people are making progress, producing difficult times, but avoid them, and he concludes their progress may not progress much further if they are totally avoided.

Ongoing Shaping of Apostolic Networks

With all of the one-time words, here is the profile of these leaders to avoid.

Avoid these people: selfish, greedy, boasters, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unaffectionate, intractable, slanderers, out of control, wild, not care about doing good, traitors, rash, crazed, love pleasure more than they love God, appearance of piety but denying its power.

I have not taken time this morning to include a study (which I have mostly done) of each word of the profile, in order to stay at the overall argument level of this entire section of Paul's letter. But in the *Consult the Scholars* section of this session, I have included a very long quote on 2 Timothy 3:1–9, from Luke Timothy Johnson's commentary: *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*. It goes into important detail, but mostly it illustrates excellent exegetical work as well as a relevant comment section.

Ongoing Shaping of Apostolic Networks

Now back to the concept of the *apostolic traditioning of Paul*.

The *Apostolic Traditioning of Paul*: By using this phrase I mean that Paul handed down with authority both the teaching and the apostolic processes of setting churches in order and training key future apostolic leaders. This also includes elements like the gathering meeting. This is the meaning of *tradition* in the Pauline corpus. (Paul uses the word *tradition* in this sense in his letters, first seen in Thessalonians, and then as the main appeal of the gathering in 1 Corinthians 11:17–14:40.)

This is *returning to the original Paul*—a process begun by a movement of scholars writing on “the new perspective on Paul.” The *apostolic traditioning of Paul* was understood this way by the churches up to at least Tertullian in 200 AD, and it is the heart of what we call the *Antioch tradition*.

Ongoing Shaping of Apostolic Networks

Excursus on the *apostolic traditioning of Paul*

1. E. P. Sanders broke through the old Western paradigm of Paul (*Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 1977).
2. NT Wright, following the *New Perspective on Paul* by Dunn, broke through the “systematic theology” Reformation lockdown of the gospel.
3. Luke Timothy Johnson’s *Canonical Paul* laid the foundation for no “Theology of Paul,” freeing Western theology from its “Western academic roots” toward a fresh, unique theology of Paul in every culture, which has transformed my thinking on biblical theology.
4. Our New Testament Mastering the Scriptures Series is built around the idea of the *apostolic traditioning of Paul*. It is the heart of the series on Paul’s early, middle and later letters.

Ongoing Shaping of Apostolic Networks

Now let's go back to where we began concerning 2 Timothy serving as a *topos* for the training of key, emerging apostolic leaders in each generation. It is difficult to not get lost in the specifics, with all of the character lists and ministry instructions. Let's get the big idea of 3:1–4:5.

1. Paul is concerned that Timothy fulfill his ministry (“carry out your ministry fully” 4:5); that final phrase unifies the entire section.
2. In this section, though character traits are everywhere, we see a primary focus on his ministry.
3. 2 Timothy serves as a *topos* within the household of God (*family of families*) *topos* of all three later letters. The *topos* is entrusting next generation key apostolic leaders—a central element to establishing churches and networks of churches as families of families.
4. Even though all three later letters are instructions to his key, young apostolic leaders, Paul summarizes Timothy’s ministry in this section in 2 Timothy.

Ongoing Shaping of Apostolic Networks

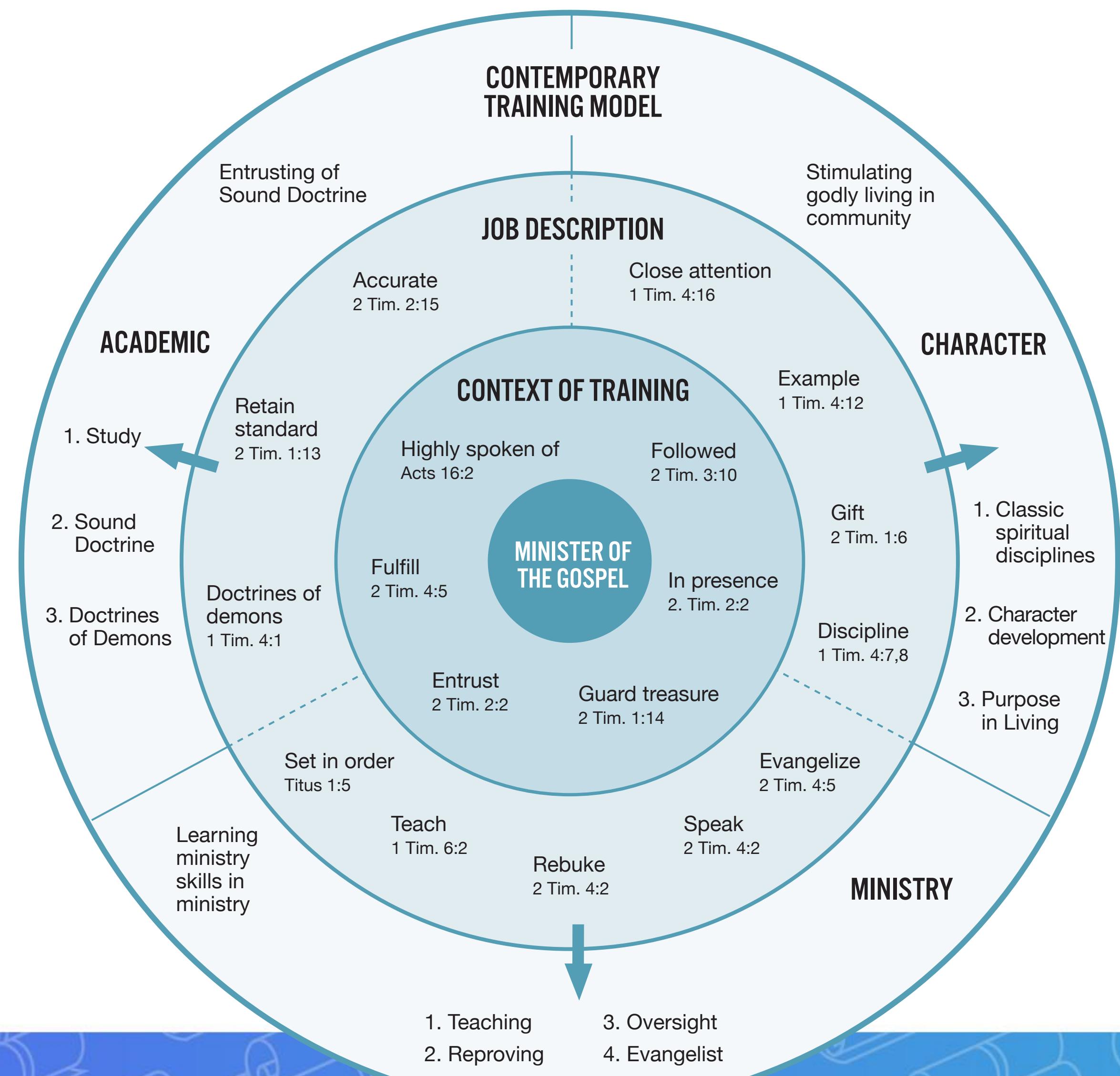
2 Timothy serves as a topos for the development of future apostolic leaders; a permanent part of the *apostolic traditioning of Paul*.

I did not know a lot of these terms and could not see nearly as clearly as I can now. But with what I know now, I realize I actually created a chart of this topos on the back of a napkin at the beginning of my apprenticeship in 1972.

The first official diagram of it was about 6 years later. In 1978, after meeting a few times with Walter Kaiser, I began to understand how to build a full curricula around it.

Let's look at it now and make a few observations.

PAUL'S TRAINING OF TIMOTHY: PASSING ON THE DEPOSIT



Ongoing Shaping of Apostolic Networks

Is it truly a *topos*? Yes.

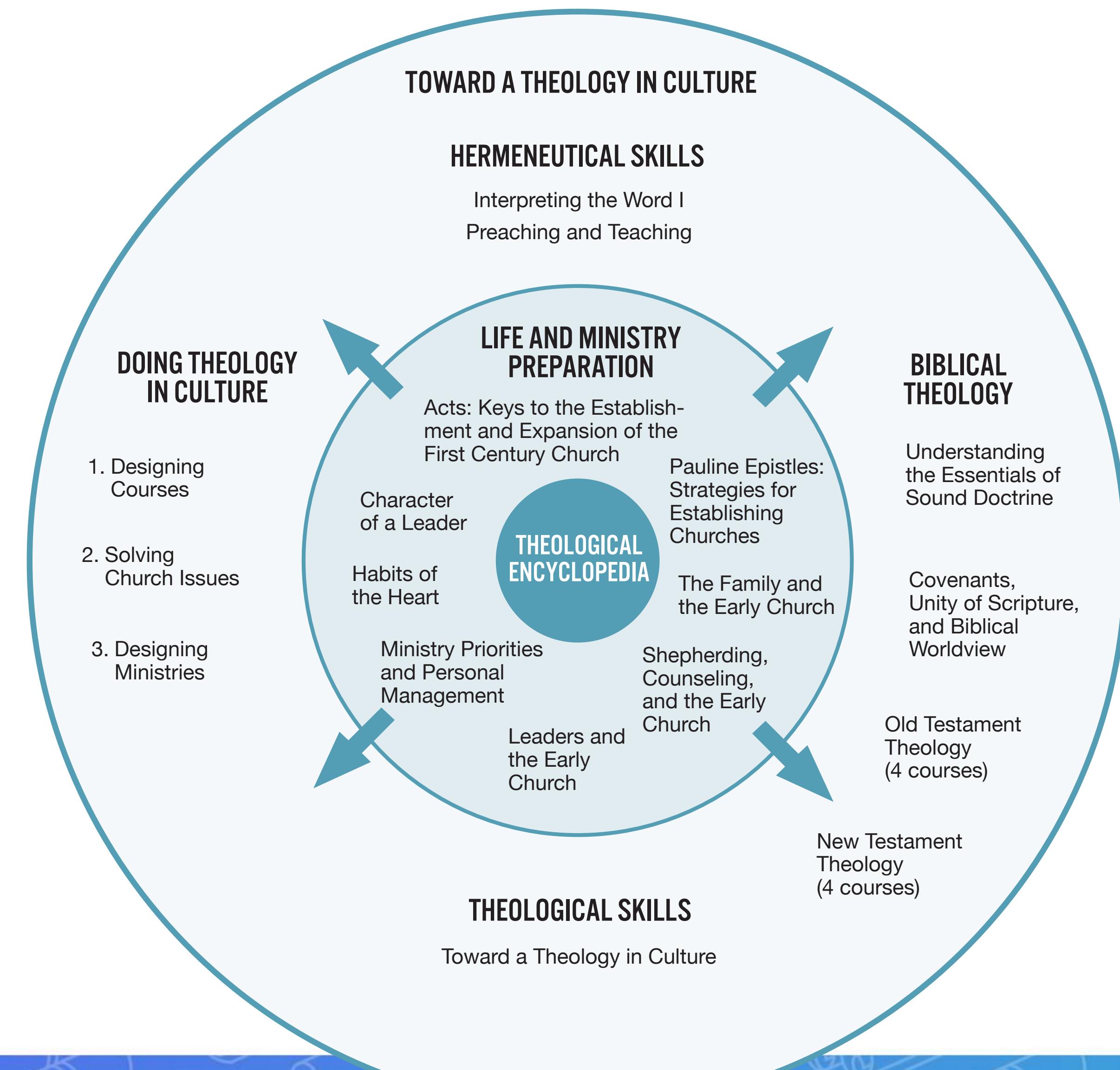
The heart of it is 2 Timothy, the heart of the *topos* in the later letters of Paul.

It draws on the later letters at times with a few key references, but stays within the *topos* in the pastorals.

It is solid, but I did not have full understanding of many of the ideas very deeply, but the *topos* idea held the concept's essence—that this was Paul's framework for developing future ministers of the gospel. But while I did understand the equipping gifts, I did not understand apostolic leaders or networks and did not understand biblical theology or theology in culture as I do now.

Yet the power of the *topos* hermeneutic has held strong. And because it was solid, it has unfolded, and out of it has come our entire curricular framework, which has led us to the entire *apostolic traditioning of Paul*, to a recovery of the Antioch tradition, and a recovery of Christ's design for the church.

BILD CURRICULA DESIGN



Ongoing Shaping of Apostolic Networks

Over the years, the initial topos (schema) of 2 Timothy on training future key apostolic leaders to establish and guard church networks has grown into a whole set of resources:

First Walter Kaiser—biblical theology additions

Next Ted Ward—theology in culture editions

Now versions to train all believers

First Principles

The Story

Mastering the Scriptures

Ongoing Shaping of Apostolic Networks

Why did it work so well? Why has it continued to serve as a guide even to us today? Why did it work when we did not understand it fully?

Because it is just an attempt to diagram exactly what Paul is saying.
Because I only used Paul's actual terms.

Just because I did not know the full meaning of several of the words and concepts Paul was using, does not mean the diagram was wrong.

If we stick to the apostolic teaching and tradition, we will see more and more clearly as life unfolds.

Paul's Later Letters

Issue: Ongoing Shaping of Apostolic Networks Today

Questions:

1. What does it mean for key apostolic leaders to “carry out their ministry fully” today? Does their ministry include any of Paul’s functions as they carry out their ministry within a network of churches today?
2. What conditions should emerging key apostolic leaders expect as they assume major responsibility within complex apostolic networks?
3. What main ministry responsibilities were young, key apostolic leaders to carry out throughout their ministry, regardless of the current cultural situation and times?
4. In what sense is 2 Timothy a topos for training future key apostolic leaders today? In what sense is it a framework or schema for training all future intergenerational key apostolic leaders?