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## Care for Your Elders

*1 Timothy 5:17-25*

**Keywords:** Discipline, Elders, Leadership, Pastoral Pay, Accusations, Ordination

**PowerPoint Presentation included:** NONE

**SermonAudio Blurb:** In this section of 1 Timothy, Paul takes back up the discussion of elders and deals with some critical issues facing Timothy. How to instruct the church to honor these men, how to protect these men's reputations, how to deal with those of them who are in unrepentant sin, and how to choose new ones. Weighty issues dealt here, but ones that, if heeded, would save many churches today from much sorrow and harm

## Dismiss

### I. Introduction.

- A. The office of an elder is an important one and yet it is often only vaguely understood by many and the result are many problems.
  - 1. One great problem is the selection of leaders for the church who should not be leaders. Churches every year are torn apart because they had people in leadership that had not business being there.
  - 2. Second, leaders who are in leadership but who don't want to lead. This ends up resulting in either a church going no where, doing nothing; or it is a church where a shadow leadership operates instead.
  - 3. Third, a church who does not want real leaders, so they resist in both active and passive ways.
    - a. Emails and phone calls trying to gather enough votes or simply by not cooperating, showing up or giving.
    - b. Either way, the message is clear, we are not going to follow you.
  - 4. Fourth, a church that has leaders who do not love their people.
    - a. They fail to see these people as those for whom Jesus has died. They are God's people and God's church, covered and redeemed by God infinite love.
    - b. For these leaders, there is not the motivation of love, but merely duty or power and influence.

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5. Fifth, a church that does not submit her leaders. They are seen as an entity that resists the church's real potential. The leaders are not precious to them and they do not look to them with respect and honor.
- B. These and many more can be the hard reality in many churches. Most likely it is true in the Church of Ephesus.
- C. Paul has dealt with several issues related to the office of elder in this short letter:
  1. First it was related to those who desired to be elders, next he dealt with the qualifications that must be present in a man's life to fill this role, now he turns his attention to the pay of some elders, then to the protection of the elders' reputations and finally their accountability before the church
  - 2.
- D. Read 1 Timothy 5:17-25.

***Propositional Statement***

Four principles for a church to remember regarding their leadership. Four points of wisdom that every church member should embrace for a healthy church leadership: A generous spirit toward its leaders. A refusal to take just any accusation against its leaders. A willingness to rebuke a sinning leader. And finally, a slowness to appoint one to the office of leader.

- E. Before going on, give quick explanation of vs 23 since it is a parenthetical point.

**II. Care for Your Elders.**

- A. A generous spirit toward your leaders.
  1. All elders should be respected. That is a given. This passage speaks of 'double honor,' which I will explain in a moment. But first let's just talk about the 'single honor.'
    - a. Your elders pray for you, they teach you, they disciple you, they correct you, rebuke when necessary. They are there to give you counsel and there to give you a word of encouragement. They are there far more than many realize.
    - b. And you need to honor them, give them the respect that is due them.
    - c. Notice it is not telling you to love them, just respect them. You don't have to have happy, warm feelings toward them. But when they talk to you or they challenge you, show the respect that is due them.

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2. When was the last time you sent a word of thanks and appreciation to your elders (not me)?
  - a. For those of you who were brought to Christ under the ministry of another pastor or elder, have you ever written to him to tell him that you were still walking in faith with Jesus?
  - b. Perhaps it is a word of chagrin where you come to a man who has labored in your life with nothing but push-back by you but you now realize that his counsel had be faithful and wise and you humbly admit it.
  - c. Fathers and husbands, you lead in this. You set the tone in your home for how your children and your wife sees the leadership of Missio.
3. Honor is one thing, but Paul tells us that there are some who are worthy of double honor.
  - a. The ones who rule well, especially in the area of preaching and teaching are the ones in view here.
  - b. The idea of “considered” is in the passive voice, indicating that it is not up to the elder to decide what he is worthy of.
  - c. To rule means to lead, from the front, being an example to follow.
    - (1) There is the clear sense of authority built into this word, so it is not merely being an example but also calling and expecting the people to follow.
    - (2) To do this well means to be good at it. There are some who are just better at leading and ruling over people than others.
  - d. Double honor speaks of both the respect that is in the word honor and compensation of some type as the second honor, just like it speaks of regarding widows.
  - e. But built into this as well is a sense of generosity. Pay is one thing, but pay that expresses respect is a whole different thing if you think about it.
    - (1) You show double honor when you take the financial care of those you support seriously. Where care and time is invested in considering their investment in your lives.

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- (2) It is a way to tangibly acknowledge this person's impact in your life. How you give and how you support these people is a direct indication of how much you honor them in the 'single honor' sense.
4. This doesn't just go to a guy called the pastor. It is to those who work hard as an elder, as a pastor.
- a. Here is why I think some people don't show honor to their pastors and elders. They don't realize what goes on.
  - b. Pastoring is hard work. That is not to complain nor to puff up the job. It simply is hard work.
  - c. Just a glimpse into a pastor's world:
  - d. It is not a forty hour work week, it is not simple and it involves a lot more energy and effort than is first seen. If I work 40 hours only, Kim is wondering what is going on and starts asking a lot of questions like, "Don't you have something else to do?"
  - e. I personally have tried to average 20 books a month just on my reading cycle. For each sermon I invest about 15 hours minimum of research and thought before I write one word. And that is for easy passages, much more time goes into hard ones, at times over 25-30 hours.
  - f. To teach a one hour bible study I put 6 hours minimum of study prep into it. To teach an old study it still takes me about 2 hours to gear up.
  - g. Many who are dismissive of a sermon would faint if I assigned them the next Sunday to preach. Especially if I demanded from them an entire hour that is built off of explaining a specific passage.
  - h. I love this job, and I am not complaining. If the elders believe that I am then just don't give me a raise for the next five years.

Principle to think on:

Does the salary and benefits we give to those who pastor us express the respect we have for them and the honor we desire to show them?

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If more churches approached pay, vacation and benefits from that perspective there would be more happy pastors.

5. In this passage we have a sense of how the decision-making would go for a typical church if they are considering paying their leaders.
    - a. First would be to mark out the ones who are best at preaching and teaching and how are working hard doing so.
    - b. After that those who are working hard at ruling well in a more general sense.
    - c. But all of it driven by a desire to express honor.
  6. This is why these two passages are chosen, one from Deuteronomy and the other Luke.
    - a. BTW, good evidence here for the development of the Canon of New Testament.
    - b. It is wrong to have an ox labor so hard simply so that you can eat. Give him food as well. Same way, elders who work hard to feed you should be well fed themselves.
    - c. The bible speaks much, and none of it good, about those who oppress the worker. He is to be counted worthy of his wages.
- B. A refusal to take just any accusation against your leaders (19).
1. Remember Hebrews 13 where it tells you to submit and obey those who lead you. The reason? They give watch over your souls. And to do it with grief rather than joy is to your harm.
  2. Well this verse is one of those that cause many a pastor or elder great grief.
  3. In this passage Timothy is the one given this instruction. He was going to be making some decisions regarding the current elders and he needed to be making decisions on solid evidence.
  4. Few things hurt more than to find a person listening to accusations against you as you lead. I expect cheap shots and lies from certain people, that is not as sorrowful as the one who will actually allow it to take place.
  5. This verse is designed to reduce the cheap shots that are so easy to take against those who are laboring on behalf of the church.

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6. Some simple observations about this verse:
  - a. Present tense imperative usually means it is something that is happening and the demand is to have it stopped immediately.
  - b. Two or three witnesses are required NOT for a conviction, BUT before an accusation can even be heard!
  - c. The two or three witnesses must be actual witnesses. It does not allow for the witness to hear a charge from a single person and then bring the accusation to Timothy.

Calvin: none are more exposed to slanders and insults than godly teachers. This comes not only from the difficulty of their duties, which are so great that sometimes they sink under them, or stagger and halt or take a false step, so that the wicked men find many occasions of finding fault with them; but added to that, even when they do all their duties correctly and commit not even the smallest error, they never avoid a thousand criticisms. It is indeed a trick of Satan to estrange men from their ministers so as gradually to bring their teaching into contempt. (from John Stott, Guard the Truth: The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus, p 138)

7. Nothing can tear about a church than allowing accusations made about the leadership.
  - a. This must be strongly rejected in every way. Slowness to act on this is simply to invite poison into the household of God.
  - b. Example is how GCC reacted to accusations by a woman thinking John was sending her erotic mental messages (an extreme example).
  - c. This is something people love to do because it is impossible to disprove a negative. It puts them on the defensive.
  - d. It creates questions in the minds of others without actual facts. And then whatever actions or statements that person makes from there on in is subject to misunderstanding.

Principle:

To allow accusations without witnesses to be heard helps the people of the church to doubt the pastor's credibility. Once that happens it becomes easier to shrug off his exhortations toward godliness. And when that happens you become one who shares in that sin.

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8. This does not mean that an elder is exempt from scrutiny. . . .
- C. A willingness to rebuke a sinning leader (20-21).
  1. Once a charge has been credibly made against an elder the expectation is that they would repent.
  2. Elders are not above the law, quite the opposite, if they continue to sin they are to be publically rebuked.
  3. But if they do not, that man is brought before the entire church where he would be rebuked before all of you. (that is what “presence of all” means)
    - a. Give that a little thought for a moment.
    - b. Why? “So that” To cause the rest of the church to fear sinning. To see the shame that sin brings.
    - c. Illus of Elder and wife who first visited GCC with several being disciplined out of the church.

Principle:

Discipline teaches more than merely the one disciplined. Others see and fear.

4. An aside: This brings up the nature of rebukes and if they are to be only done in private. It is clear here that there are times that public rebukes serve a good purpose.
5. In vs 21 we this task is to be done with out partiality. It is not to be avoided; rather it is to be executed carefully and fairly.
  - a. It might have been tempting for Timothy to lock himself in his study and hope that his problems would simply disappear. But problems in the church never go away all by themselves, so the apostle gives him a solemn warning.
  - b. It is also tempting to remove a person who is possibly a bit difficult or doesn't see things your way by not listening carefully to the evidence.
  - c. As Timothy listens to the charges he must take great pain to not prejudge a person before all the facts are in (Proverbs 18:17).

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6. But here Paul takes Timothy to the throne of God, where the Father and the Son judge the whole world according to the strictest standards of justice.
  7. Paul is telling Timothy to live and minister now in the awareness that he did so in the presence of the One who one day will be unveiled in all His magnificence and glory.
    - a. Along with God and Jesus we have the image of the angels.
    - b. By referencing the charge as being before God and Jesus and angels he may be calling to mind the final judgment and Timothy's accountability to God at that time.
    - c. If so, then the idea is that you might get away with making the hard but right decision in the short run, but it will catch up to you big time in the end
    - d. These divine messengers are mentioned as a reminder that one day there will be a judgment to end all judgments, Jesus said, "when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne" (Matt. 25:31; cf. Rev. 14:10). This final judgment will be completely impartial, "For there is no injustice with the Lord our God, or partiality or taking bribes" (2 Chron 19:7).
  8. Timothy, and the entire church, is to maintain these principles taught without partiality and favoritism. This is especially true of leaders who are having to make decisions all the time and the temptation becomes to give a friend or an especially faithful member a better ruling. This is evil in the sight of God
  9. Paul is telling Timothy to live and minister now in the awareness that he did so in the presence of the One who one day will be unveiled in all His magnificence and glory.
- D. A slowness to appoint one to the office of leader (22, 24-25).
1. The reference of laying on of hands is that of commissioning someone to a role or task. In this context it is appointing elders.
    - a. Sometimes, out of a fear of man or a simply a need to rest you can appoint someone into leadership that later becomes a huge point of trouble for the church.



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- b. You can have many regrets later and you end up sharing in their failures because it affects the church
  - c. This is a call for patience. Not everything is obvious and it is not what it may seem at first glance.
2. Vss 24-25 describe four kinds of people.
- a. There are those whose sins are so obvious that they are waiting for them as they enter the time of judgment. Those are the easy ones.
  - b. Then there are those who are experts at hiding their sins, those sins are shadowing them and in the end, judgment will bring them to light and then surprise everyone at the judgment.
  - c. These two points also work in the opposite with those who do good.
    - (1) Holman's translation is good for vs 25 CSB 1 Timothy 5:25 Likewise, good works are obvious, and those that are not obvious cannot remain hidden. (1Ti 5:25 CSB)
    - (2) Good works are not easily hidden and often there are those who are easily seen in their godliness
    - (3) But others are not as readily seen.
      - (a) B. B. Warfield, professor of theology of Princeton was on his honeymoon. His wife Annie was apparently struck by lightning and the result was an invalid wife. He faithfully served her needs for the rest of her life.
      - (b) I believe it was Dr. Barnhouse who used to sell eggs from chickens he raised. Many in the church complained about it, thinking he was trying to shame them. Later, after his death, it was found that he used the money to support a widow.

Principle:

The more pushy a person is to become a leader the more cautious you should be.

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3. One simple question I ask when thinking about someone for leadership:  
do I see this person as a peer?
  - a. In other words, would I seek his counsel for my marriage, my children, my life. Do I value his opinion and do I respect his theology?
  - b. Would I ask this man to hold me accountable? Do I see things in his life that I would like to model?
  - c. Is this a man I would trust to care for anyone in this church?

### **III. Conclusion.**

- A. Our Lord is the chief shepherd and elder over the Church, everyone else simple servants of Him.
- B. He is serious about the purity of the leadership in His local churches.
- C. But he is also serious about the care and protection of these leaders.
- D. It is a beautiful thing to watch men who love God's people labor faithfully among them, helping them see the glories of the gospel in their lives and the joy of knowing their Creator and Savior.
- E. But it is even more beautiful to see a church rise up beside its leaders as they faithfully labor and show them rich, unhindered honor in word, deed and money. A people who guard their leaders' reputations.
- F. May God make Missio's leaders always faithful and may Missio always honor her leadership.

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## Small Group Questions

- What evidences mark a man as a an elder who rules well? Is this just a sense that you get or should there be clear, quantifiable evidences?
- What are the kinds of sins that are hard to see until later and what are some of the kinds of good works that are not easily seen? Why?
- Does our church emphasize money: a) too much; b) not enough; c) about right? What do you base this on?