

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Introduction to Church Leadership

1 Timothy 3:1

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PowerPoint Presentation included: NONE

SermonAudio Blurb: One distinctive within the Protestant church that stands out to many is the diversity of positions related to church leadership. From Episcopalians and Methodists, to the simple lives of Plymouth Brethren, there are many ways that God's people have approached this key subject. In this sermon, Pastor Matt seeks to give a bit of the background to the biblical terms used, as well as show three key realities that exist no matter what type of polity exists in a church.

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I. Introduction.

- A. We come to a key section of this letter regarding recognized leaders and servants in the church.
- B. Why this is an important issue to work through.
 - 1. Paul warned the Ephesian elders in Acts 20 that false teachers would arise among themselves to harm the church.
 - 2. The primary teachers in any church will always be the leaders. Therefore truth is either strongly affirmed or diminished in the hearts of the people based on the leadership.
 - 3. The leadership of any church always ultimately determines the direction and depth of the faith of the church.
 - 4. The leadership is who will ultimately train up the next generation.
- C. In 1 Timothy we have a situation where the current leadership needs to be replaced.
 - 1. Paul gives Timothy the necessary tools to accomplish this task by listing what an elder or deacon must be.
 - 2. And by doing so, he expects that it will affect the entire church. He writes at the end of chapter 3, "I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to

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behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.”

- D. Today I want to introduce you to the whole subject of church leadership and then deal with chapter three over the next two weeks.

II. Background:

- A. Elder (Πρεσβυτέρος).
1. Old Testament.
 - a. Basic survey of its uses.
 - (1) Childbearing ceases (Gen. 18:12-13; 2 Kings 4:14).
 - (2) Grey hair appears (1 Sam. 12:2).
 - (3) A failing of sight (Gen. 21:1).
 - (4) Age 60 seems to separate the mature man from the aged (Lev. 27:1-8).
 - (5) The elder is to be honored (Lev. 19:32; Lam. 5:12).
 - (6) The younger men were to wait for the elder to speak (Job 32:4).
 - b. It is evident that the old man was respected and trusted in the Jewish community.
 - c. Out of this select group they apparently selected the “cream of the crop” to be the official elders of the cities.
 - (1) They were marked by maturity.
 - (2) They were marked by wisdom.
 - (3) They were marked by being trustworthy.
 - d. Their rise to power during the exile.
 - (1) When Israel and Judah were taken into captivity they were no longer able to worship in the temple.
 - (2) In order to maintain a link to their religious life they needed to meet for study of the Law and prayer.
 - (a) This was the beginnings of what eventually became the synagogue.

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- (b) The leadership for this new type of meeting fell upon the shoulders of the godly and wise of the people—the elders.
 - (c) Their authority began to increase beyond that of the time before the exile.
 - (d) Eventually they became part of the Sanhedrin and also were the elders of the synagogue.
- e. New Testament.
- (1) Πρεσβυτέρος (presbuteros) at its simplest mean “old” or “oldest.
 - (2) When you see this word you have to be careful, for it normally means one of two things.
 - (a) Age is the primary concern (“to be aged in body”).
 - (b) Spiritual maturity and wisdom (“to be aged in godliness and wisdom”).
 - i) Which is what the term means for elders within a church.
 - (c) Age is not the central issue, spiritual maturity is.
- B. Overseer (ἐπίσκοπος).
- 1. The is the second major term used in the Bible referring to church leaders. Some translations use the word “bishop.”
 - 2. New Testament.
 - a. Its basic meaning is to oversee, to have oversight, or to be in charge.
 - (1) Acts 20:28. "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.
 - (a) Notice Who made them overseers.
 - (b) Notice also the purpose that they were made to be overseers (to shepherd).

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- (c) Notice also the graveness of this responsibility.
Whose church is it?
- b. In all of the passages the main point is to give oversight to the church, to be in authority, and to give it direction and protection.
- C. Shepherd (ποιμήν).
 - 1. This is a rich word conveying tremendous meaning.
 - 2. The Jew reading it would be flooded with a beautiful picture of the attitude in which the oversight of the church was to be carried out.
 - 3. Almost exclusively refers to Jesus Christ.
 - 4. But it also is referred to for elders.
 - a. 1 Peter 5:1-4 (turn)
 - (1) The command is to shepherd, to pastor the flock.
 - (a) God's flock.
 - (2) The way they were to this was through the exercise of oversight.
 - (a) Here we see all three words together (Pastor, Elder, and Overseer).
 - (b) Three attitudes of a true shepherd.
 - i) They were to do this with a willing heart (vs. 2)
 - ii) They were not to do it for financial gains; rather with an eager heart.
 - iii) Not lording it over the flock, but being examples.
 - a) The idea of lording it over does not deal with authority, which too many try to make it sound.
 - b) Usually this happens when the congregation does not like how the elders made a decision.

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- c) It means to rule over people with the intent to take advantage of them. To use and abuse them..
 - d) A good example of this would be the lifestyle of the Pharisees and Scribes (Matthew 23:3-7).
 - (c) For the elder, however, he was to have the character of Jesus, and be an example in all things. To be in charge, but with grace.
- 5. We learned about the three main words for this office.
 - a. *Episkopos*, which refers to the oversight aspect of church leadership.
 - b. *Presbuteros*, which refers to the spiritual maturity of church leadership.
 - c. *Poimain*, which refers to the character and mind set of church leadership.
- D. Miscellaneous Terminology.
 - 1. Ephesians 4:11 (teacher).
 - 2. Romans 12:8 (those who lead); 1 Thessalonians 5:12 (have charge over you); and 1 Timothy 5:17 (rule).
 - a. All three of these have the same root word which simply means “to stand before.” Its basic meaning is to preside or rule over.
 - 3. Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24 (those who lead).
- E. All of this provides us sufficient background to consider church leadership. From here I want to consider four realities connected with church leadership that need to be thought through by you.

III. Four Realities about Church Leadership.

- A. First, there is the reality that there are recognized leaders in the Church (Hebrews 13:7).
 - 1. This seems obvious, but it is more important of a point that some realize.

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2. There is a mind set in the church in America that church leadership is vague at best.
 - a. No authority is really found in them.
 - b. They act only as administrators.
 - c. They can be easily ignored and are not allowed to speak into your lives.
3. Notice the command here—remember.
 - a. Remember here refers to the act of keeping or recalling to mind something.
 - (1) it is used in 2 Timothy 2:8 of remembering Jesus Christ who has risen from the dead.
 - (2) Or in Revelation 2:5 of this church in Ephesus to remember from where they have fallen.
 - b. Present active imperative, meaning you are expected to be in the practice of thinking and recalling those who are in leadership over you.
 - c. They are defined here by being the primary teachers of the Word of God to you, which is true here at Missio.
 - (1) There was one person who kindly sent me a note once that simply stated that aside from Jesus Christ there was no one who has cared more for the well being of his soul than me.
 - (2) I would hope that this is true of many of you, that your elders have sought to care for you spiritually, pointing you to the sufficiency of Jesus.
4. These are the people who you should be wanting to imitate.
 - a. The writer wants you to watch how they live out their life.
 - b. This indicates that you are to be recalling not merely the present leaders, but those in the past as well.
 - c. And as you reflect upon their lives, their faith, and teaching, you are called to imitate them. This too is a command.

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- B. Second, there is the reality that these leaders possess authority and it is hard work.
1. This may seem obvious, but it is amazing how this is given mere lip service in many people's lives.
 2. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13.
 - a. Here there are three areas of oversight. All three are in the present tense indicating a constancy about these men's oversight.
 - (1) They labor diligently among the people.
 - (a) This word indicates strenuous labor.
 - (b) They work hard at being elders.
 - (c) The task of an elder is not for those who are lazy nor those who are timid.
 - (2) They have charge over you.
 - (a) Literally means to be at the head, to direct or to rule.
 - (b) They are not to allow themselves to be merely the servants of the church, rather, they labor diligently within the framework of ruling.
 - (c) Notice also that their authority comes from the Lord.
 - (3) They also are responsible for admonishing you.
 - (a) NASB translates it "instructing you."
 - (b) It is the activity of reminding someone of what he has forgotten.
 - (c) It carries with it a rebuke for sin and also a flavor of warning.
 - (d) One man said of this passage, "while its tone is brotherly, it is big-brotherly" (Morris).
 - (e) This is one of the hardest parts of being an elder, because so often the people who you need to warn don't care or don't want to hear it.

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- (4) Therefore, Paul says that the church is to hold their elders in high esteem. In fact it means ‘beyond measure.’
- C. Third, there is the reality that how the church responds to their leaders has either a positive or negative effect on their lives.
1. Hebrews 13:17.
 - a. You are to “obey” your leaders.
 - (1) this word is interesting because it carries the sense of being “persuaded.”
 - (2) It is a willingness to follow the direction of the leadership.
 - (3) The verb is in the present tense and is a command.
 - b. You are to “submit” to your leaders.
 - (1) This also is a command and is in the present tense.
 - (2) This is not the same word in the Greek as the ones with refer to submitting to God, husbands, masters, or the governing authorities.
 - (3) This word means, “yield, give in to, resist no longer, or do what someone says.”
 - c. Unfortunately, too many rebel at these words, and that is exactly what it is, rebellion.
 - (1) Notice the reason the writer of Hebrews gives for these commands.
 - (a) They are concerned about your spiritual well-being.
 - (b) They will have to give an account for you to the Lord.
 - (2) Notice also the warning if you do not.
 - (a) The men should be able to lead with joy, not sadness or frustration.
 - i) You cause grief, when you resist the instruction and counsel of your elders.

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- ii) You cause grief when you gossip and complain about them to others.
- iii) You cause grief when you take their teaching only as a suggestion.
- iv) You cause grief when you do not walk in the truth of the Word of God.
- v) Joy comes when you have a person who is open, honest, and pliable.
- (b) The writer tells you that God will make it a point to discipline you.
 - i) The word “unprofitable” means to have something detrimental happen, something bad.
 - ii) God will not tolerate or bless that type of activity.
 - iii) There are many within churches who have lost blessings, had difficulties in their lives, etc. all due to their refusal to submit to their leadership.
- D. Fourth, there is the reality that all leaders are to remember who they are shepherding.
 - 1. 1 Peter 5:1-4.
 - a. It is God’s flock.
 - (1) We did not purchase it, we did not die for it, we do not own it.
 - (2) We are mere stewards of those whom Christ shed his blood.
 - (3) Therefore we cannot ever use the church for our gain or glory.
 - (4) Rather we are to be found faithfully laboring when He returns.

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- b. Three motives which are arranged in couplets, each having a positive and negative side. Because it is not our flock, but God's .
...
 - (1) We are to give oversight with a willing heart.
 - (a) These are to be called men, not forced men.
 - (b) Too often we speak of the “pastor’s calling” but fail to see it as the same as any elder.
 - (c) As a result, their service should not be done begrudgingly.
 - (2) We are to give oversight with a ready heart.
 - (a) This shows that the way the elders should function is eagerly.
 - (b) The negative is through sordid gain.
 - (c) The idea here is that the reason that the men are serving as elders should have nothing to do with money.
 - (3) We are to lead by example rather than by might.
 - (a) He is not to be puffed up regarding his position.
 - (b) He is not to be looking down upon the flock with an attitude of contempt or arrogance.
 - (c) Instead, he needs to be among them.
 - (d) Christ is a perfect example of this, how he was always seeking to be with the people, even in the most mundane of times.
 - (e) When an elder is unsure what to do in some situation, he merely needs to consider Jesus.

IV. Conclusion.

- A. Much considered today and much for you to think about.
- B. No church will be healthy if it has ungodly leaders or people who are given to resisting those leaders.

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Small Group Questions

- What are tangible ways that you personally have expressed a high esteem (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:13) of your elders? When was the last time you consciously considered how you showed them that respect?
- How do you make it easy for the elders to give watch and care over your soul?