

Learning to Lead: Leaders in the Church

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[0 : 0 0] If you'd open your Bibles to 1st Timothy, we'll be reading from chapter 3. In the Church Bibles, it's on page 1192.

It's 1st Timothy, chapter 3. We'll be reading verses 1 through 16, and that's again on page 1192.

Here is a trustworthy saying. If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.

Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.

He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's Church?

[1 : 1 0] He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience.

They must first be tested, and then, if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers, but temperate and trustworthy in everything.

A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

[2 : 2 3] Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great. He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.

Now, if you'll turn to chapter 5, we'll read verses 17 to 22. It's chapter 5, 17 to 22.

The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the scripture says, do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain, and the worker deserves his wages.

Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly so that the others may take warning.

I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and do nothing out of favoritism. Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others.

- [3 : 39] Keep yourself pure. Thanks very much, Ryan.
- Well, just keep the Bibles open there at Timothy. As I say, we're starting a new series about learning to lead.
- We're going to be looking at leaders within the church today, leaders within marriage, leaders within the home, and leaders within the community.
- It's a very big subject, and the Bible has lots to say about it. So let's pray and ask for God's help as we venture into this together.
- Let's pray. Let's pray. Our Father, we come and we submit ourselves to you as the one who has all authority and all supremacy.
- [4 : 48] For you are the chief shepherd, the true leader. And we submit ourselves to you in that we want you to teach us and to instruct us, and that our lives would be shaped and molded around who you are, and that our lives would be changed by you.
- And to do this, we need the help of your Holy Spirit, first to open up our minds to understand it, but also for your Spirit to work that deep in our lives to change us and to enable us to be the kind of people and the kind of church that you call us to be.
- So help us this morning, help us as we go through this new series together. We pray all this in Jesus' name.
- Amen. Well, do take notes. There's pens there if anybody needs them. Feel free just to come to the front and get one.
- Well, men, can you hear me? Are you all sitting comfortably? Because I'm going to make you very uncomfortable.
- [6 : 12] Listen to this. The trouble with Irish men is they do not want to lead and they don't want to be led.
- What do you think of that? Are you offended? Well, I was when I heard it. That was the comment of a well-respected Irish pastor as he reflected on the state of the church.
- But, of course, what he was saying was really nothing new. It's been a problem right from the very beginning when Adam in the Garden of Eden abdicated his role and responsibility.
- And it is a problem the world over, not just for Irish men. Us men are slow to take on roles of leadership within the home, within marriages, within our communities, and within the church.
- And that's a serious problem because, look at chapter 3, verse 1. Here is a trustworthy saying. If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, that's an elder or a leader in the church.
- [7 : 27] If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. So far from rejecting or ignoring leadership, Christian men should seek and aspire to be leaders.
- Or chapter 5, verse 17. The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour.
- So far from being a low calling, this is a high calling. Leadership is critical. And the church today needs leaders.
- And before we get into the detail of what these leaders look like, let's define, first of all, what we mean by church and what we mean by leaders.
- First of all, let's look at what church is. Verse 14 of chapter 3. Timothy is, or Paul is writing to Timothy, who is a young leader within the life of the church.
- [8 : 39] And, well, really, 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy is really all about that. But he says in verse 14 of chapter 3, Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions.

Instructions about leadership within the church. So that if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and the foundation of the truth.

The church is defined there in verse 15 as God's household or God's family. The people who belong to Jesus, the people who trust Jesus. But the church is much more than that.

It goes further than that. Look at the end of verse 15. The church is the pillar and the foundation of the truth. Well, in an age when the only truth is there is no truth, it's a good question to ask, what is the truth?

Well, verse 16 gives us the answer. Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great. Sounds a little confusing, but he's now talking about the Lord Jesus.

[9 : 56] Who appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit through his resurrection, was seen by angels. Christ Jesus was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world.

People trusted him. And Jesus was taken up into glory where he reigns with all authority. So what is the truth?

Well, the truth is the good news about the Lord Jesus Christ. The truth is the gospel. So the church is the pillar and the foundation of the gospel.

Now hopefully we all know what a foundation is. And that your house at home has a foundation. Because that's what holds our buildings together. This building has a foundation.

It keeps it strong. Well, the gospel of Jesus Christ is our foundation. It's what holds this church together. It's what's built upon.

[11 : 01] And if you were to take away the foundation of truth, if you were to remove the gospel, well, then church is just going to fall flat. It'll disintegrate. It will be nothing.

A pillar is not a foundation that's underground. A pillar is kind of up high.

It's visible. It's what makes the building seen. And that people can see it. Well, the gospel of Jesus is like our pillar. The church is to take that gospel and to make it known, to make it visible within the community and within the world.

And if we're to take away the pillar of truth, to take away the gospel, then the church is never, ever going to grow. It's never going to be all that it's meant to be.

So the church is about God's instrument on earth. It's the foundation and the pillar, the foundation which, if you like, guards the truth of the gospel from error.

[12 : 06] And it's the pillar. It's to declare the truth of the gospel to the world. That's what the church is. And this church needs leaders.

So what are the leaders? Well, look at verse 17. We get a definition there of chapter 5, verse 17. The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

So the leaders who are the elders, their role is to direct the affairs of the church. Well, how do they do that?

Well, it talks about directing and it also talks about preaching and teaching in the same verse. And they're not two distinct roles. Directing and teaching are part and parcel of the same thing.

Elders direct the church as they preach and teach and apply the gospel to our lives. So as they apply the gospel, then the church gets direction.

[13 : 19] So if the church is the pillar of the foundation of truth, the leaders of the church must be responsible for making sure that the church remains the pillar and foundation of the truth.

That's important. I'll say it again. The leaders of the church must be responsible for making sure that the church remains the pillar and the foundation of the truth.

that's why it's a noble task to be a leader that's why they are worthy of double honor that's why verse 22 we must not be hasty in the laying on of hands as in calling people to leadership because it is a serious and responsible role well having leaders in the church is of critical importance so let's see what leaders in the church look like and let me say this let me preface this before we get into the detail that I stand before you as a leader of this church Ralph is also a leader you have to hold us accountable to what we're looking at and that is also very serious so let's look at what we mean by leaders within the church gospel leaders first a character that is changed by the gospel verse 2 now we're in chapter 3 here chapter 3 verse 2 now the overseer the elder must be above reproach that does not mean perfection it simply means a character that has been changed by the gospel and is evident to everybody else in other words there is nothing within their life that you would pinpoint and say that disqualifies them from leading so what does this changed character look like well we've got a big list here let's go through it one by one verse 2 they are to be the husband of but one wife you don't have to be married to be an elder but if you are you can only have one wife well all men can only have one wife which implies they are to care for their wives practically and they are to love their wives sacrificially part of their leadership is as we'll see in the coming weeks is lived out even within home and family life the husband of but one wife they are to be temperate self-controlled and respectable that means they don't have a short fuse or they're prone to react to people out of hand or speak disrespectfully to others when you're with these kind of people you're not worried or afraid that they're suddenly going to blow their top and get really annoyed with you let's read on they are to be hospitable they're to be the kind of people that opens up their home welcomes people regardless of their race religion or culture they're not a hermit where they like to be kind of kept by themselves a recluse where nobody can get near them they're warm and relational they're people orientated in fact they love to be with people they're hospitable read on they're able to teach we'll come back to that later verse 3 not given to drunkenness does not mean that alcohol is off limits but it means that they are not dependent on drink and if they do have a drink they are not getting drunk and losing control let's read on they are not violent but gentle violence can be physical and it can be verbal so elders are to be gentle in their speech and gentle in

their actions some people are a bit more like hurricanes and volcanoes destroying and erupting all around them leaders though come into a situation and speak gently and they bring a calmness to the storm they're not quarrelsome they don't turn every conversation or discussion into an argument as if their whole life depended on winning every single debate they're also very wise in the kinds of discussions that they get involved in there are some things that it's good not to be debating over read on they're not a lover of money and let me say that money and wealth is not wrong it's making money your first love and priority that's wrong have a look at first timothy chapter 6 verse 9 having money and wealth is not wrong it's making your pursuit of it a priority that's what's wrong so verse 9 people who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction for the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil some people eager for money have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs so if elders are just purely in it to get a good salary watch out now while these characteristics are directed towards leaders they are actually the fruit of every person who has been changed by the gospel you could read through the bible through the new testament and you will find these same characteristics applied to every single believer it's what we should expect to see it's the standard of every single christian whether you are a leader or whether you are not so first leaders within the church display a consistent christian character that has been changed by the gospel second they're the kind of people that live a life that reflects the gospel and this is seen in two ways it's seen in family life and in work life first of all family life verse 4 he must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect you know a disordered home where children are not disciplined where wives are divisive where fathers abdicate their responsibility it's a recipe for disaster when it comes to leadership why?

well look at verse 5 if anyone does not know how to manage his own family well how can he take care of God's church God's family you see if a leader's home life is in a mess then church life is going to be in a mess and in many ways it's saying here that family life home life is almost like God's training ground for leadership within church life it's where you serve your apprenticeship it's where you get down and work out the nitty gritty of what it is to manage your family and how to lead within the church family of course it doesn't mean that leaders must have families or that leaders must be married it doesn't mean that but it does provide a good test for those who would be leaders and what does it mean to manage your family?

[22 : 29] well it does not mean forced obedience or abuse of control with the use of a whip no to manage your family means to gently rule and to lovingly care for your family and we're going to be talking about that in the coming weeks in practice though it simply means that we do take sin seriously within the home that it's not something just to kind of pass over and say oh it doesn't matter but at the same time as taking sin seriously there is a demonstration of mercy and grace it's a life that reflects the gospel and leads the family in the gospel so it's to be worked out within home and family life but not just home and family life it's also to be seen in work life verse 6 he must not be a recent convert a brand new Christian or he may become conceited he become very proud of his position and then fall under the same judgment as the devil but here we are verse 7 he must also have a good reputation with outsiders so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap you know when churches look for leaders they usually ask for references from other Christians or from other churches what are they like?

what's their character like? tell us but what about asking for a reference from your not yet Christian workmates? because look what it says in verse 7 he must have a good reputation with outsiders those who you hang around with those who you work with because if leaders have a bad reputation in their work or in their neighbourhood then you can be sure the devil is going to exploit it and cause great harm within the family of the church so leaders in the church are to live a life that reflects the gospel in their workplace the people that they sit beside the people that they're on the phone to the people that they're interacting with and they see within their life that they are fair that they are generous that they're kind that they're forgiving they're not slagging off people behind their backs they're welcoming and they're helping people along they are reflecting the gospel in their life through their work again the context here is about leaders in the church but you know what this is also normal Christian living all of these principles here are worked out for every single believer this is the high standard the high calling for every home and for every person who is an employer or an employee so second church leaders live lives that reflect the gospel in family life and work life and third they are to be a faithful teacher of the gospel let's go back to verse 2 at the very end of verse 2 we get this short little statement that they are able to teach a leader in the church must be able to teach the gospel this is the one qualification that marks leaders apart from everybody else so all that we've been looking at so far applies to everybody but an ability to be able to teach the whole church is particular to those who are leaders yes again at one level we should all be able to teach the gospel it's not just elders who are able to teach parents if you're a parent here listen to this you should be able to teach the gospel to your children you should be making that your priority to spend time with them whether it's in the evening or whenever throughout the day to be instructing them in the gospel you need to teach it don't depend on others to do it for you it's your job and of course we need teachers within crusaders and Sunday school we need people who can teach and grow in that ability to teach in fact we're all to be teachers of God's word and the gospel to each other as we meet up one to one or in groups to pray and to read the Bible together so yes we should all be able to teach but there are those who are set apart and called to teach the whole church and who are responsible for the whole church so look at 1st Timothy 4 verse 11 through to 13 let's just read that there chapter 4 verse 11 command and teach these things so here's an instruction to Timothy that he's now to teach and to pass on to the whole church teach these things

don't let anyone look down on you because you're young but set an example for the believers in speech in life in love in faith and in purity that's all the things we've just been looking through and until I come devote yourself to the public reading of scripture to preaching and to teaching flick over to 2 Timothy chapter 4 verse 1 we get another another example of what this means 2 Timothy chapter 4 verse 1 and again the seriousness and the responsibility of this it is done in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus so right now yes we're teaching but we're in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who will judge the living and the dead so take it absolutely seriously and in view of his appearing and his kingdom

I give you this charge preach the word be prepared in season and out of season correct rebuke and encourage with great patience and careful instruction it implies that leaders have sound comprehension of God's word and are crystal clear in their communication of God's word in other words there are people who know their Bible who are immersed in their Bible and are able to pass that on to others not just pure information but as you look at their lives they example and they model what they are teaching this is the central and primary task of church leaders this is how they direct the affairs of the church and this is how the church remains the pillar and the foundation of truth so every Christian and if you are a Christian every Christian should make it their responsibility to be able to teach but only some are called and able to teach the whole church so this is what church leadership looks like a character that is shaped by the gospel a life that is reflective of the gospel and they are a faithful teacher of the gospel these three qualities are essential to church leadership and must never ever be overlooked you can't just take one out and then think the other two are fine in fact and I want us all to hear this it is your responsibility and I speak as a leader humbly to you it is your responsibility as a church to make sure that your leaders that's Ralph and myself measure up to this standard your responsibility to hold us accountable and if ever you think that we are drifting from any of these areas it is your responsibility to bring it to our attention chapter 5 verse 19 it says do not entertain an accusation against an elder it doesn't mean say there couldn't be one unless it is brought by two or three witnesses so no kind of side snipey comments but if there is something then it should be brought by people to the church and if they are found to be wrong then it needs to be dealt with humbly and graciously we are accountable to you and I pray that you take it seriously let me just read one other reference you can look at it it's in

Hebrew so I haven't got the page number but I think it will be helpful just to read it Hebrews chapter 3 if you've got a page number somebody can tell me 1 2 0 2 Hebrews chapter 13 sorry 13 yeah so if you get to Hebrews 2 sorry it's chapter 13 it's at the end of okay verse 17 of chapter 13 well you know what I'm going to read from verse 7 sorry and then jump to 13 okay so here we go verse 7 of chapter 13 remember your leaders who spoke the word of God to you consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith that's why you need to pray for us verse 17 obey your leaders and submit to their authority the authority remember is an authority which comes from

[34 : 00] God's word the gospel not just whatever they think in their own minds they keep watch over you as men who must give an account one day we will stand before God and God will ask Johnny how did you lead the church family obey them so that their work will be a joy and not a burden for that would be of no advantage to you and here it is do you see how he says it in verse 18 pray for us pray for us you need to pray for your leaders that they do all that we are commanded to do but as we finish let me speak to the men and then to the women men we're great at pursuing our careers and having dreams about the things that we're going to do we're great at planning our projects but don't ever allow that to hinder leadership within the church remember how we started in 1 timothy 3 verse 1 whoever sets his heart on being an elder and leader desires a noble task never put the career and the projects and all of those things so important that even the consideration of leadership is down here of course it doesn't mean that everybody will be an elder but we should at least be prepared should we be called whoever sets his heart on being an elder desires a noble task and to the women let me say this pray pray for the men of the church pray that

God would raise up leaders within the church in Ireland and leaders who can go overseas pray that they will be everything that we have just looked at that they would be gospel minded pray for the men that they will have a character that is shaped by the gospel a life that reflects the gospel and that they would be teachers of the support them and encourage them and where you need to step back and let them learn to lead because the men are very shy God calls for leaders within the life of the church it is the pillar and the foundation of the truth it is the means by which the church is built strong together and it is the way in which the church grows and the way in which the gospel is spread let's pray together father we thank you so much for the church we thank you

Lord Jesus that you died for us and you brought us into your family. We thank you for providing your church down through the years and the centuries with those who are gifted and enabled to lead.

And we pray that you will keep on raising up new leaders for every new generation. You would provide leaders for new churches and new church plants on this island.

That you would be raising up new leaders who will go overseas and bring your gospel. We pray for the men of this church.

[38 : 31] We thank you for them. We thank you for all of their roles of responsibility and care. Enable them and equip them and call them and work in them.

We pray that you will raise up leaders from within this church. And we pray for the women.

We thank you for them. We ask that you would help them to encourage and support, to pray, that we would be the church that you call us to be.

That we would never be found wanting. But we would be people who live a life worthy of the gospel and see your church grow and your gospel proclaimed.

Help us all then and fill us with your Holy Spirit to achieve and accomplish all of these things. It is for your name and for your glory alone that we pray this.

[39 : 41] Amen. Amen.