

Teaching on eldership

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[0:00] In verse 17 says, Jesus said to him, blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah, for flesh and blood! has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. So I'm going to start off thinking, not just write down on what the specific texts about eldership, but I trust we will come to them. But I want to put it in a wider context, which I think is the right thing to do, to say, why have churches at all? I mean, we're going to talk about leadership of churches, but what is the church all about, or the churches? Why church? Jesus says, I will build my church.

So he's the one who builds it. I will build my church. Please could some people tell us what they think this building involves? What does he mean, I will build my church?

Build it how? Build it in what way? What would building look like? Saving sheep. Thank you very much. Okay, living stones. So that would be the building in this. So we're looking at the idea of building as a temple. Living stones. Thank you. Any more thoughts?

Loving community. Just thinking about it just even briefly, this is a big statement, isn't it? It draws in from streams of Old Testament stuff, where you have the mountain of the house of the Lord exalted above all the other mountains, and all the nations shall flow to it.

So you've got the whole idea of mission, because the sheep are not just, it's not just talking about Jews. It's not just talking about what we would nowadays have, I was born in a Christian family.

[2:23] It's calling people from all sorts of places to be built as church, yes? And then having brought them together to sort of knock the rough edges of them and build community and put the whole thing together.

So there's a lot going on here, and I think we need to put elders into the process of this. So just say, it's calling people from outside, so saving the sheep, yes? It's calling in.

It's building up people together as living stones, so getting people to work together, and it's building, in various ways, a living community. So I think that's the context that we have to put this in.

So I looked up Nehemiah earlier to make sure there was Nehemiah in my Bible, and I think I can find it again.

Nehemiah 2.1-6. So this is quite a mission. This is quite a thing to do. This is quite a venture. And I just want to pick out one little snippet of somebody who faced a venture. Nehemiah 2.1-6.

[3:56] This is a building thing. Could Mark read that for us, please? Nehemiah 2.1-6.

Nehemiah 3.1-6. In the 20th year, King Artaxerxes, when wine was brought to Philemon, I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had not been sad in his presence before.

So the king asked me, why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness apart. I was very much afraid, but I said to the king, may the king live forever.

Why should my face not look sad when the city where my fathers are buried rise in ruins and its gates have been destroyed by fire? The king said to me, what is it?

Then I prayed to the Lord of heaven and I answered the king. If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so that I can rebuild it.

[5:07] I think go down to end of eight, if you wouldn't mind. Then the king and the queen, sitting beside him, asked me, how long will your journey take?

And when will you get back? It pleased the king to send me. So I set the time. I also said to him, if it pleases the king, I have letters to the governors of Trans-Ephrates so that they will provide me to take conduct until I arrive in Judah.

May I have a letter to Asaph, keeper of the king's forest, so he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple and for the city wall and for the residents I will occupy.

And because the gracious hand of my God was upon me, he came granted my requests. Thank you very much. So here's just a little snippet. I don't want to take too long on this.

But here's somebody involved in building. And I wonder if you could identify some of the things that were going on in this man as he is involved in.

[6:17] He occupies a sort of a key role, a crucial role, doesn't he, in the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Anybody like to call out some features, noticeable things about this man's involvement in building?

He's a human being. He felt it keenly. He felt it keenly. Which verse are you on? Well, how can I not be sad to the city of my own such a very ruined?

And that is verse 3. Yeah, okay. So he felt it keenly. So there's something going on inside him that he cared deeply.

So if I put cared deeply. Anything else about this man in his? He's good at logistics. Thank you.

He'd thought about the logistics because when the king says, well, what do you need?

It looks like he's already thought about it because he says, I need letters. I'm going to need timber. I'm going to need timber for the, what does he say?

[7:31] Beams for the gates and the wall and the house that I shall occupy. So he's been thinking ahead and he's got some plans. So logistics, thinking ahead.

Yeah. Thank you. So he assessed the current situation. And he did it realistically, didn't he?

The gates of the city are burned with fire. Yep. He prayed. He was a man of prayer. And there's quite a bit of prayer earlier.

And there's an instantaneous prayer in, isn't there? Where is it? Verse 4. I pray to the God of heaven. Yep. Thank you very much.

He was afraid, but he relied on God. Yeah. That's, I mean, in shorthand, you could say he was a man of faith and lived by faith.

[8:50] That's an important thing. Yep. Anybody like to add anything else to that? Yes. That's a very good point. He lived respectfully in his context.

The king obviously trusted him. And he had the respect of the king and he had respect towards, he respected the king and the king respected him. Would that be a fair?

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. but his job would have been actually to prevent the king from being poisoned. So it was always a job given to somebody who was really trusted.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Trusted. Okay, let's not swell too long on that, because it doesn't say this is an elder, but it does, I think, is a useful example of somebody who's instrumental in God's purposes of building.

And I think that there's transferable ideas from this, and I think we'll see some of them coming up when we look specifically at elders. Does that make sense?

[9:57] I think that's worth, I think I might even photograph that, because I think you've come up with some good points. Okay, right.

Let's go into the New Testament then. Well, let me say that if you wanted to find examples of elders in the Old Testament, there's plenty of examples of elders in the Old Testament.

If you look up Exodus 24.1, while I just rub this out on here. Okay. Could somebody read us Exodus 24.1?

Okay. Thank you.

So, Israel had elders, and in fact you can find examples of elders in various communities. You have tribal elders and so on. I think it makes a point that humans, it's understood, and God endorses this, that human societies function properly when there are people in those communities who are recognized as worthy of respect, of having seniority, and are in a position of leadership.

[11:51] I always think leadership is a, can mean lots of different things, but let's use that word for the moment, that back in Israel,

there were elders, people in a position of seniority, because elders actually means older, doesn't it?

So that's the original thought of it, but people in the position of seniority, and what else did I say? People who are respected, and people who can lead, take leadership.

And I think this is a human thing, and it translates into the Old Testament communities, and it certainly translates into the New Testament communities, that it's a right and proper thing to have people who are respected as leading the communities.

In other words, when we get to the New Testament, we don't find that all of that is sort of washed away, and it's just a free-for-all. We're not sort of anarchists, and everybody does what is right in their own eyes.

There is a form to communities with elders. So just quickly make that point. So there are New Testament elders, and if we go to Acts, and I'm going to go to chapter 11.

[13:25] And could Ruth please read us Acts chapter 11, verses 27 to 30. During this time, some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch.

One of them, named Adalus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world.

This happened during the reign of Claudius. The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea.

This they did, sending their gift to the elders by violence and soul. Thank you very much. I'm just going to try and treat that text with the respect it deserves, in the sense of saying, I don't intend to try and pin on us that everything in that text just copy and paste.

Because if we did copy and paste, we would have to have apostles, which I don't think we can copy and paste that. We would have Agabus prophets. I'm a little dubious as to whether we have Agabus prophets.

[14:41] And we have a famine, so we don't want to cut and paste the famine, do we? But we do have that when this gift was sent, it was sent to the elders of the church.

So, you might say, well, if you're not going to copy and paste the rest of it, why are you copy and pasting this? But I'm just going to say, it was a feature, wasn't it? The church had elders.

It's not made a big fuss of. It's just, if you're going to send a gift, send it to the people who can administer it, who can be trusted, who will distribute it sensibly.

Let's go to Acts chapter 14, 21 to 23. Acts chapter 14, 21 to 23.

And could Angel read this for us, please? Acts 14, 21 to 23. Amen. Thank you very much.

[16:20] Well, again, I'm not going to say we've got to cut and paste everything from here. I mean, again, we have apostles. We're in the apostolic era. The apostles appointed elders.

It doesn't say what process they went through to appoint elders. But presumably there is a way of appointing elders that does not involve having an apostle come and visit.

But I think that we can get the general drift of this. That as they've been, as a, who is it, Paul or Paul and Silas? Paul and Barnabas.

Yeah, Paul and Barnabas. As they have been evangelizing and planting churches, they return. And the thing that they're keen to do is, well, they want to strengthen the souls of the disciples, to encourage them to continue in the faith, saying that it's not easy to be a Christian.

You've got to be ready to face that. And to appoint elders in every church. And to do so seriously. So I would say the prayer and the fasting. The important point there is they prayed and made it serious.

[17:28] And that's, I think, what we've been doing. We've been praying for, actually, a number of years about this. If, for you, being serious in prayer means fasting, don't let me stop you.

But I'm not going to pin that on us. That we have to fast. But I think we do have to take it seriously. And here again, elders is the point that Paul and Barnabas think is essential as they sort of let the churches go on their own, as it were.

Titus 1.5. Titus 1.5-9.

So I'm going to ask you to join with people on your row, two or three, to look into this. But let's have it read first. Perhaps Miriam could read us.

[23:09] Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Since an overseer manages God's household.

I did look this one up before I came out. And it is... It uses the word for house. And then it makes it into a sort of like house ruler, house manager.

So I suppose it would be a bit like Mr. Carson in Downton Abbey, the butler, who makes everything in the house run smoothly. So managing God's household is a right thing.

And it is... It has got the idea of managing. So when we looked at Nehemiah earlier, the sort of...

How he worked out a plan, how things should be done. That's not a million miles from this. But anyway, okay. So managing God's household.

[24:09] He should have management abilities. Yep. Okay. Somebody go... So actually, the contrast, when you think of it that way, with the next bit. Because, you know, there's all this rare about Dominic Ryle.

This is a management style too bloody. Whereas that's exactly what he said. This man, there mustn't be. He must be not over there. He's not quick-tended. He's not violent or dishonest.

Yeah. Thank you. Yeah. It's about character. Thank you. Can you put down character? There's a lot about character. Not in the sense of being a lively character or a vivid character.

But in the sort of way this person approaches life. And what... Moral character. Yeah. Say moral character. Relation.

Sorry. Christian spiritual integrity. Yep. Integrity means wholeness, doesn't it? Yeah. Put integrity.

[25:13] In the ESV, it uses this term above reproach twice. Okay. We were just talking about what that means. And we thought, is that something to do with kind of public conduct?

Kind of the meaning of a conduct that's exemplary? Yeah. For outsiders. I think you said, Mark, about being blameless. Yeah. That's... It's challenging.

I think that goes to bits of translated blameless in the end. So this is verse 6. So I've got above reproach. Would you have blameless?

It says... I've got the Greek here. And I think it says unaccusable. It means that there aren't big, gross things that you can...

You know, obvious things that you can accuse this person of. They pay their taxes. They keep to the speed limits. Or at least within reason.

[26:12] You know, they make sure that they're doing things honorably. Where's the other... Is it in verse 7?

Yeah. Yeah. Yes. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I think this ties in. If you think back to Nehemiah, that his boss respected him.

He didn't cheat the boss. He didn't... He wasn't lazy. You know, he did the job. He could be trusted. I think that that sort of thing. You know, a good neighbor.

I was just thinking, and when Nehemiah makes these big asks, you know, the letter of safe conduct, you know, all the trees and the rest of it, the king trusted that Nehemiah said he needed them because he needed them.

Yeah. That's a very good point. Yes. Yeah. Yeah. Thank you very much. Okay. So we've got this management. We've got these things about character, integrity, being respected, not guilty of obvious outward moral, legal, civil failures.

[27:31] Yeah. Okay. Anything else? Thank you. The next bit. The last bit. Because now I kind of... There's a contrast to that, isn't it? It goes on to talk about silencing the opposition.

Yeah. So he's going to be, you know, not given the temperance or a long environment or quick temperance, but he has... He's not supposed to be able to move on. He's going to do that. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Okay. So let's... Did we put anything about the leadership style? Let's put... Can you put leadership style? So this is not arrogant and not quick tempered and not like the Dominic Raab, wasn't it? Who's allegedly, reportedly...

I can imagine... Let's not personalise it to Dominic Raab, but a leadership style where you get angry with people and swear at them and tell them they're rubbish and motivate people by just being obnoxious.

[28:32] He says it's not leading that way. Is there something about what Paul, because of Timothy, this charge? Does he say something about the

mind of not having a spirit of timidity, but to have a spirit of kind of boldness?

He does say that. So let's capture this one. So can you say something like, able to be bold? Stand up for the truth? Something like that? He does.

Yeah. Able to refute. Let's put that, shall we? So I think it's the ability to see where somebody's going wrong and point out what's wrong with what they're saying.

Able to refute. R-E-F-U-T-E. R-E-F-U-T-E. You're doing okay. It's really difficult when everybody's watching you, which is what we're doing.

[29:45] Right. Let's look the other way. R-E-F-U-T-E. Refute. Okay.

Anything else? Yeah. I was wondering about, going back to verse 5, that kind of conviction in the plurality of elders.

Because in a sense, it's kind of, if there were just one elder, you'd have seen that that is still unfinished. Because it's saying, you might put in order what would lack unfinished and point elders in every town.

Well, that's the natural way to read it. I don't know enough Greek to say whether he would have said to appoint an elder in each town, if he'd just meant one.

But as I read it, it looks as though he wants elders in each town. And presumably, each town had its own assembly.

That's the natural way to read it. And I think there are other scriptures which assume a plurality of elders. I mean, we had it in Acts 11, didn't it?

[30:58] They sent the gift to the elders of the church. I mean, they could easily have said, we'll send it to the elder at the church or the whatever.

But they sent it to the elders. So I think the plurality is there. Yeah. I suppose that when we were looking at the first line, you must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in the doctrine and the other side of it, Steve was saying, to review those.

Yeah. The kind of wide of that, he says, to be an example. Like a good example. OK. Put good example. But I think we also ought to include in there, able to teach, because I don't think we've said that yet, have we?

Good example. Just going back to your previous point. Yeah. Just think of Acts 21. Acts 21, 20. No, it's 21. Yeah, Acts 21, 18.

Next day, Paul and the rest of us went to see James and all the elders were present. Mm-hmm. Clearly, we were all there. OK. Thank you very much. Thank you very much.

[32:14] Right. Anything else that we want to pick out in these verses? I mean, there's some specifics worth pointing out.

There's a relationship to alcohol. Not, I've got not a drunkard. I think it says probably, sorry, not an alcoholish person or something like that is probably not.

It's difficult to translate it. It's just one word which includes the word wine in it. You know, I suppose if you were going to say it rather disrespectfully, say not a wino. So there's something to do with relationship to alcohol.

There's something to do with their relationship to violence, not a striker, not somebody who hits people when they don't get their own way.

I mean, it is quite specific about that, not a violent man. And about their relationship to money, not greedy for gain. Have you got something like that in yours at the end of verse 7?

[33:22] Not pursuing dishonest gain. Not pursuing dishonest gain, yeah.

Yeah, that's the classic authorised version translation, isn't it? Who is this person, Luca?

He was a French detective, wasn't he? But, yeah. Yes. Luca. Was May Gray's accomplice, wasn't he?

Wasn't he? A French detective, Luca. No, this is different Luca, isn't it? L-U-C-R-E. Yeah, meaning money. I'm sorry?

The union of currency in the Roman world. Oh, currency. Let me just have a look, see if I've got anything on that. Which verse am I looking at?

End of verse 7. Yes, just one word again. I don't know whether I can shed any more light.

[34:22] It's just one word in the original anyway. And I think this is important, the relationship for money. I mean, in other verses it's going to say you should be paying, you know, if somebody's giving their full-time attention to this, you should be paying them properly.

It's going to say that. But the motivation shouldn't be money. My friends in Sri Lanka would, where things are a lot more varied, would give examples of people who are in ministry because it's money. And it's Western money. And the people in the West are somewhat naive. And if you spin them a story or tell them about your ministry, they will send you money because all the Christians in the West have got loads of money, apparently.

But, you know, there is a sort of mentality of that. And particularly if work is hard to come by, go into ministry because you can get money.

It sounds a bit unrealistic to us in England, but, you know, in other situations it would be, you know, very well worth saying.

[35:32] Don't go into it just for the money. Sexuality and sexual diversity would be important here because it works with about being the husband of one wife.

Yeah. Because it just makes me think, you know, really sad that you do hear of people in positions of leadership, eldership in large churches, large parachurch organizations.

This could be a particular area. Yeah. Marital example. Let's put it that way. Exemplary. Although it says a husband of one wife, it doesn't mean you can only appoint married elders.

It doesn't mean that, does it? Because Paul wasn't married. Jesus wasn't married. You don't have to be married to be a leader. But if you are, you've got to do it right.

Yep. Do you see there's a preference, though, for marriage, marriage, marriage, marriage? Okay. For anybody listening at home, the question was, is there a preference for having a married, a married?

[36:30] Yeah. Well, that's a very good question, isn't it? But I suppose you could say that this was a temptation to try and give an answer before you really thought about it, that being married gives you experience of aspects of life that a single man wouldn't have.

But Paul says one of the things about being married is you've got to take time to look after your wife, whereas a single man would perhaps be able to dedicate a much higher percentage of his time to serving the Lord.

So I'm just thinking if John Stott was a remarkable Christian leader, single man, Dick Lucas also single man, remarkable Christian leader. But generally, we think you're married men, aren't we?

Yeah. One argument in favour of being married is that it removes, to some extent, temptation, but it's actually seen as a people being women in the ministry.

Yeah. Well, that's one of the things that it says about marriage, isn't it? That it's better to be married than to burn with passion. Yeah. Yeah.

[37:47] I was just thinking that we sort of haven't talked to you about the last part of verse 8. I mean, we talked about hospitable.

One who does what is good to be self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. Yeah. That, I mean, maybe I'm wrong, but that sort of suggests to me is sort of a bit like sort of what you see is what you get is what really goes on behind the scenes.

Yeah. And, you know, sort of holy and disciplined. So, somebody, you know, teaches about sort of spiritual growth and how to sort of, in a sense, think about your own spiritual life.

But then, you know, it's the same behind the scenes in his own spiritual life. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I mean, sometimes it can be very easy for an elder to get so overwhelmed and stop that their own spiritual walk of the Lord can suffer.

Yeah. And also I was thinking... Yeah.

[39:22] Yeah. Yeah. So, let's put... Shall we first say consistent living... Behind the scenes as well as what...

What? What? Yeah. And, of course, Christian leaders who have had marriage problems. Not the moment. And John Wesley, most obviously. I believe John Piper as well.

I don't know about John Piper. John Wesley said... Yeah. We don't have to go very far away to find people who've had problems in their marriages. Yeah. Just a quick one on that marriage.

I just wonder... It just doesn't seem to be a coincidence that it is the first relationship mentioned in the list. Both in Titus and in 1 Timothy.

Yeah. So, his analogy must be blameless and first and foremost faithful to his wife. Yeah. Yeah.

And it just seems that... You know, I just wonder... Actually, you have the definition of...

[40:28] Which way you've got... In the thinking of the elder and also the church family, how to consider the priorities in relation to...

Like, where does that marriage relationship fit in terms of responsibilities... Yeah. ...to responsibilities for the church family? Yeah. Yeah. If you want to sort of say to a minister, who are you?

What are you? They would probably say, first, I'm a Christian. Then, I'm a husband. I'm a father. I'm a minister. And because you have to have it in that order, if you do it the other way around, then it undermines itself.

Yeah. No, Brenda mentioned...

Yeah. And refute those who oppose it. Yeah. And sort of put all that together and sort of suggest to me somebody who...

[41:52] Who doesn't do knee-jerk reactions to... Perhaps issues or problems in the church when he's managing...

And managing God's household. You know, who... Who... Yes.

He thinks before he speaks. I'm praying before he speaks. Yeah. Okay. So, well, I suppose the self-controlled bit sort of covers that.

There's a word here which has power and self... Yeah. It isn't ruled by passion or nervousness or something, but is able to control themselves in reacting.

Is that fair enough? Yeah. Okay. Okay. So, we're actually building up quite a list here. And what I want to say before we go too much... Yeah. Let me just say this bit first. That it's not...

[43:02] We're not... If... Paul assumed that this would work. He's writing to say, Titus, you ought to be able to find these people.

So, we mustn't, in our minds, build it up to such a height of perfection that, you know, only three people in the whole of Christian history have ever been able to be elders.

It ought to be doable. I mean, he expects it to be doable. I'm not trying to sort of whittle away, but I'm saying, as we build this picture in our minds, let's not make it such a pedestal and so difficult that it becomes impossible or a huge burden of expectation on whoever it is.

Right. Sorry. That was just an aside. So, Aaron. Sorry. Nothing major. I was just going to say the one thing that seems to be...

There's kind of weirdly in the middle there, but it seems to be like the... I would say it's the root of everything that we're mentioning. Is it loving what is good? Yeah. It's got to be like...

[44:12] It can't be surface level character and being able to do these things just as out of habit. But, you know, you've got to love what is good.

You've got to love serving the Lord. And it's got to really come from... Yeah. I don't doubt that.

Thank you. Thank you. Love what is good.

Loving Jesus was the first point, wasn't it? Yeah. Yeah. Yes, I'm just looking at it in the original. It says, lover of strangers, lover of goodness.

So, there's something there about what's in the internal attitude, isn't it? Loving strangers, hospitable, a lover of good.

Thank you. Yeah. Let's... Anything that anybody... Is that the ultimate error is of course sanctifying Jesus? Yes.

[45:17] Christ-like demeanor in all these things, isn't it? thank you i mean you could say that the the good shepherds are the ones that lead people to the the good shepherd yeah yeah yeah and i think it's helpful to preserve that distinction that the things that the under shepherds are meant to exemplify they can't exemplify perfectly because jesus alone is the perfect good shepherd i remember somebody once saying to me um the good shepherd knows his sheep so the pastors should know their sheep which i think is true up to a point but but jesus knows the heart and and human beings don't don't know the heart you i mean you know try and get

to know people as best you can but we don't have divine insight into everybody's heart i don't particularly want that actually but uh so there is a distinction between what the way the lord jesus does it and the way people human beings do it should we look at another text and then perhaps i mean there's a lot of texts we could look at but let's where shall we go should we go into a one timothy three one timothy three one to seven one timothy three one to seven here is a trust where they say oh oh here is a trust where they say when he wants to say he's an overseer he desires an overtake now the overseer must be a heart of a friend the husband of but one wife temperate self-controlled respectable hospitable able to teach and not give in to drunkenness not wanted but gentle not forcible but a lover of mother he must manage his own family well and see that his children they have and see that his children they if anyone does not know how to manage their family how can he take care of god's church he must not be a recent convert or he may be conceited for the same judgment as the devil he must also have a good reputation with our souls so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil thank you very much oh okay can bring together there's actually quite a lot of material

so let's just make this the last couple of texts that we look at I think we will we'll call it a day the 1 Peter 3 1 to 6 what did I say sorry 1 Timothy 3 it's getting late isn't it 1 to 7 I think it sort of reinforces what we've seen before doesn't it we notice that this person is an overseer and the idea of managing the household it's more explicit about managing his own household if he can't manage his own household how will he care for God's church I wonder whether that's the same word I can look that up in a moment so we've got the can you put a tick next to the ones that so where was the management one that's up up near the top so that one is reinforced the husband of one wife so the marital which was somewhere down at the bottom a good marital example was reinforced yeah go on yeah yeah the ending

The idea of faithfulness, I think, is an important one in itself. In modern thinking, you know, if you're fed up with this wife, you move on to the only one. But the same may be true of the church. You know, you get fed up with this group of believers, so you move on somewhere else, or you remain faithful to the people you've committed yourself to. Mm-hmm. Yep. But taking your original point of the way it's expressed, in the original it says, of one woman, a husband.

[51:23] So it doesn't actually use any vocabulary of faithfulness. I mean, that's implied, but it's... The husband implies that. The word husband implies that.

Yeah, well, in Greek there is no word for husband. It just says man. So a man, a one-woman man. But, I mean, the idea of faithfulness is there, but it's just not the vocabulary of it.

But your point, just say your point again was about... If he's faithful to his wife, then he might be faithful to the church. Yeah, yeah. Rather than just giving up on something and get difficult.

Yeah, thank you. Yes. I think this idea of faithfulness, dependability, steadiness, reliability, as opposed to being flighty, not taking responsibility, giving up easily, making rash decisions.

I mean, those are all the other opposites, aren't they? Is that fair enough? Is that a reasonable paraphrase? Yes. There are two things that were mentioned before.

[52:39] Able to teach. Yep. Thank you. There are two things that were mentioned before.

Yeah, thank you. So the apt to teach. Just give us the verse for that. Able to teach. Able to teach. And we did mention that before, didn't we? Yeah. Pardon? Pardon? He may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine, is what I've got in Titus 1 verse 9.

That's able to teach, isn't it? And so I think it's the same thing. I don't think it's a new one, is it? But it's not, none of these is the big emphasis that this guy's got to be a pulpit, you know, magical preacher that everybody flocks to hear.

I mean, it might be. I mean, like Spurgeon was. But there's much more emphasis on the sort of character type of person that they are than the spectacular incendiary gifts.

[54:02] A steady person who can teach the Bible and live it is more valuable than, you know, somebody who's a magnificent orator but can't

actually live it out and is no good at managing people.

Is that fair enough? Yep. Can we... And the well thought of by outsiders, I think, is on the same wavelength as that blameless, not open to accusation.

You know, it... I think it's an interesting thing to flag up because we can say that, you know, Christians are persecuted and everybody's down on them.

But actually, that has to be put against the fact that outsiders, there's a genuine sense in which outsiders should say, you know, they're decent people. I don't agree with them.

But, you know, they're decent people. You know, people... Have you ever heard people say that? You know, Christians are completely off the wall, apart from the one or two that I've met, which are really quite nice people.

[55:13] I think there is that aspect to it. Yeah? Yeah. That's a new one, isn't it?

It wasn't in the other passage. This idea of not being too hasty in giving people responsibility because it can go to somebody's head. They think, wow, you know, look at me.

Everybody's looking at me as I preach. I must be the greatest preacher in the world, which you're probably not. You know, it just might feel like that temporarily, but you're probably not. But, yeah, so I think something there about caution and realism.

The perfect opposite of that is not making the church look like a cult. Carry on. It's open.

People can see what goes on. Yeah. Yeah. Oh, dear.

[56:25] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. serving the church yes but um yeah the the boss is the lord jesus yeah sorry servant but you are not my boss yes that's right yeah um okay can we just flip over to chapter five i don't know whether you had time to think about this in verse 17 where it says let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor especially those who labor in preaching and teaching the scripture says you shall not muslin ox when it treads out the grain and the laborer deserves his wages do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses those who persist in sin rebuke them in the presence of all so that the rest may stand in fear etc um do not be hasty in the laying on of hands verse 22 i presume he means don't give people responsibility in a hasty way i think that's probably what he means um did anybody did you get to talk about these verses any thoughts on them go on i think reading that the double honor is means like double portion and links to that next picture of the ox shredding out the grain and muzzling it and getting the reward for the hot work and the double portion reflects the difficulty in the the hardness of the job something like that

I was thinking back over what that meant I looked at my notes from 2017 which is when it was I think and yeah the nearest I got to it was to do with being paid yeah I don't know whether it means paid twice as much as anybody else in the church in my experience that doesn't happen but it does talk about reward yeah yeah yeah it just says you need to pay people properly yeah yes yes yes yes yes yeah yeah

I think that I think that's right it seems to draw a distinction it says that you can have different elders who work in different capacities within the church if they are I've got ruling well and especially laboring in preaching and teaching so I think I think you put that very well if that's their bread and butter preaching and teaching they should be paid properly for that I suppose it's a question of judgment how you work out what properly stands for the laborer deserves his wages and I was just wondering whether you could make a distinction between elders who for whom it's not their bread and butter so you you mentioned Chris Fry I mean Chris Fry had a huge capacity for work so he he did as much in his spare time as some people would do in a full-time job but we we have a history of of elders for whom it is not their bread and butter

Sir Rod Thomas who was a civil engineer no he was a mechanical engineer sorry I'm just thinking you were saying paid properly I mean I think one of the aspects of property is such that they're they're not distracted from from the job of being an elder and managing God's house they're not distracted from that by stresses about money yep that's a good way of putting it when they've got a family yep not not that not that they must be paid so that they can maintain a lavish life because that

brings its own temptations when it happens but they should be able to to live a life where they're not worried about paying bills or kids to use yeah whatever yeah children's shoes yep yeah

I think that's a good way of putting it yes so that they are freed up to not have to be distracted or worried by the necessities of life yeah and that's going to be different in different situations I mean as we are learning to to set somebody up and set a married couple up in in central Brighton is is a takes money yeah yeah yeah yeah um and just just teasing out that that thought there are elders it seems to me there are elders for whom it is not their bread and butter to be doing this and they wouldn't be expected to be laboring and preaching and teaching in the same way so as you said they might preach occasionally but they shouldn't have to feel the burden of that it should be possible for somebody to fulfill the requirements of of looking after their home they have children looking after their children being a good husband and combine that with being an elder without it becoming impossible impossibly stressful and just unworkable it ought to be possible

[63:29] I'm not saying that in every case that can certainly happen but it certainly opens up this as a possibility doesn't it so just I don't know whether this is I think this is okay for me to share this that in Lansing my son-in-law is being approached will he be an elder in the Lansing tabernacle so there's Jamie I don't know what he will decide because he's got a young family and they're doing a lot of work on their house but I mean that would be another sort of current example of somebody who's a spiritually minded person who would not be expected to bear all the burden of preaching and teaching but whom the church would potentially be saying to them you can have a valuable role on the eldership team so I think that's part of our thinking as well I mean I've got lots more material but let's

I think we'll stop there before it begins to before I start beginning to quote the wrong text which is what I did earlier isn't it is that okay is that enough we've been looking to say are we on the right lines so first big question are we on the right lines to be saying appointing elder elders is a right thing for us to be concerned about and I think very definitely yes and then what to be looking for in terms of an elder we're not looking for perfection not looking for the angel Gabriel not looking for a one in a century Christian leader we're just looking for an ordinary steady consistent living Christian bloke who can well let's just go through this list can manage their own household has got moral integrity is can be respected by people from outside who's able to lead able are not rash and ill-tempered somebody who's able to be bold and stand for the truth and refute people who've got it wrong set a good example but is able to teach the Bible somebody in a relationship with money violence alcohol is you know not in you know has the right relationship with those things sets a good example maritally is hospitable consistent living behind the scenes and in public thinks before they speaks self-controlled has a love for what is good a love for strangers perhaps a love for people not hasty the open tool

I was thinking was the church isn't it the way that the church functions people can see that we're we're not weird fanatics because Christianity doesn't make us subhuman it makes us properly human serving the church and then we said something about payment being paid properly and I can't see able to live life without the ministry becoming a burden because they're not paid properly so those are the things that we're looking for I think there's nothing that you didn't know before but it's good just to remind ourselves of those things is that fair enough anybody want to say anything before we close perhaps in a moment Jerome could say a prayer for us but anything that anybody wanted to mention it is indeed any of those any of those any of those any of those any of those any of those any of those any of those any of those any of those any of those any of those any of those

There have been cases of domestic abuse or something, abuse of a child or something, in which case there are not two or three witnesses often.

It can be difficult. Yes. The charge must have been malicious. Yes. I saw a very good definition of a vexatious, malicious charge, which I think I did a screenshot of it, but I couldn't call it to mind.

[68:16] Yes, the idea of evidence base, I suppose that's a whole subject on its own. I think the idea of the elder being rebuked publicly is a sobering one.

I heard Dick Lucas years ago talking about this, and he was talking about things in his own church, in the Anglican church, and he said when you get Christian ministers who fall short, whether it's

maritally or perhaps in terms of abuse of youngsters, he said what happens is they get given a good reference and sent off somewhere else quietly so as not to cause a bad publicity.

And he said that's very wrong. It shouldn't be done like that. And now they're reaping the consequences of having done that the wrong way because it all comes to light.

And they say, why didn't you? Why did you let that happen? Yes. Yes. It's a minefield, isn't it? But it's probably a subject on its own. Rather than ending on that sort of rather unhappy area, let's just remind ourselves again.

[69:41] I think what we've gone through here, just checking back with God's word, are we on the right lines? And I think we are. And I think this just reinforces we're going the right way.

We keep on praying. And those of us who are church members, as we go forward to voting, I think we can do so with a good conscience that we are making the best.

We can't tell the future, but at this point making the decision that God would have us to be making. Jerome, could you close in prayer for us, please? Thank you. Father, we do thank you so much for the wonderful truths that we've been reminded of today.

Thank you for the work that was faithfully proclaimed this morning. And thank you how we were reminded of you as our loving shepherd. Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you shepherd us and you care for us and you tend us and you feed us.

And thank you for the clarity of your word. Thank you for the depth of your word and for what we've pondered and reflected upon this evening about what is required for an elder.

[70:58] Help us, Lord, as we go away to think through these things, to prayerfully consider these things, as we consider the appointing and calling about an elder, a lead elder here in this church, Lord.

May you guide us by your spirit and help us in that way. And I pray, Father, that you will bless us all as we go off into this week with what we've got ahead, whether that be work, family, obligations, and responsibilities, or whatever we have going on, Lord.

May we do it in your strength and to your glory. So be with us, we ask. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.