

Leadership in the Family

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Preacher: Joshua Winters

[0 : 0 0] If you have your Bible with you, you can open it up to 1 Timothy 3. Last Sunday we heard from God's Word a little bit about how the church should be led.

And we heard from Christ in chapter 2, verse 11-15 of this letter to Timothy, that the women are not to teach the men or to have authority over the men in the church.

Instead, they are to submit to the leading men of the church by following their leadership and by learning from their teaching with a quiet spirit. Now, if that sounds crazy to you or if you're just joining us this morning and weren't here last Sunday, I would encourage you to listen to last Sunday's sermon on our church website.

It's at davidsonscbc.org. You can find the address on the bulletin. Some things in the Bible are hard to hear, especially in light of our current cultural context.

But getting that wider biblical perspective often helps us see what's going on here. And how, yes, even the instruction that God has given concerning roles in the church is good.

[1 : 1 6] And now Paul is going to write more fully on this issue of leadership in the church and give specific instructions about this.

We're in chapter 3 here. Let me just read it for us. 1 Timothy chapter 3.

Here is a trustworthy saying. Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his 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. And he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?

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.

[2 : 4 6] So Paul begins with another trustworthy saying here in verse 1. Here is a trustworthy saying. Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task.

It's commendable for a man to desire the role of overseer in the church because the work of overseeing the church is good. It's a service that's needed.

It's a noble thing. And therefore, says Paul in verse 2, we don't let just anybody jump into the leadership of the church.

And what follows is a list of requirements for overseers. The overseer is to be and then he lists out the requirements from verse 2 to verse 7.

Depending on how you count these things, there are about 15-ish things listed. Let's start by making some general observations about some of these things. At least two-thirds of these requirements are character qualities.

[3 : 50] Two of the requirements have to do with the man's relationships in his family, to his wife and to his children specifically. A couple of these things have to do with his competence or his ability.

He must be able to teach. He must manage his own family well. Several of these have to do with his reputation. He is to be above reproach.

He is to have a good reputation with outsiders. He is to be respectable. And then we notice that mixed into this list are a few explanations as to why.

Why does he need to be a man who manages his family well? Why can't he be a recent convert? Why a good reputation with others, with outsiders? What's so important about that?

And reasons are given. Now we're going to work through this list soon. But before we do that, let's just take a step back and understand the larger context here.

[4 : 48] Otherwise, it's hard to know what a list like this is for. What's its relevance? What's an overseer, first of all? Let's start with that. In our church today, we don't really call anybody overseer.

But the word here refers to a person who watches over something. Someone who's responsible to protect, to guard, to see that things go as they should.

And this word often refers to an official position or office. And Paul gives us a good clue as to what the role of an overseer should be in the church in verses 4 and 5.

There he spells out the requirement that a man must manage his own family well. And then he gives this reason. If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?

So that's the role of an overseer in the church. His role is to take care of God's church. Now, we use the term elder more in our church.

[5 : 54] And many of you have heard that used or referred to. What's the relationship between the overseer and the elder? Well, actually, in the New Testament, overseers and elders, those terms are really used interchangeably.

Both refer to the same leadership position in the church. And Paul makes this really clear in his meeting with the elders from Ephesus in the book of Acts, chapter 20.

There we read that Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. And then a few verses down in verse 28, this is what he said to the elders. He said, keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.

Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. So Paul makes it crystal clear for us. The elders in the church are the overseers.

Their role, their job, is to keep watch over the flock. Paul uses the metaphor of shepherding. Like a shepherd looks after his sheep, so you are to keep watch.

[7 : 11] You are to care for, tend the flock, the church, those people in Ephesus that have been bought with God's own blood. Paul then goes on to give them a warning about how false teachers will arise.

And he continues the metaphor. He refers to them as wolves. And he tells the elders to be on guard. So that's another responsibility of elders or overseers.

Not just to care for the flock, but also to protect the flock. From wolves, from false teachers, from divisive people. Then we look to Peter's letter to the churches.

1 Peter, chapter 5. And he helps deepen our understanding of what an elder is and should do. 1 Peter, chapter 5. Peter writes, To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings, who also will share in the glory to be revealed.

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them. Not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be.

[8 : 29] Not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve. Not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

So here Peter directly addresses the elders among the churches in these various provinces. And his charge is very similar to Paul's. What is an elder to do? He is to shepherd God's flock.

He is to watch over the people in the church. He is to do so willingly. He is to do so as a servant. Not lording it over the people in the church.

Hey, I am in charge. You need to listen to me. But instead being an example. And again, we see that shepherding is at the heart of being an elder or an overseer.

Next, we look to what Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus itself. Ephesians chapter 4 verse 11. Here Paul writes, This is the only place in the Bible where pastors are mentioned.

[9 : 54] And guess what? The word literally is the word shepherds. So we might wonder, why has it been translated pastors?

Well, that's actually the Latin word for shepherd. And it came to be used as a proper title for those who had this position in church history. And this is where we can start to get some clarity about how the church should be led.

Shepherds or pastors, elders, overseers, all of these are really referring to the same position of leadership. Our modern Christian church culture today sometimes gets this mixed up.

We think of the pastor as the full-time professional leader of the church. But then, what are the elders? Are they board members?

Are they advisors to the pastor? Or is it the other way around? Does the pastor report to the elders?

[10 : 57] A careful look at these passages reveals that the elders are the shepherds of the church. The shepherds of the church are the elders, the overseers.

There's no hierarchy between them. They all have the same role in the church, which is to shepherd the flock and to give oversight and leadership to the church. Now, according to Paul in 1 Timothy, it does happen that some of the elders in the church end up shepherding full-time.

And in such cases, Paul says they should be compensated for that. They should be able to get their living from the work that they are doing. 1 Timothy 5, verse 17.

The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For Scripture says, Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.

And the worker deserves his wages. So the paid pastor or elder really is God's idea. It's a way that those who excel in leadership, preaching, or teaching can give more of their time to doing that for the benefit of the church.

[12 : 14] This passage here in 1 Timothy 5 also implies some other important things about being an elder. What are the elders responsible for?

It says, The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

Not all of the elders will have it as their primary work to preach or to teach. But all of them are together engaged in directing the affairs of the church.

Now this action of the elders has been translated in various ways. Some Bibles will say the elders who rule well or who govern well, who lead well, are worthy of double honor.

Now some of those terms have baggage in our culture today. But the overall implication of this word is that it is the elders who are to give leadership to the church. They're to direct the affairs of the church.

[13 : 19] And this word really implies not just doing that kind of work, but also having some measure of real authority over the people in the church. This is where last week's instructions concerning men and women begin to make sense.

As we heard last Sunday, women are not permitted to have authority over men in the church. Well, how could they do that unless there is a position of real authority in the church to be held by some of the men?

Well, the elders, the overseers, are that position. Now we might wonder, are there other places that confirm this, that there is this authority structure going on in the church, that elders are to have authoritative leadership in the church?

There are some other scriptures. We can go back to 1 Peter. After he charges the elders to shepherd the flock, he goes on in verse 5 to say, in the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders.

That word submit implies authority. Probably the clearest statement about this is Hebrews chapter 13, verse 17, which says this, Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account.

[14 : 47] Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you. So the elders or overseers, shepherds, leaders, they are the group of people in the church who have been given the task of caring for the people of the church, watching over them, protecting the flock, leading the flock, directing the affairs of the church.

And this role, this position, is an authoritative position. There is to be an authority structure in the church, just like there is in the home. In the family, the husband is the head of the household.

We saw that last Sunday, Ephesians chapter 5, verse 23. He is the one who must manage his household well, as we just heard, 1 Timothy 3, verses 4 and 5.

And in the church, it's the elders or overseers who have been given that authoritative role for the local church family. And this authority has been instituted by God for the benefit of his people.

What happens when there are sheep but no shepherd? The flock goes nowhere or the flock scatters. What happens to the sheep when they have a bad shepherd?

[16 : 12] This is why 1 Timothy 3, verses 1-7 is so important. These requirements for an elder not only protect the position of elder, but they protect the whole local flock from all kinds of bad things that can happen when men who are unfit to lead seek after authority and leadership in the church.

These requirements are here so that the people in the church who are not leaders can affirm those who should be and know clearly, yep, that guy, he is an example worth following.

And they are here so that the people in the church who are not leaders can put out of leadership men who are disqualified and should not be in leadership. Many Christians over the years have made this puzzling statement.

They have said, the Bible is virtually silent about how the church should be led. It doesn't say anything about what kind of governance model we should have. But as we've just seen looking through these passages, it's far from the truth.

There's a whole model given to us by Christ through his apostles. And what we see here in the scriptures is not board governance like we see in secular organizations today.

[17 : 35] Instead, we see a plurality of elders in each local church who have authority. A church that is elder-led.

Now, we might wonder at this point if there's a case to be made for congregationalism. Congregational decision-making. And I'm not going to get into this too much this morning except to say that in the New Testament there are several moments, important moments in the life of the church where the whole church was involved.

Church discipline was one of them. Sending out missionaries was another. Rebuking an elder who had been sinning is a third. Now, these things are debated and they're speculated on.

Did the church actually vote in these instances? Was the church the final court of authority in these moments as some suggest?

Or was the church present simply to help everyone come to a consensus guided by the elders? Was the presence of the congregation meant to add the full weight and resolve of the church to the course of action that was being led by the elders?

[18 : 53] It seems clear in the Bible that the congregation plays a role in the most important moments of the local church. But whether that role is authoritative decision-making by voting is not stated.

What is stated is that the church should be elder-led and that the leaders or overseers are the ones who have authority in the church. And so we should probably go with what's stated in the Bible rather than what's not.

The picture that we're given in this letter of 1 Timothy is that the church is to operate like a household or a family. And there are times when the whole family must be gathered.

I don't know if you guys do this in your house but in mine we call it family meeting and we bring everybody together all the kids together and that's needed sometimes because sometimes decisions affect everyone.

Sometimes urgent feedback is needed. We need to have a conversation right now together as a family to know what the best course of action is. Whether it will suit the needs of everyone in the family.

[20 : 03] And so I would say yeah, congregational meetings are warranted at times. but a fully democratic style of governance where the board comes to the congregation for approval seems to be a little bit backwards.

Let's go now to the qualifications for an overseer here in 1 Timothy chapter 3. Let's look through these things. Paul says the overseer is to be above reproach.

Very simply this means that they must have an excellent reputation. To be above reproach means that slander doesn't stick. It means that if anyone was to try to drag your name down into the mud people wouldn't believe them because you're so well known to be the opposite.

The example I've got written down here might hit a little close to home for someone visiting with us this morning but if someone began vandalizing all the flower pots in Davidson and then someone else said I know who's been sneaking around and pouring gasoline into the flower pots in the middle of the night it's Lana Schmitke I saw her with my own eyes would anybody believe that?

No because we all know Lana and her love for flowers she's on Communities in Bloom she helps get these pots ready she takes such joy in beautifying her yard and her flowers when it comes to flowers and growing things Lana is above reproach the community knows that it's just a matter of time before the true culprit will be identified in the same way an elder must have this kind of well known consistent steadfast character when it comes to his conduct his actions his words Paul says he must be faithful to his wife literally of a man who is of one woman the husband and so sexual purity and faithfulness is a must he must be temperate a temperate person does things in moderation they're not given to rash or obsessive behavior an elder must be self-controlled very similar meaning to temperate he's not a man who seems like he's out of control or a slave to passions or desires or pleasures but he's a man who governs himself an elder must be respectable or honorable a man who gathers the respect of others by the way that he lives an elder must be hospitable we generally think of hospitality as being welcoming to strangers or guests or as entertaining guests in the home but I think probably the meaning is a little bit broader than just having people over for dinner regularly it's about really caring for and providing for the needs of other people and being a really welcoming person means that I'm on the lookout for the newcomer the stranger the outcast and Jesus is the very best example of what it means to be hospitable in the Bible

[23 : 34] I think also of the parable of the good Samaritan that Jesus told it paints a picture of a truly hospitable person this character quality has to do with being others focused it has to do with going out of our way to welcome and to meet the needs of others and it's at the heart of it is love a character of love Paul says an elder must be able to teach this is one of the skills that an elder must have now as we said earlier not every elder will end up doing the work of teaching but every elder must be able to teach and this requirement helps us to see that it's the responsibility of the elders as a group to do the teaching in the church it's a big part of shepherding the elders are responsible to put God's word before the people and to call them to respond to explain what God's word means and help apply

God's word to our lives as a church and lead us in that in obedience to that this requirement is also why women cannot be elders because as we heard last Sunday women are not permitted to teach men in the church and teaching of the church is a primary responsibility of an elder an elder must not be given to drunkenness addiction to substances is a no-go for a person aspiring to be an elder substances often have ill effects and impair judgment and addictions wreak havoc in many other areas of life as well an elder must not be violent says Paul the Greek word here means given to fighting I've never seen anybody really throw a punch in the church but think of the demeanor or the attitude of a bully an elder must not be a bully we're not to put people in leadership in the church who are going to be combative or manipulative or who are known for really emotionally or verbally bullying others to get their way or to get others to do what they want them to do some men can be like a bull in a china shop don't put those men in leadership in the church says Paul an elder must not be violent but must be gentle again

Jesus is the ultimate role model here gentle does not mean compromising Jesus spoke the truth he rebuked the hypocrites the Pharisees he told that one man that he healed on one occasion stop sinning or something worse may happen to you but he was gentle through and through a bruised reed he did not break a smoldering wick he did not snuff out where some of us might have wanted to give someone a swift kick in the pants Jesus was gentle think of how he bore with those disciples they were always arguing and fighting with each other they were jockeying for position he could have just smacked them all across the head many times and yet he patiently sat down with them again and again and he taught them not this way but this way an elder must not be quarrelsome some translations render this positively an elder must be peaceable so not argumentative not bent on getting everybody else to agree with their own ideas or opinions and then going into fight mode when that person doesn't comply or agree an elder must not be a lover of money this has to do with greed and we could do a whole sermon on that but maybe another time an elder must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect and then the reason is given which we mentioned earlier if anyone does not know how to manage his own family how can he take care of

God's church so the family at home is the proving ground for whether someone should be an elder in the church the church is the household of God we are a family but we are a bigger one and so a man must prove himself with his own family at home before he is qualified to serve in leadership in the larger church family and notice the way that he must manage his family that's mentioned here he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect so he must not be a man who verbally abuses his children to get them to submit or a cruel man it's not just about good behavior it's about how the man treats his children and family respectably with dignity abusive men are disqualified we should also note here that the word used for family it's the same word used elsewhere through the letter for household and managing a household well is more than just the people it means overseeing and taking responsibility for the whole thing all the affairs of the household and this is a place where many men have just been content to just dump on their wives a burden that they were never meant to bear like I'll provide the finances

I'll go to work but you look after the rest when I come home I expect there to be a meal hot and ready waiting for me on the table and then I'm going to go out most evenings and I'm going to play hockey and you know hang out with my friends no that's abdicating responsibility men are to provide more than just finances to the family they're to provide leadership and care they're to direct the affairs of the household in a manner worthy of respect verse 6 he must not be a recent convert so no new believers in leadership in the church verse 7 he must also have a good reputation with outsiders so a good reputation with unbelievers or people outside the church people may not agree with us they may even find some of our beliefs offensive or repulsive but they ought to know us as men of our word who genuinely care for others love others are kind are eager to serve are eager to meet needs there are enough

[31 : 07] Christian qualities enough Christian deeds that are not offensive to win the respect of outsiders of unbelievers even if some of what we believe is offensive to them now this is quite the list of requirements but there's just a couple things we need to know about this list first of all no man is perfect I mean we can look at this and think man who could possibly qualify we all have moments where we fail to be temperate or self controlled or gentle lose a temper but do these things describe our general overall character and behavior is that how others would see us again no man is perfect we're all still sinners but what happens when we blow it do we make excuses do we blame someone else do we sin persistently and keep doing it again and again or do we humble ourselves before God and others confess our sins and turn away from them with God's help second the question has been asked is this a bare minimum list or is this a lofty really hard to achieve kind of list it's important to recognize that a number of the qualities in this list are things that we're commanded to be just as as Christians in other letters in the

New Testament things like gentle self-controlled not given to drunkenness so in that sense this is kind of a bare minimum list many of these things reflect what a mature follower of Jesus is to be like on the flip side there are some things here that just don't come easily we must pray we must wrestle with the flesh because gentleness doesn't come easily emotions are powerful self-control is not easy managing a household and a family well is not easy earning this kind of a reputation with people is not easy and it takes time maybe this is why overseers are called elders quite literally older ones if younger men attain to these requirements it's probably the exception rather than the norm because these things take time to develop and grow in the life of a believing man they're the fruit of an abiding relationship with Jesus that's been going on for some time but this is good because if we're going to install men in our church into a leadership role where they have real authority over us and we are going to submit to them we need them to be these kind of men not domineering or abusive or manipulative or power hungry not passive or abdicating careless uninterested or self absorbed we need them to be men of Christ like character so finally we come to how this applies to us here in our church today and I have five things the first one we need to continue to shift away from a secular board governance style of leadership towards the kind of shepherding elder model of leadership that the scriptures point us to and we have been making this shift over the past number of years at some point we need to update our constitution to reflect that eventually our current elders will be quite elderly where will our next elders come from men it's important that every one of you aspires to be these things at the least that you strive to be men of character and live an example worth following where will the future elders of the church come from well they must come from among us men here in the church now not all of us men will become elders not all of us are wired to teach but at the least all of us can set that example for others in the church that's worth following as we men have been hearing at lead we need to reject passivity we need to accept responsibility we need to lead courageously and we need to invest eternally following the example of

Jesus Christ the second Adam and not living in the shadow of the first Adam those of you who are elders there's only three of you in the room today's not the day to pat yourself on the back today's the day to soberly reflect over the things in this list and I want to encourage you to ask yourself which of these things do I need to grow in most the church is looking to you to set the example in speech in faith in love in purity in conduct those of you who are members when the time comes to serve on the nominating committee or to affirm a new man for the position of elder this is number four let's not just put someone into those positions because they're willing to do it or because we don't want to do it or because that person has experience in business or finance or on boards we don't want to just ask someone to serve as an elder because well they haven't really been asked yet or how to turn and we don't want to hurt their feelings they must meet these requirements this is why we've been given them and lastly number five the scriptures clearly present the elders as having authority within the church authority to teach and to lead and to call the rest of us to believe and obey the word of God and the rest of us are called to submit to their authority authority now we may not like this but the

Lord Jesus is the one who has set it up this way he's the one asking this of us and many in our North American churches have just lost sight of this authority structure in the church we've come to see the elders as the ones that we choose to serve us the ones that we have voted to look after the affairs of the church so that we can do whatever we want to do we've come to see ourselves as the final authority under Christ in the church with more of that congregationalist mindset and then if one of the elders says something or asks something I don't like I'll just do as I please or I'll go somewhere else I'll find a new church now obviously if the elders ask something or teach something that is contrary to the word of God you stand on the word of God and take a brother or sister with you and talk to that elder with love and respect and if we've done according to this passage and put the right men humble men into those positions then by the grace of God they will respond they will acknowledge their mistakes they will confess they will repent finally here in

Hebrews chapter 13 verse 17 we're urged to submit to the authority of the leaders in the church because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account do this so that their work will be a joy not a burden for that would be of no benefit to you we're told that the work of the leaders in the church can be a joy or it can be a burden and if we make it a burden to our leaders it's of no benefit to us so have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority so that it can be a joy for them that will bring benefit to all of us as a church family as the Lord leads us there's lots more that we could say on this issue if you have other thoughts or questions you'd like to talk about this I mean there's so much we chopped out of the message here there's books whole books written on this subject it's an important one but we'll leave it at that for this morning let's pray

[40 : 13] Father in heaven we pray and ask that you would give us each the grace that we need to follow these instructions those of us who are currently in leadership that we would be the way that you want us to be in our lives in our character those of us who are not that we would submit and follow the leadership that you have raised up and appointed and I pray that we would more and more learn to function like this as a church that we would operate the way that is pleasing to you and that declares your goodness and your grace to the world around us we ask this in Christ's name amen