

How A Church Cares for Its Leaders

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 10 November 2024

Preacher: Pastor Andrew

[0 : 00] Open your Bibles, if you would please, to 1 Timothy chapter 5.! 1 Timothy chapter 5.! We're going to be picking up at verse 17, and it opens this way.

It says, Let the elders who rule be counted worthy of double honor. Let the elders who rule be counted of double honor.

So, there's at least two reasons why this is challenging this morning. First is because when we hear the word rule, I don't know about you, but there's flashes of, what does that mean?

Who am I submitting myself to? And how in the world can I possibly honor that kind of leader? A kind of leader who rules. We've come to understand the challenges of authority that are misappropriated and overused in our culture, and so we tend to bristle against leadership and authority and rule.

So, we need to understand what the Bible says about that kind of spiritual leadership. What does it look like? The second reason why this is a challenging passage is because it seems a little self-serving, to be quite honest with you.

[1 : 42] Because as an elder, here I am trying to instruct you, as we're walking through this passage, Honor me! Ha ha! Hey, you need to give me double honor.

You need to consider me worthy. That just doesn't go well. And so, it's not really a passage that I prefer to preach, quite honestly. But this is how we do it.

Working through passages, working through texts. And so, we preach the things that we like, and we preach the things we don't. And we understand this guiding principle.

We understand, as Paul will write in the second letter to Timothy, he'll say in chapter 3, verses 16 and 17, he says, All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and it is profitable.

Right? Profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction, and righteousness, so that the man of God might be perfect, thoroughly equipped, for every good work. And so, this is in God's word, and this is good for you.

[2 : 43] This is good for me. God has given us leaders. And leaders are good. And when we come to understand the right kind of response to leaders, then we come to enjoy the benefits of good spiritual leadership.

All throughout the Bible, we have seen God's design for leaders. And it's not the kind of leadership that we would come to assume in culture today.

If we were to characterize leadership in culture today, some of the things that might come to your mind are things like charisma. Man, he's full of energy. He draws attention.

He's inspirational. Or he's a great vision caster. He knows what's coming. He knows the steps on how to get there. He can cast that vision, and he can draw people along with him.

Maybe he has the gift of communication. He knows how to articulate difficult concepts. He knows how to inspire and draw people to his message. Maybe he has that winning personality.

[3 : 49] Or he has that courage. Or maybe he has this driving work ethic. Whatever it is that we associate with good leadership, that's maybe some of the ideas that we get.

But I want you to know, in God's economy, the best spiritual leaders are the best followers. The best spiritual leaders are the best followers.

Make no mistake. Those who have learned to lead God's people, those who have been entrusted with the greatest responsibility of providing direction and leadership and authority and care and love for God's people throughout time have been those who have learned to walk in the steps of God.

To know what the Bible says and to align their heart and life to do what God's Word says. That's why when the Apostle Paul is giving qualifications for spiritual leaders back in chapter 3 of 1 Timothy, that's what he brings to the surface.

That's what he wants to bring out front. It's not how great they are at communicating. It's not how gifted they are at crafting vision or their strategic nature. No, it's all about their character.

[5 : 08] It's all about do they know what the Bible says and have they incorporated it into their life? The greatest spiritual leaders are the ones who've learned to be the greatest followers of God.

We think about Moses. I mean, I love the exercise and I would just encourage it for you. Even this afternoon, read through the book of Exodus and just do this exercise.

Every time you see, and God said, followed by, and Moses did, underline those phrases and you will be blown away. The leadership of God over Moses' life, that was preeminent.

That's what made him a spiritual leader. It shows up in the life of Joshua. Here he's concerned about stepping in to the shadow of this great leader Moses. And what's the encouragement that God gives to Joshua?

We find it in Joshua 1, 8, and 9. This is the key for success, Joshua. You want to be a great leader? Here's what it looks like. This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth. You shall meditate on it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it.

[6 : 25] For then you will make your way prosperous and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of a good courage. Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed.

For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. Joshua, you want to be a great leader? Follow me. Know my word and follow my commands.

And I will be with you. I will prosper you. And I will fulfill my objectives through you. Trust me. Follow me. And then lead the people to do the same.

That becomes the pattern throughout all of Scripture. We don't have time this morning to talk about all of the examples through Scripture. But we see it on and on and on as we move our way through the Scripture.

Leaders who are marked by humility. Marked by obedience to God. Courage to proclaim God's word. To accept the challenges that come. Men who have learned to listen and follow God.

[7 : 26] And that's what we're going to see in our passage today. We're going to see that those kinds of leaders that have risen up and have followed God in the greatest ways.

And are now entrusted with this great responsibility of leading and exercising authority over God's family. They're to do it in a way that is recognized.

Do it in a way that is met with the care of God's family. God's people. In our passage there are going to be four commands. Four imperatives that we're going to run across and move through as we work our way through this passage.

Four imperatives that we find throughout this passage. That address us as a church in our response and care for the spiritual leaders that God has set over us.

First, a church must honor its leaders. A church must honor its leaders. Let me read this passage for us and then we'll jump into our text for today.

[8 : 28] Beginning again at verse 17. It says this. Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor. Especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.

For the scripture says you shall not muzzle an 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.

As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all so the rest may stand in fear. In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels, I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality.

Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others. Keep yourselves pure. No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.

The sins of some people are conspicuous. Going before them to judgment. But the sins of others appear later. So also, good works are conspicuous.

[9 : 41] And even those that are not cannot remain hidden. Excuse me. We find four commands in this passage. The first command is right there at the front of verse 17.

It says, Be considered worthy. That's our first command. Honor your leaders. And there are several ways that we're informed or encouraged on how to honor our leaders and the reasons for why we should honor them.

Well, we honor them, first of all, because of their service to the body. Honor them because of their service to the body. Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor.

Honor. This word to be considered worthy is a present tense. It's a present imperative. It's a command that Paul is issuing to this church. Recognize your responsibility to provide honor.

This double honor, as he says. This respect. It's really the word to know. To recognize. To be aware. To call attention to. Recognize those among you who are serving, leading, ruling well.

[10 : 55] Recognize them and respect them. Respect them in a way that calls attention to their life. Respect them in a way that aligns your heart and life to identify and to submit to and to revere what God has called them to do.

There is this responsibility to esteem them well. And we esteem them in a couple of different ways.

We esteem them by drawing attention to the work that they do and by supporting them in ministry. But who are these elders after all?

Who are they? Well, they can be older men or older women. We actually see that at the beginning of this chapter. These two words. Presbyteros.

It refers to both older men and older women. In verses 1 and 2. It says, Do not rebuke an older man. That's our word. Presbyteros. And younger men as brothers.

[11 : 57] Older women. That's also presbyteros. As mothers. Younger women as sisters. But it's also used extensively throughout the gospels. The word elders refers to these spiritual leaders who were there among the people of God.

And it's often attached to scribes and Pharisees and to the religious leaders there in Jerusalem. The elders that were there. This word is common in Judaism to describe religious leadership.

It was also then applied to the spiritual leadership within the church. These elders who were exercising leadership and authority among God's people. We see that in chapter 4 verse 14.

Just look at that for a moment. Where Paul tells Timothy, Do not neglect the gift you have which was given to you by prophecy. When the council of elders laid their hands on you.

This group of spiritual leaders in the church recognized the gifts that God had given to you. They appointed you for ministry. So when we're speaking of an elder, we're speaking of spiritual leaders in the church.

[13:04] The usage in the New Testament. We see elders and overseers used interchangeably throughout the New Testament. We saw that word overseer in chapter 3 verses 1 and following.

Here we see the word elder. And those two words are used interchangeably in Titus chapter 1. Titus 1:5 says this. This is why I left you in Crete.

That you might put what remained into order and appoint elders in every town as I directed you. And then a couple verses later. For an overseer as God's steward must be above reproach.

He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain. And then on and on the list goes about his qualifications. We see that leaders, elders, pastors, overseers are interchangeable words throughout the New Testament to describe this spiritual leadership.

But what do these leaders do? Well, they're leaders who rule. They're leaders who exercise authority. This word for rule is expressed and describes one who guides or directs.

[14:16] One who provides direction for the affairs of the church. One who provides this ongoing activity of authority over the church.

As we observe the way that Paul uses this same term for overseer, we get a clearer picture of what they do. Even looking back to chapter 3, he will use this same word for rule when speaking of a way an elder and a deacon will manage their families.

Notice chapter 3, verses 4 and 5. It says, He must manage, that's our word to rule here in chapter 5. He must manage his household well with all dignity.

For if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? Do you get the sense of the kind of leadership, the kind of authority, the kind of rule that a pastor is meant to express for the church?

The same kind of leadership that he exercises in his family? The same kind of tenderness and care he provides for his children, for his wife? The same kind of affection that he will demonstrate to those members of his own household?

[15:28] That's the kind of management that an elder is meant to exact in the church. The New Testament is full of principles that will set the boundaries, the guardrails, as it were, on how an elder is meant to govern the church.

Christ will talk about and differentiate or contrast the leadership between the world and the elders within the church from Matthew chapter 20, verses 25 to 28, when he says this, Jesus called them, speaking of his disciples to him and said, you know that the rulers of the Gentiles lorded over them, and their great ones exercised authority over them.

It shall not be so among you, but whoever would be great among you must be your servant. Whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.

So the leadership in the church, the elders, the pastors, the overseers, their leadership is meant to reflect and resemble the leadership of Christ, which was a leadership preeminently of service, of spending, of love, not in lording it over and using their position as a means of power, but a ministry that will be directed by the word of God.

It will be displayed the self-sacrificing care of God. It will be governed by the wisdom and directed by the wisdom of God, empowered by the spirit of God, and motivated for the glory of God.

[17:11] In every way, he is following after the Savior and leading others, encouraging others to follow along. His ministry will be bold and unwavering regarding the truth.

He will seek to protect the flock. It will be marked with zeal and eagerness. It will be impartial. We find from 1 Corinthians, it will be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

It will be a ministry that resembles Christ and points to Christ. It's not a leadership for personal gain. It's not a leadership for fleecing the flock.

It's not a leadership that is lording it over others. But it's also not a leadership that's weak. It's not a leadership that avoids conflict. It's not a leadership that will resist and run away from problems.

No, it steps in. It's bold and seeks to guard others from danger. It's a leadership that's not just about making decisions, but in equipping others for ministry.

[18:17] This multiplying kind of leadership that elders and pastors are meant to have. Despite popular opinion, strong, godly leadership is good.

It's good for you. It's good for us to have strong leaders that stand in the gap. It's good for us to have strong leaders who point the way to Christ.

It's good for you to have leaders who care for your soul and seek to encourage you in things that may be difficult. It's good for you to have leaders who are able to devote themselves to the word of God and to instruct you in ways that will lead you and point you to him.

Good leaders are good for the church. So the church has not only the responsibility, but the joy of honoring those leaders because of their ministry, but also because of their instruction in the word.

And that's where we turn next. They honor those leaders because of their instruction in the word. Notice at the very end of verse 17, it says, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.

[19:36] Everything in the Christian life is due to the word of God. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

You have a relationship. I have a relationship with God because of the ministry of the word. Whoever that ministry came from, it came through the word.

And so it's the word of God that lifts you and restores you in relationship to God himself. And it's the word of God that strengthens you for the work that God has called you to.

As Jesus prays in John 17, he says, sanctify them by your truth. Your word is truth. So the people of God are strengthened and carried along by the word of God.

What a joy it is to have spiritual leaders who have given themselves to know the word and have sought to teach that word to you. They labor in teaching and preaching.

[20 : 37] This word for labor is the work to describe that which is hard. Matter of fact, it's the work that comes to the point of fatigue and exhaustion. It tucks them out.

It makes them collapse into bed. But they do it because they're doing it, their work heartily as to the Lord and not to men. They do it because they are expending themselves for the things that matter.

The church of Ephesus would have known precisely what Paul was talking about in this labor of ministry that he gave to them. Both public ministry and private ministry.

We find this ministry of preaching and teaching and I think the translation does us a bit of a disservice. It says, those who labor in preaching and teaching and we get this image in our mind of what that must look like.

We imagine somebody standing in front of a group preaching or teaching them or somebody perhaps that's in a Sunday school class or in some way teaching or preaching.

[21 : 40] But the literal translation of this is those who labor in the word and doctrine. These are not verbs. These are nouns.

They have given themselves to the logos, to the word of God. They have given themselves to the teaching, to the instruction, to the word of God itself, to the doctrine of God.

They've committed themselves to know what the Bible says and so in every interaction that they have, both personal and public, it's an interaction that is governed by their love for the word and is instructive and is helpful.

God has blessed Maranatha with great teachers. And I'm not speaking of myself. The legacy of godly teachers in this church are immense.

I think about the 60-year history that we have as a church and I think I am really only the third main pastor who's been here.

[22 : 45] I know there have been four. One was here for a short period of time but the legacy of faithful teaching and the ministry of building up the body because of the faithful teaching of the word of God.

But I also think about the commitment of your other pastors to the word of God. I think of Pastor John every single Sunday morning. His commitment to the word of God in making sure that the songs that we sing in the transitions between the various songs that are introduced and making sure that they are Christ-centered and biblical and sound in theology.

His interactions with you, especially teenagers and young men on Tuesday morning is instructive and helpful. It demonstrates his love for the word of God.

And then Pastor David, how many of you at this church have been blessed by the ministry of Pastor David and Brenda? And I don't want to forget about Kristen. Their ministry, Pastor David and Brenda, especially the couples in the counseling, the leaders, the small group leaders, the various leaders of the ministries here at our church and the significance of that commitment to the word of God.

You know when you ask them a question about the Bible that you can trust the answer. It's an answer that has been undergirded by a commitment to truth, to teaching, to the word.

[24 : 16] They've been faithful because of their faithfulness to the word. They deserve your honor and respect. I appreciate this quote from the book The Path to Being a Pastor.

It says, These will be men who are masters of the word and mastered by the word. Men who are masters of the word and are mastered by the word.

That's what we're talking about. We're talking about somebody who has the gift of teaching. Well, over a century ago, as Charles Haddon Spurgeon said of John Bunyan who wrote Pilgrim's Progress, he said this of John Bunyan.

He said, Prick him anywhere and you will find that his blood is Bibline. The very essence of the Bible flows from him.

He cannot speak without quoting a text for his soul is full of the word of God. That's the kind of leader we desire to be.

[25 : 23] That's the kind of leader that you need to commend. They've distinguished themselves as those who love the word and love you to the word. Finally, in this section, you honor them because of the teaching of the scripture.

What does the Bible say about how you honor your leaders? Verse 18, for the scripture says, you shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain and the laborer deserves his wages.

The second part of this quote that's drawn from Christ's words in Luke, the first part of this quote that's drawn from the Old Testament. Deuteronomy chapter 25, 4 simply says, you shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain.

When the ox is doing the work, it's pulling that stone, it's rolling over the grain, you have a responsibility as the farmer to ensure you're doing that oxen good service.

Paul reasons that if God could show concern in the law for an ox, then the congregation obviously needs to show concern for their pastor.

[26 : 35] That makes sense. And Christ himself in his own words to his disciples in Luke chapter 10, he says this, after the Lord appointed the 72 others and sent them on ahead of him two by two into every town and place where he himself was about to go, he says, go your way, behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.

Carry no money bag, no knapsack, no sandal and greet no one on the road. Wait a second, Jesus, what are you asking us to do? Carry no money, no knapsack?

How are we going to care for ourselves? Well, don't worry. Don't worry. Remain in the same house, eating and drinking. What they provide for the laborer deserves his wages.

Do not go from house to house. And I appreciate that second piece, the integrity of staying where you are in trusting the provision that God has given to you, not in trying to search out better options.

Oh, that house over there has a pool. I think I'm going to go over there. Even though this place that I'm at is kind of stinky and kind of small. Trust the provision that God has given to you.

[27 : 48] Trust that God will provide. And church, be those who honor through support in honoring God's word. And I can say my experience at Maranatha has been that you have excelled in this.

I'm grateful for how you have allowed the pastoral team to serve without having to worry about financial things. you have excelled in your care for your pastors.

Thank you. Next, the next responsibility. We find in verse 19, it says a church must protect its leaders.

A church must protect its leaders. Notice, do not admit a charge. That's another command. Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.

This word for charge is the word for formal charges that are being brought. One commentator says this, quote, there are always people eager to falsely accuse a man of God.

[29 : 04] They may do so because they resent his calling, they reject his teaching, they resist biblical authority, they resent virtue, are jealous of the Lord's blessing on his life.

Ultimately, however, they demonstrate by making such accusations that they have become messengers of Satan, end quote. We live in a time that is hostile to leadership.

We live in a time, and I just read a book, and I won't tell you the title of the book, but I just read a book that the whole thing was about making sure you keep your leaders in check, and it doesn't incorporate really, as far as I'm concerned, any real biblical, any biblical instructions related to it.

It's all built in culture, it's all built on the day and time in which we live, and not established on the foundation or principles of God's word.

And Paul will move to this next. Certainly, your leaders are not without problems, okay? And I'll be the first to admit that your leaders make mistakes, your leaders sin.

[30 : 20] I'll go so far as to say that there are times where we sin against you, and that will be dealt with in just a moment.

But so often in today's day and age, the smallest offense, the smallest problem, I can't even remember, this is going back several years now, and I had somebody come to me and said, I'm really angry at you, Pastor Andrew.

And I said, really? Tell me, what did I do? And he said, well, six months ago, you walked down these stairs, you walked right past me, and you didn't even acknowledge me.

I'm like, wow, why didn't you tell me this six months ago? I am so sorry, we could have cleared this up a long time ago. But this is the day and age in which we live.

And by the way, I'll tell you, there are actual ministries that target pastors for this specific purpose. They want to dismantle the ministry, they want to discredit the ministry, they want to blow up the church.

[31 : 32] Can I encourage each of you to seek to honor your leaders, to give them the benefit of the doubt.

I'm thinking particularly of 1 Corinthians chapter 13, where Paul says that the quality of love is it bears all things, it believes all things, it hopes all things, it endures all things.

Now, certainly, the apostle Paul isn't trying to set leaders apart and trying to say that they don't have any accountability because that's where we go next. You need to protect your leaders but you need to understand that a church must also discipline its sinning leaders.

A church does have a responsibility to hold their leaders accountable. We find that in verses 20 and 21. As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all so that the rest may fear.

In the presence of God, of Christ Jesus and the elect angels, I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality.

[32 : 44] We're all aware, especially in the last several months and several years, of the failures of really prominent pastors. We know the devastating effect that that sin has on individuals that they're interacting with and the churches that they serve.

We know how that discredits their ministry, how that dishonors the name of God, how that brings a measure of tarnish to the beauty of the gospel.

We recognize the significance of sin and the effects that it has on the church itself. And the leaders of God's church, those who have been called to spiritual leadership within the church, because of the public nature of their ministry, the apostle Paul is helping Timothy understand public sin must be treated in public ways.

And so when he's confronted and when he persists in sin and when you see this characteristic of his life continues and there's no posture for repentance or changing his heart, you must stand before the congregation and rebuke and provide discipline and confrontation of him in the presence of all.

Why? So the rest will fear. It stands as a significant warning to the rest of the body of the seriousness of sin. It helps to expose the nature of his leadership and helps to protect and preserve the body of Christ from those things that would cause harm.

[34 : 27] Timothy, as we've seen throughout this letter, going back to chapter one, what is the mandate? He is to charge some so they teach no other doctrine. Why? Because it would lead to shipwreck.

That's what he says later on in chapter one. It has eternal ramifications. So for the sake of the beauty of Christ and the gospel message, do what is necessary to keep him in check.

Rebuke him in the presence of all so the rest may fear. So the rest might understand the seriousness of sin. So the rest may come to terms with how their sin is also leading maybe to smaller effects in the circles in which they run.

You have a responsibility to protect him, but you also have a responsibility to discipline him. Finally, in verses 22 to 25, a church must promote its leaders.

A church must promote its leaders. It says, do not be hasty in the laying on of hands. That's our imperative. That's our command here. Nor take part in the sins of others.

[35 : 35] Keep yourself pure. No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments. sins. The sins of some people are conspicuous, going before them to judgment, but the sins of others appear later.

So also good works are conspicuous, and even those that are not cannot remain hidden. There's the principle of promoting, and this laying on of hands is likely the confirmation of these men, these leaders who have risen up within the church, this confirmation of their role of leadership, similar to what we saw in chapter 4, verse 14, that council of elders that laid hands on Timothy, kind of commissioning him to ministry.

This is what we're talking about here. And Paul wants Timothy to understand, because of the serious nature of leadership, take your time.

Be patient. Don't rush into it. And there's two amazing, benefits that we see here. We see that the sins of people, some people, are obvious, they're conspicuous.

You wait long enough, you're going to see their sin. You're going to see their sinful tendencies, you're going to see how they relate to others, you're going to recognize whether or not they're fit for ministry.

[36 : 59] That's why in chapter 3, the apostle Paul says make sure that he's not a novice, these elders, and for deacons, make sure that they're first tested. You want to make sure the leaders that you have are those who represent the consistent, faithful integrity of walking and following after God.

They do that long enough, you will know their true nature. You'll either see their obvious sins, or the flip side is you're going to see their obvious works, their good works, their true heart, their faithful character, their integrity, their love for others, their zeal for the scriptures, their passion for service, their humility and obedience.

You'll see those things, they're going to come to light, just trust the process and be patient along the way. Having godly leaders is so important, Timothy.

Take your time, be patient, but the other principle that's important for us to understand here too, is that it is the church that's responsible for promoting leaders to their place.

Going back to chapter 3, verse 1, it says, the saying is trustworthy. If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.

[38 : 22] Therefore, an overseer must be above reproach, and so on and so forth. In other words, just because a young man aspires to leadership and wants this good thing, is not an automatic for them to serve in that position.

Make sure, Timothy and church, that their life is squared up with the gospel. And it's the church that will do the work of confirming those young men for that kind of leadership.

And so, the beauty of the church in that role of raising up godly leaders and doing it in a way that shows their confidence in the Lord and their patience in the process.

All of this, of course, is possible because of the work of Christ. We have a church family. We have church leaders because of what Christ accomplished for us on the cross through his death and through his resurrection.

We're going to transition now to our time of communion. I'm going to pray, invite the men who are helping to come forward and we'll observe this time of communion.

[39 : 37] Father, thank you for your kindness to us in giving us spiritual leaders. Thank you that they do it through the instruction of the word of God and through the power of the spirit of God.

God, I pray that as your people, you would help us to be faithful in our care for our leaders. I pray that we would recognize them as you have called us to, support them, love them, promote them, and Lord, even discipline them when necessary.

And God, I pray that you would help this church to grow in likeness to Jesus Christ. That we would be ever more effective in the gospel message that you've called us to.

ever more resembling the perfections of Christ in our life. Obedience and submission to you. Thank you for sending your son to begin that work in us.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.