

God's Design for Christian Leaders

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[0 : 00] It's a pretty mighty statement that you just sang. For I know that His glory is my good. I want to encourage you to turn there with me if you would, please.

1 Timothy chapter 3. If you're using the Pew Bible, it's on page 992. This morning we're going to be talking about spiritual leaders and God's design for the spiritual leaders of this church.

Isn't it great that God has put together instructions on how the church is supposed to work? And those instructions are for our protection. Those instructions are for our good as well as God's glory for our good.

Those instructions are meant to help us know how to please God and know how to operate in the realm that God has directed. It's a good thing.

The challenge of a passage like this morning, when we're talking about spiritual leaders, is to say, well, I'm not a spiritual leader. I guess I can just check out.

[1 : 27] And I guess I can just leave. I wonder what's happening in the world today. But that's not really, I think, what's going to be beneficial for us as we move our way through this passage because we know that the direction that God gave to Timothy through the Apostle Paul is direction that is good for us, not only in terms of spiritual leaders, but it's good for us as a church to know how God intends for you to relate to your leaders.

And as we read through this, as we study through this this morning, I hope you'll be encouraged to know that this isn't just about God's direction for spiritual leaders, but especially God's direction for His church.

This is God's design for us. And we'll talk about that more as we move our way through the passage today. Every Monday morning, I get an email in my inbox.

It's from a guy who hosts a ministry called the Practical Shepherding. And at the beginning of this email, it always begins the Monday email with this salutation.

It says, Pastor, remember, it's just Monday. Don't resign. And in a recent email that he sent, along with that he said, Instead, drink some coffee, get some sun, take a walk, pray with honesty, lift something heavy, talk to a safe friend.

[3 : 06] Another pastor who is also involved in seeking to encourage other pastors in the ministry, has a ministry called the Authentic Pastor. And this was his prayer for pastors, the pastors in his email distribution list for this past week.

He says, My heart aches for pastors, Andrew. I understand the weight you carry, both publicly and privately. I know the long hours, the invisible struggles, in the moments when you wonder if anyone truly sees what you're going through.

But more than that, I know that there are areas of your life, deep, unspoken places, where you may feel stuck, unsure, or even distant from the healing you desperately need.

You may not have had the words for it, but the Lord knows. I know because I've been there too. These pastors recognize the unrelenting struggle, the consistent, heavy burden of ministry.

They have carried that burden for themselves, and they recognize the significance of that burden on pastors, and the challenge that pastors face from day to day, from week to week.

[4:23] Recently, there was a study from Barna that suggested that 42% of pastors in evangelical churches across this country, 42% of pastors in ministry this year have wondered whether or not they should check out of ministry altogether.

42%. Almost half of pastors in America have wondered whether or not they should give up ministry that year. Now, some of the pressures that they're facing, some of the reasons why they're considering this are as follows.

The stress of the job itself, feeling lonely and isolated, unhappy with the effect that the role has on their family, lack of optimism regarding the future of the church, a church that has steadily declined, not being satisfied with the job.

I think this sentiment is the same sentiment we find in the Apostle Paul, the burdens and labors and challenges of ministry that he describes in 2 Corinthians 11, verses 24 to 29, when he says, five times I received at the hands of the Jews the 40 lashes less one.

Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. A night and a day I was adrift at sea on frequent journeys in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my own people, dangers from Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers at sea, dangers from false brothers, in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

[6:08] And apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak and I'm not weak? Who is made to fall?

And I am not indignant. The Apostle Paul, in recounting the challenges of ministry, and then climaxed at the very end by the fact that all of these horrendous things that happened in ministry don't even begin to compare with the challenge and struggle and burden that he has for the churches.

A burden for souls. A burden for lostness. A burden for the spiritual awakening of God's people. And all of that burden in light of the fact that the Apostle Paul has understood and come to grips with his own fallenness.

He knows his own weakness. He knows who is susceptible in his own life to failure and to failing. And yet, through all of that, there is a pressing on and a moving forward.

With all of this, one might wonder, who would ever imagine or want to move into the ministry? And with all of this in mind, how can we, how can you, as a member of Maranatha, be part of the long-term strategy of helping to support and encourage and to ensure that your spiritual leaders were able to go the distance?

[7:38] This morning, my goal is twofold. While we'll be moving through this passage that really deals extensively with the qualifications of elders, I want to target two groups of individuals here this morning.

The first group of individuals that I intend to target and I want to encourage are those of you young men or even older men who God may be working on through the course of this message to inspire you to want to do the hard work of ministry.

It's a good work of ministry. We're going to talk about this a little bit more as we go along, but I believe that there are men here today. I believe that there are men that God is choosing out, selecting out, and drawing into the significant work, the labors of the mission field, as it were, this eternal work and harvest of souls, that God, regardless of the struggles, regardless of the loneliness and the pressures of leadership and the criticism that might come, God, perhaps, is calling many, several of you, perhaps, to consider the possibility of heading into this heart work of the ministry.

The second is that this message is for you. The congregation at Maranatha, those who would call themselves believers and followers of Jesus Christ, this message is for you because the qualification that we're going to work through this morning are not just qualifications for a pastor, a spiritual leader, that person who's up front, that person who's leading the various ministries of the church.

These qualifications are meant to be the walk of life, the way of life for every believer in the church. I love the way that D.A. Carson put this, and I'll expound on this quote a little later, but he talks about how remarkable the qualifications are in how unremarkable they are.

[9 : 48] And what he means by that is that these qualifications for elders are no different from the kinds of standards that God has set before God's people.

And that God has put leaders in front of you to demonstrate what a walk with God really looks like, to welcome and invite God's people to participate and to wear the same kinds of habits and the same kinds of characteristics.

So if you're there with me in 1 Timothy 3, I'm going to read through our passage this morning as we begin our time together. 1 Timothy 3, beginning in verse 1.

The saying is trustworthy. If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore, an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.

He must manage his own household well, with all dignity, keeping his children submissive. For if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?

[11 : 05] He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

I want to break this message up into two parts and we're going to spend some time just building out the first verse and talking about the work of spiritual leadership. The work of spiritual leadership and then we're going to follow it up later on with the life of a spiritual leader from verses 2 to 7.

But beginning now with the work of spiritual leadership. What is this work that we find here in verse 1? There's a number of ways to describe this work and I want to move from the end of the verse towards the beginning of the verse to kind of fill this out for us and I think there are several characteristics of this work we see even in verse 1.

First, it's a good work. It's a good work. Paul describes this as a noble task. Literally, it is a good work. Those looking for an easy time in leadership, those who are maybe gunning for places of authority need to understand at the very outset this is a work that Paul is calling these leaders in the church to do.

In another place in Thessalonians the Apostle Paul will not just call this work he'll call this labor. He'll call this the kind of labor that expends him that tucks him out that expends him to his very end.

[12 : 44] But I like how Paul opens up this chapter. He begins this is a trustworthy saying as he's talking about this work. Each time the Apostle Paul uses this phrase.

He uses it five times throughout 1st and 2nd Timothy and also in Titus. And it's meant to explain or to draw out the kind of truth that Timothy should know is reliable.

This trustworthy saying. This statement that should be a matter of fact kind of statement. Now why would the Apostle Paul begin this chapter this way?

This is a trustworthy statement. Much like what he did in 1st Timothy chapter 1 verse 15. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance he says that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the foremost.

Timothy, if there's any doubt remember this reliable statement that's coming from me. Recognize the truthfulness. Recognize the reliability of it.

[13:53] Likely as Timothy has just finished reading the instructions of 1st Timothy chapter 1 and 2. I'm imagining in my mind's eye that Timothy is reading these instructions in chapter 1 and in chapter 2 and beginning to wonder is this really the kind of work that I want to be involved in?

After all in 1st Timothy chapter 1 the kind of confrontation that is required this command this charge that Timothy is supposed to give to these divergent teachers.

This is not the kind of climate or the culture in this church that's going to be really happy and it's going to be full of now some conflict and consternation and criticism and strange relationships.

Who wants to go through that? Timothy in the latter parts of 1st Timothy chapter 1 he is called by the apostle Paul to wage the good warfare. Those aren't the kinds of terms that you would use in a peaceful climate and here Timothy is as a spiritual leader now in this church having to lead the charge as it were in this area and then in chapter 2 to define the roles of biblical manhood and womanhood and how that plays out in the church.

Who wants to be on the front lines of that kind of conversation? But these were the things that were necessary. These were the things that were essential to have a church that would become and be the pillar and buttress of truth in order for it to be a safe haven for truth.

[15:36] Truth needed to be conveyed. If Timothy was going to carry out this good work then bold proclamation and gracious proclamation of truth needed to be done.

Timothy no doubt did not want conflict but he understood that truth was the most important thing in order for this church to enjoy the fruit of this good work that he had been called to.

Second it was a desirable work a desirable work. Notice the saying is trustworthy if anyone aspires to the office of overseer. He desires a noble task.

Two words that kind of fill out this desire that shows up on the outside. This aspiration this stretching out this moving forward that happens on the outside that's driven by an internal desire.

This epithumia which sometimes in the New Testament is a sinful kind of desire but here it's used in a way to speak of a desire that is this passionate craving and longing for something good.

[16:45] The desires that are meant to drive and compel an individual towards ministry. I love how one commentator puts it he says Christ grabs his pastors by the heart he doesn't twist them by the arm.

He wants men with holy ambition for the office. Men with holy dreams about feeding and leading the flock. Men willing and eager to stretch themselves and to do what the calling requires.

Pastoring drops you into a surging rapid of emotion and spiritual hazards. A man should become a pastor only if he has a sober informed eagerness for the work.

God doesn't compel one to ministry as much as inspires him and gives him an affection and a desire to see what the ministry is meant to accomplish in terms of pointing to the glory of God.

This is exactly what Peter describes in 1 Peter chapter 5 verses 2 and 3 when he says shepherd the flock of God that is among you exercising oversight not under compulsion but willingly as God would have you not for shameful gain but eagerly not domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock two words that Peter uses for these shepherds these leaders there spread across the known world serve in a way that it is willing serve in a way that is eager demonstrate the inner drive that God has given to you for this good work that you've been called to third we find that it's a vital work it's a vital work if anyone aspires to the office of overseer he desires a noble task and then an overseer must be and we fill out the remaining list in verses 2 to 7 this office of overseer is used four times in the new testament it's the word that describes the act of being visited or the office as a church leader some have suggested that this word derives its sense from a city administrator an inspector or financial manager but it probably harkens back to the to the

[19:13] Qumran community those as seen Jews in that Qumran community who were instructed and given the task of preaching and teaching and presiding over this group this community of individuals this word for overseer that we find at the very beginning of verse 2 is a guardian a supervisor a keeper a watchman a superintendent this is one of the three words used throughout the new testament to describe this office of leader and overseer spiritual leader of the church the other two are elder which is presbyteros and pastor which is also the word for shepherd all three of these words show up in 1 Peter chapter 5 we saw this verse just a moment ago but I want to now draw out some of these words so you can see them all kind of put together for us in this passage I exhort the elders Peter says among you as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed shepherd this is the verbal form of pastor shepherd the flock of God that is among you exercising oversight this is the verbal form of the overseer we found in our passage not under compulsion but willingly as God would have you and when the chief shepherd appears you will receive the unfading crown of glory the motivation for all of our leadership is the glory of God the motivation for our leadership is to serve under the chief shepherd to follow the directives that he's given to manage and care for the flock of God as he has called us so what are the responsibilities of this overseer we could spend the rest of our time spelling out those tasks but let me just give them to you briefly first they are to rule we find that in first

Timothy 5:17 of course they are to preach and to teach they are to pray for the sick we find that in James chapter 5 they are to care for the church we find that in this passage here in first Peter chapter 5 they are to be examples to follow to set church policy we find from Acts chapter 20 that they are to help safeguard the flock from wolves they are to guard the flock from error to equip the saints for ministry there in Ephesians chapter 4 they are to counsel they are to encourage they are to spend themselves for the advancement and encouragement of God's people essentially they are to represent Christ in a really tangible and practical way in pointing people to Christ in showing the example of Christ before God's people in spending themselves in a way that represents the costly sacrifice of our Savior for us as a pastor's work it is vital for the health of the body and he does it because he understands that it points to

God and that brings joy finally in this section it's a team work it's a team work this role of eldering shepherding pasturing overseeing is always described throughout the New Testament as being done in teams being done with others these words are always used together in a team kind of way every place we find them throughout the New Testament this word is plural by the way there is safety in the multiple of leaders there is longevity in the multiplicity of leaders as they're working together and pulling the weight together there is wisdom in the plurality of leaders Solomon says in Ecclesiastes chapter 4 in describing the benefit of multiplicity he says there two are better than one because they have a good reward for their toil for if they fall one will lift up his fellow but woe to him who is alone wherein he falls and has not another to lift him up the value and the importance and significance of leading

God's church together and so let me just point you to a few passages just briefly that would reflect the fact that the elders are serving together in Acts chapter 14 verse 23 we see this and when they had appointed elders this is speaking of Paul and Barnabas they're heading back from their first missionary journey and those churches that they have just established they're working their way back to Antioch and what's happening here is when they go back to those churches it says they appoint elders for them in every church with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed in Acts chapter 20 on the end of Paul's third missionary journey again he's heading back to Jerusalem and it says this now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him and then in Titus chapter 1 verse 5 the instructions that Paul will give to Titus in terms of appointing elders is this this is why

I left you in Crete so that you might put what remained into order and appoint elders in every town as I directed you then to the church of Philippi he says Paul and Timothy servants of Christ Jesus to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi with the overseers and deacons and then 1 Peter chapter 5 verse 1 we've seen this several times but just to continue to fill it out so I exhorted the elders among you this wisdom and interest in plurality of leaders in the church that strengthens them for the work maybe you'd be asking so what about smaller churches what about churches that can't afford to have multiple pastors how will they be able to carry out this function and the simple answer is that they would continue to carry out this function the same way the apostle Paul carried this function out in the churches that he served and by the way the way that churches are carrying out this function and have been carrying out this function around the world since the first century and that is pastors who are committed to bivocational kinds of ministry or committed to full-time work and part-time ministry for the sake of loving and serving

[26:04] God's church this is what the apostle Paul did in supporting his team in working as a tent maker this is what I have been able to witness around the world pastors who are devoted to the church but have to support themselves in their family with a job that is unrelated to ministry this is a way for them to demonstrate to their church the hard work and diligence of faithful service in the world but also demonstrate their care for those that God has entrusted to them what a blessing it is in the places that I've been to see men who are committed to this kind of service now as we've seen the work of spiritual leaders now let's turn our attention to the life of a spiritual leader the life of a spiritual leader in verses 2-7 now just at the very beginning of this I want you to know there's no way we can cover all of these character qualities in one sitting together and so next week we're gonna have a chance since there's some correlation and similarities between the deacon and the elder to be able to to build this out a little bit more in our time next week but let me just read this passage again for us remind us of what's going on here and then spend some time working through it says in verse 2 therefore an overseer must be above reproach the husband of one wife sober minded self-controlled respectable hospitable able to teach not a drunkard not violent but gentle not quarrelsome not a lover of money he must manage his household well with all dignity keeping his children submissive for if someone does not know how to manage his own household how will he care for God's church he must not be a recent convert or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil moreover he must be well thought of by outsiders so that he may not fall into disgrace into the snare of the devil we see right at the outset there are two words that begin to shape the rest of our passage we see them right there in verse 2 the word must be and the word above reproach those two words help to provide some definition for the qualities of this pastor's life that we'll see throughout the rest of our passage when we find this word must be it's the word for it is necessary and this word will govern the next eleven characteristics that we find throughout the remaining part of this passage grammatically they're dependent upon this word it is necessary and then this word above reproach it speaks of exemplary character obviously this isn't a pastor who is perfect this is a pastor who has demonstrated a steady consistent faithful pattern of life that through the long haul demonstrates that he is someone to whom there is no blame no one can properly bring against him a charge of unfitness for office this exemplary life sets the example for the church and that's why I used this term

I used this term exemplary to help you understand that he in doing this will be an example an exemplary kind of character that's why the apostle Paul is able to say imitate me as I imitate the Lord Jesus that's why Paul could say to the church of Philippi in Philippians chapter 4 verse 9 he says what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me practice these things and the God of peace will be with you you see the qualifications that we see here for elders is not a qualification that is only for them but they are setting the example they are calling the church to the same kind of life and by the way it's the kind of life that like Paul says in chapter 1 where he calls himself the chief of sinners and because of the mercy that God has demonstrated to him then he's able to move and those that he's sharing the gospel with will say well if

God can do a work in Paul's life then I suppose he can do a work in my life too that's really the thrust of this exemplary life the life of one who you know is broken as you look at your pastor you look at your spiritual leaders and you recognize there's there's brokenness in that man I see flashes of the flesh coming through that man and yet there's hope at the same time because as God is transforming me into the image of Christ from one degree of glory to the other I trust that through that process it encourages your heart if God can work through Andrew then God can work through me too I trust that that is the case as we begin to compare the qualifications that we find there in 1st Timothy chapter 3 and set them against the backdrop of the qualifications in Titus chapter 1 we begin to understand why this is a must be kind of statement and so

I just want to shine a couple of these tables up before you to set those qualifications side by side and so this is the first set of qualifications and you can see a correlation with that which is in Titus chapter 1 and then this next slide will show you the next set of qualifications and their correlation to Titus chapter 1 do we have that next slide Larry there we go and as we're working through our list you continue to see that the things that are represented as those things which must be true of the character of this spiritual leader are also reflected in the same qualifications for Titus chapter 1 and then our final slide which shows you the remainder of that list and here finally we have some areas where there doesn't seem to be perfect alignment but you can understand there is plenty of similarities throughout the rest of this list but the whole point of the qualifications for elders is not just that they would be spiritual leaders who show what

Christ like obedience and humility looks like but especially so that God would work in his people and that's really why I want to turn to this next slide next couple of slides to demonstrate that the things that God has called elders to do and to be those qualifications those characteristics that God has called your spiritual leaders to have are the same kinds of patterns and behaviors and attitudes that should be represented in and among his people and this next slide gives you the remainder of that list again I appreciate that D.A.

[33 : 43] Carson has said this he said if I can find it I can't find it basically it's remarkable that the qualifications for elder are so unremarkable and in other words the fact that God has called his leaders his pastors to look this way and then provides a correlating work and a reminder that an obedient life will also look the same way is a demonstration of the fact that we're all growing together in likeness to Christ that is the goal the goal is Christ the goal is oneness in our relationship with God so that we would look like him in this world so we've looked at his exemplary life and now I want to briefly turn to his personal life and also his public life his personal life and his public life now again we don't have time to work through every single one of these qualifications but

I want to address a couple of the ones that provide maybe some of the most confusion and hopefully I can provide some help in understanding what they mean first here on the list is husband of one wife now what does this mean what is going on here what does husband of one wife mean well commentaries and commentators will work through this and they will come up with one of several different options is Paul suggesting or prohibiting polygamy not having more than one wife which by the way was common practice in first century Ephesus is Paul requiring that a man be married he must have one wife is the apostle Paul preventing a man from remarrying once he his wife has either died or he has been divorced or is the apostle Paul prohibiting divorce altogether of course all of these are a possibility but how are we to know the answer well

I think there are some clues that are provided for us in the text and some clues that we can see throughout the scripture to help us draw an understanding of what Paul means but not definitively or emphatically first I think it's important for us to remember that Paul is laying out a set of character qualities he's not just trying to say married or unmarried just this principle of status and identity no Paul is really aiming at the heart what is it about this quality that points to their character second it would have been easy for Paul to have said that this man must be married he could have used the word married in this text in this passage and he uses the word married several times throughout first timothy three times in fact but he doesn't use the word marriage in this passage been easy for him to have done that third several of these prohibitions would seem to contradict some statements that are made throughout the new testament related to these things for example

Paul commands remarriage for younger widows we're going to see that in chapter five next we're going to see that Paul commands singleness that's in first corinthians chapter seven so it would seem strange that Paul would commend singleness for young men and young women and command that in a way that would say this is going to help set you apart to be more faithful in ministry and yet they would be cut off from being able to serve in this way fourth Paul and Barnabas and likely Timothy were also single leaders in the church exercising pastoral authority prohibiting something that was true of them might seem a bit inconsistent but of course our desire is to allow the text to speak for itself and to be faithful for the way that God has convicted our hearts regarding it to make a modern day correlation I think what the apostle Paul is saying here is a man must be loyal to his wife he's a one woman man that's the literal translation of this text does he only have an eye for her for his wife is he careful with his interactions with the opposite sex does he keep himself from being flirtatious is his heart his eye his mind devoted to her is his life a reflection of loyalty to his partner husband of one wife we could talk about sober mindedness and the significance of being clear thinking clear headed in in terms of discernment and helping to exercise the right kind of spiritual leadership in the church we could talk about being self controlled those who are unable to control their own impulses certainly should not be in a place of leadership

I think it's important for us to address just briefly the issue of hospitality this is a word throughout the New Testament that is used and it's a compound word that means to love the stranger does this leader have a love for those who are part of the church but not necessarily from his city those who are traveling through those who are unfamiliar to him does he have a posture of willingness to help the least of these those who are in need is he willing to open up his house to extend kindness to the Lord to trust in God to provide for his needs is he one who's aware and willing to serve his ability to teach of course that makes sense and that of course is the one quality that really differentiates itself from deacons and other spiritual leaders when we think of ability to teach we think of somebody who is skilled to actually bring the word to bear on others able to explain and provide the complex breakdown the complex parts of the word of God and to make them clear and accessible for God's people and that of course is certainly a factor here but I think the appeal to be able to teach also demands what one commentator says is a competence and skill not only in communicating

[40 : 36] Christian truth but an ability to know the truth for himself to be able to differentiate as Timothy would differentiate in 1 Timothy chapter 1 between that divergent doctrine those doctrines that were superficial and tangential to the faith and being able to zero in on the things that were essential and squaring his focus on those things and helping to work through some of the complexities of doctrine and to allow the church to know what God's word says focusing on the things that matter he's not a drunkard we see he's not violent but gentle and that's important as we consider a man who is marked out by the fruits of the spirit love joy peace patience kindness goodness faithfulness gentleness and self control it will be as gentleness that will stand out as one who is who is moved by the Holy Spirit empowered by the Spirit in his work he's not quarrelsome he's not one who is warring with his words he's not defensive he's not argumentative he's not the kind of person that has to always win an argument the Apostle Paul will use this word a couple more times in his second letter to Timothy he says in 2 Timothy chapter 2 verse 14 remind them of these things and charge them before God not to quarrel about words which does no good but only ruins the hearers and then in verses 24 to 26 he says and the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone able to teach patiently enduring correcting his opponents with gentleness God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil after being captured by him to do his will you see this spirit of a leader who is his posture is gentleness his posture is kindness his posture isn't to use or leverage his authority over others but there is a submission of this man to the Lord in a trusting of

God to do the work in that individual's life so he doesn't have to be quarrelsome he can be kind because he's trusting in God to do the spiritual work in this individual's life not a lover of money we find in verse 4 he must manage his house well with all dignity keeping his children submissive for if someone does not know how to manage his own household how will he care for God's church one of the greatest ways that we can come to know the quality of your spiritual leaders by looking at their home by looking especially at the children who are living within their household are they the kinds of individuals the kinds of children who are responsive to authority are they the kinds of children who demonstrate a behavior that is reflective of self control and obedience to their parents are the kinds of kids that demonstrate a respect for father and mother and for leaders and authorities in their life we can tell a lot about the ability of a leader to manage a church by looking especially at the proving grounds of family is he managing his house well he's not a recent convert he's not somebody who's just come to faith and all of the pressures and complexities that come into that position he's the kind of person who's been tested the kind of person whose life has proved itself out and finally in verse 7 we look at his public life his public life so his personal life is now counterbalanced by his public life notice moreover he must be well thought of by outsiders so that he may not fall into disgrace into a snare of the devil this is quite surprising actually when we're considering the kinds of spiritual leaders that we would set over ourselves we often think about well how do they relate to other believers how do they relate to their family how do they relate to those who are already in their sphere but here the apostle

Paul wants the church to recognize that they are also going to have a reputation and a testimony within the community and that testimony will also help to reflect the true nature of who they are I'm not sure if any of you have been around certain individuals who look a certain way in the church but look another way in the community the way they relate to the grocery store worker the impatience that they demonstrate in other different venues but this is the kind of person who is demonstrating a consistent pattern of life and behavior both inside and outside the church Peter will say in 1st Peter chapter 2 verse 12 keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable so that when they speak against you as evildoers they may see your good deeds and glorify

God on the day of visitation now I think that's an important verse for us to draw out because just because we might have a good life that reflects Christ on the outside it may not always be received that way but when they see your good works they will know them for what they are and they will push against them not because they are offensive personally but because they remind them of Christ's standard it brings them to shame the church of Philippi Paul says this in Philippians chapter 2 verses 14 and 15 he says do all things without grumbling or disputing that you may be blameless and innocent children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation among whom you shine as lights in the world make sure that your light in the world is bright make sure that your light in the world is pointing to Christ and finally how are we as God's people how are you as a!

[47 : 21] church how can you be instrumental in the ministry that God has here at Maranatha and around the world well I want to close with just a few verses that direct our attention to the significance of your partnership in prayer your partnership in prayer first Ephesians chapter 6 verse 19 Paul says this and pray also for me that words may be given to me and opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel do you realize how instrumental and I would say even essential the apostle Paul thought prayer was for the fruitfulness and productivity of his ministry he depended sincerely on the prayers of his people second Colossians 4 3 at the same time pray for us that God may open to us a door for the word to declare the mystery of Christ on account of which I'm in prison pray for me

Romans chapter 15 verse 30 I appeal to you brothers by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the spirit to strive together by the way that is the word sun agoniz my you can hear the word agony built into that strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf be a partner in ministry struggle to the point of agony for the work that God has through my life through prayer 1 Thessalonians 5 25 brothers pray for us and finally 2 Thessalonians 3 verse!

You play a significant part in the ministry that God is doing here at Maranatha in the ministry that God is doing around Columbus and around the world and you play an integral part in that through your prayers that God will use your prayers to help shape your pastors that God will use your prayers to help them to endure through hard things that God will use your prayers to focus them in wisdom that God will use your prayers to transform them in likeness to Christ that God will use your prayers to open the doors of fruitful gospel witness that God will use your prayers to accomplish his purposes here in Columbus and around the world are you a praying people partnering with your pastors in this great work that he's called us to let's do it together let me pray oh father thank you for the instructions that you've given to your people thank you for the model that you've set and the wisdom of that model and God

I pray that you would help us to be faithful faithful as leaders of your people faithful as those who are part of the fellowship in ministering to one another in ministering to the people that you've put in our circles God what a great work you've called us to may we not be complacent may there be an urgency about us and Lord even this morning I pray for the men in this fellowship that you intend to call out for ministry God begin that work in their life and lead them to greater affection for Christ and greater love for your church and a willingness to endure whatever it takes to serve you wherever you might send them in Jesus name Amen God bless you have a great week of