

# (1 Timothy) Instructions for Church Leaders

by Brian Brodersen

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of proper leadership and responsibility in the church, including how to deal with difficult people and provide for those in need.*

**Duration:** 51:28

**Scripture:** 1 Timothy 4:12-15, 1 Timothy 5:1-2, 1 Timothy 5:22

**Topics:** "Church Leadership", "Spiritual Purity"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of patience and caution in the ministry. He advises against hastily laying hands on anyone, as it can lead to sharing in their sins. The speaker also highlights the need to keep oneself pure. The sermon is based on 1 Timothy chapter 5, which provides instructions on how to lead the church and deal with various situations in the ministry.

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## Transcript

All right, 1st Timothy chapter 5, that's where we're picking up tonight. And of course, just a reminder, just a bit of background again, Paul is writing to Timothy instructing him on how to lead the church and what the church is to look like and how to deal with a variety of situations that come up in the ministry. These are known, as we pointed out before, these are known as the pastoral epistles.

And they're known as the pastoral epistles because they are written to those who are pastoring, those who are in the ministry, Timothy namely, to give him an understanding of what the ministry is to look like. And so Paul has been doing that all the way through from the very beginning. He says, I left you in Ephesus so you could, you know, make sure things are running the way they ought to run.

And then all the way through he's been addressing different issues and things that have come up in the church. And as we looked at the 4th chapter, rather extensively, you remember Paul admonished Timothy, let no one despise your youth but be an example to the believer. He said, give attention to reading, to exhortation, and to teaching, and not to neglect the gift of the Holy Spirit in him, and to meditate on these things, and then to take heed to the doctrine.

And now he continues on with his admonition in regard to leading the church and the different issues and things that will come up. So he says in verse 1 of chapter 5, Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father. Younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, with all purity.

Paul, of course, was an apostle. He was a church planter. He was a pastor, an evangelist.

He was sort of everything rolled into one. But Paul was a very wise man and had many, many years of experience in the ministry. And, of course, to top it off, he's speaking by inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

But he's telling Timothy how to deal with a variety of situations that would arise in the church. And so, when you're dealing with people, there's a right way to deal with people and there's a wrong way. There's a godly way and there's a way that would just be more consistent with human nature.

And so Paul is reminding Timothy in his dealings with people, when he comes to situations where he might have to correct a person, that he is to do it in the right spirit. So he says, Timothy, do not rebuke. And the word rebuke here is a strong, strong word in the Greek.

And it means to harshly rebuke. It can even actually mean to strike an individual. Now, I don't think Timothy was the kind of guy that was going to, you know, punch somebody out if they didn't heed what he was saying.

So I think Paul is referring more to, you know, a harsh word. But he says to him, do not harshly rebuke an older man, but exhort him or entreat him or plead with him as a father. The word here, the Greek word, to exhort, it's translated entreat as well, parakaleo is the word.

Remember the word parakletos? Parakletos is the word that is translated helper in the New Testament in reference to the Holy Spirit. It means to come alongside of somebody. And so what Paul is saying to Timothy in the case of an older man who needs some correction, some instruction, he says, Timothy, don't come at him harshly or aggressively, but rather come alongside, you know, sort of the picture is come alongside and put your arm around him and say, you know, let me encourage you.

Let me just give you, you know, a bit of direction in this area. You know, I know for myself, I have had to address a lot of different situations in the life of the church, and I've had to deal with difficulties and problems and problem people. And sometimes I've had to say things to people that are hard things to say.

They're difficult things to say. You know, one of the difficult things about ministry is there's a confrontational element to it. You have to confront people at times.

It's just inevitable you're going to have to do it. If you don't like to do that, well, I don't know of anybody. Some people do like to do it actually.

But if it's something that you absolutely cannot bear doing, then you probably won't be able to be in pastoral ministry because that's part of the job description. You have to confront people at times. But when you do it, you have to do it in the proper way.

I love what Paul said in Galatians 6, you that are spiritual, he says, if any man see a brother overtaken in a fault, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of meekness, considering yourself, lest you also be tested. And that's really the way that we must go about it. And there have been, as I was saying, many times where I have had to do something like that, and I try my best through the help of the Spirit of God to do it as gently as possible.

And many times I will even use sort of an illustration from my own life where I've had to be corrected or something to just sort of ease the blow. You know, I'm going to tell him something that's not going to be

easy to hear, so sometimes I'll pad it with my own experience. Hey, you know, one time I was doing this, and the Lord dealt with me in that way, and, you know, by the way, there's a situation going on in your life.

So it's important when we have to confront a person that we do it in the right way. And that's what Paul is saying to Timothy. So treat an older man like a father.

Younger men as brothers. You know, a pastor is not to be dictatorial. A pastor is not to be a tyrant.

A pastor is not the person who goes around rebuking and, you know, telling people this and you better shape up and that kind of stuff. That's not what the pastor is to do. The pastor isn't this, you know, authority over everybody and that sort of a thing.

Some people, I've met many people over the years who feel like they have a God-given ministry of rebuke. And, you know, they go around rebuking everybody. And, you know, I don't think that's really a God-given thing.

If it is a God-given thing, then it's not going to be in that kind of spirit, that heavy, you know, oh, man, I'm here to rebuke you, brother. You know, let me tell you. You know, that's not the Lord.

But I've seen it many, many times over. There's to be a gentleness. And so with the younger men, you treat them as brothers, not as inferiors, not as, hey, I'm your superior, now you better snap too.

But you treat them as brothers. There's an equality. There's, of course, an authority, a God-given authority and a leadership.

But then we have to remember that we're all equal in that other sense before God as well. And then so for the older women, He says you treat them as mothers. And you deal with them in that way just as you would deal with your mother.

Of course, if you were having an issue with your mother or something, I would imagine that most of us, if you had something like that, you would, if you felt that you really had to address it with her, you would want to do it as gently and as lovingly and everything else as you possibly could, but at the same time driving the point home. Sometimes that's what you have to do with the older women. And then with the younger women, you treat them as sisters.

But then He adds this with all purity. Just, you know, covering that little base there. In the ministry, so many times, men have fallen in the area of impurity because they haven't treated the younger women as sisters.

They've treated them in another fashion. And, you know, this is really, to me, it's a very excellent way to show, you know, how we are to conduct ourselves as men with younger women. You know, what guy in his right mind would be hitting on his sister? You know, if you're doing something like that, you've got a real twisted thing going.

You know, your sister is your sister. And you might love her very dearly, but she's your sister. You don't think in terms of, you know, some sort of sexual kind of thing or impurity.

No, that's disgusting. It's despicable. You don't even think in those terms.

That's what Paul says, church leadership, male church leadership, in regard to younger women in the church, that's the attitude that we're to have. This is my sister. I wouldn't even think of something like that in regard to a sister.

So, Paul deals with correcting people here. Now, in verse 3, he moves on to another subject that is not totally relevant to us, but there are principles here that I think are relevant. But it's a subject of widows in the church.

Now, in the early church, and from reading what Paul says to Timothy, it's obvious that they were doing a bit of experimentation in regard to helping out the widows. And it seems that Paul writes from the vantage point of having observed attempts to minister to widows in a variety of ways, and maybe seeing the failure of certain attempts. So, Paul comes in with some real great wisdom on how they are to treat this particular situation that would arise in the church.

So, honor widows who are really widows. Now, evidently, what the church was doing is they were sort of taking in the widows. They were taking responsibility for them.

They were providing for them. It seems like they were probably providing them shelter. They were providing them food.

And at the same time as providing them with something, it seems from the context here that they were also utilizing the widows for different aspects of the ministry. So, they would bring them in to take care of them. But at the same time, there were many practical things that needed to happen in the context of the church ministry.

So, they would basically put them to work. But Paul says that's only to be done. And when he says honor widows, what he means by honor is bring them in and take care of them.

He says only for those who are truly widows. And now he goes on to explain himself. He says, but if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents for this is good and acceptable before God.

So, someone who's truly a widow, in other words, is somebody who has no family whatsoever to take care of them. Paul says, look, if the woman has children or grandchildren, and, of course, believing children would be probably more specific in the context, those believing children are to take care of their parents rather than allowing the parent to become a burden on the church. And so, that's what Paul is referring to here.

He says, now she who is really a widow and left alone trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day. So, he's alluding to the kind of character that Timothy is to look for in a woman that the church is going to bring in and take care of. So, he contrasts that woman that he just described with this one, but she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives.

So, in other words, Timothy, those who are out living in pleasure, you know, obviously, some women would have taken advantage of their liberation and gone off and maybe, you know, used their newfound liberty to indulge themselves. That's the idea behind the word pleasure here. It's to indulge themselves.

Paul says, these are not the women that we are to bring in to the church. They're dead while they're living. In other words, they don't meet the qualification for those that the church is going to obligate itself to take

care of.

And these things command that they may be blameless. But, if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. So, Paul comes down pretty heavily here.

And evidently, there were, just from the statements, it seems that there were people in the churches whose parents were widowed and they were destitute, and they were trying to pawn them off on the church. They were trying to get the church to take care of them, rather than they taking care of themselves. And so, Paul says, if anyone does not provide for his own, especially for the members of his own family, Paul says, that person is worse than an unbeliever.

That's sinking below the standard. Even the pagans, even the unbelievers would take care of their own family. And Paul says, if this is going on with people in the church who are, on the one hand, praising the Lord, and on the other hand, saying, Hey, can you take care of mom? We're too busy.

We don't have the time to do that. Paul says, these people have denied the faith. Now, this verse, of course, the context is clearly dealing with the widows, but this has a broader application.

You know, we have seen, over the years, many times, able-bodied men, men who are perfectly capable of providing for their families who simply refuse to do it for whatever reason. And quite often, they're coming down to the church, and they've always got their hand out. You know, can we get a box of food? Can we, you know, we need our electric bill paid, and they're about to turn off the gas, and, you know, the rent's six months overdue, and they're going to kick us out.

Now, don't get me wrong. Some people are in those kinds of situations because of things that are completely beyond their control, and it's not a result of irresponsibility or laziness or any of that. It's just they've just fallen on hard times, and I've seen that happen over the years.

And there have been times when we as a church, when we have actually undertaken for a family in the church and basically supported them for a period of time. I remember a family in our church when I was pastoring in Vista. They just had one crisis, one mishap, one thing after another come upon them that was completely out of their control, health things, and, you know, it was just an unbelievable time, and we just felt burdened by the Lord to undertake for them and to provide for them, and we did until they could get through that.

But that's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about the person who is capable, the person who has the opportunity, the person who has absolutely no excuse for being irresponsible in these areas, but nevertheless, this is where they're at. This is a person that needs to be rebuked sharply.

Remember Paul said in writing to the Thessalonians, he said, If any man does not work, neither shall he eat. And he was referring to people who are capable of working, people who are able-bodied, not to people who are, you know, in some way, shape, or form, incapacitated or whatever. You know, he's talking about those who can but refuse to do it, and there are plenty of people in society today that have just chosen to do that.

You know, the other day, I was driving down the road, and I look over, and I see this guy standing there, and I'm telling you, this guy, he was a good-looking guy. He was nicely dressed. He looked like he just stepped off a movie set or something, and he had a sign in his hand, Need food.

And I thought, What? Is this a joke? You know, what is this guy doing? You know, now, I don't know what he was doing. I just saw him as I was driving by, but I have dealt with, over the years, I've dealt with plenty of homeless people, and you know, some people, it's really interesting. You know, there's the big pressure from certain people in society.

You know, you've got to help the homeless and you know, all of that, and again, I agree for people who are homeless for reasons beyond their control, but you know, I've talked to a number of people who are, they've chosen to be homeless. They like the lifestyle. They're very proud of the fact that they're homeless.

I've had homeless people look at me and say, You couldn't do what I do, man. You know? And look in an arrogant way, basically say, I'm better than you because I can live on the streets and you can't. They've chosen to do it.

I think I've told this story before, but years ago, we used to, we supported a local soup kitchen with quite a bit of money on a regular basis, feeding the local, you know, homeless people, and I'll never forget one morning going over to a park where we used to go on Saturdays, meet with some guys, and here's a band of the homeless guys, 7.30 in the morning, drunk out of their minds, and they were just talking about those stupid Christians that keep providing the food for them and all of that, and those dumb Christians, you know, we come and eat all that food and then we're going out and getting drunk, you know. I'm listening to all of this. I'm thinking, these are the guys that we're giving the money to.

And I went back and said, You know what? End of support for the soup kitchen. This is not a wise use of the resources that God has given us. And instead of doing that, we just began to look for individual situations where we saw that, yeah, this person really does want some help.

They're not looking for that handout to just keep living their irresponsible life. So, Paul says this is unacceptable in the church. An able-bodied individual who does not provide for their family has denied the faith.

Christianity is real practical. You got to take care of business. And so Paul makes that clear here.

Now he says, Do not let a widow under 60 years old be taken into the number. And not unless she has been the wife of one man, well-reported for good works, if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work. So, Paul lays down a pretty heavy standard.

But you can imagine the necessity of this. It's a difficult thing to get involved in this kind of a ministry as a church would do. And it would have been taxing on the church in those days.

So, Paul was sensitive so that the body didn't end up with a burden trying to help people that you really couldn't help. That ultimately didn't really want to be helped. People that would, in the end, be taking advantage of the thing.

That's always the difficulty with this sort of thing. Now, it doesn't mean that we should just decide, Hey, we're not doing it and leave it to somebody else. You know, I don't know if you realize this.

I think you probably do. But the Christian church is the most altruistic body, group of people on the planet. Christians, historically, have been the ones to help the poor, build the hospitals, set up the orphanages,

reach out to the homeless, build the shelters for, you know, the widow, all of that.

You know, you look historically and you find it's the Christians who do it. It's the Christians who go into the Hindu countries, the Islamic countries, the Buddhist countries, and do for the less fortunate people in those cultures what their own people will not do for them. So, it's Christianity that has always led the way in reaching out to people who are in distress.

But, it's not a mindless, just, you know, purely sort of emotional kind of a thing that we do. We have to do it in such a way as to really help people. You see, because if you just are doing things that are perpetuating a person's irresponsibility, you're not helping them at all.

Now, the government, and especially the liberals within the government, they think the way to help people is just throw money at them. The more money you throw, the more you're helping them. That is such a ridiculous idea.

It's provably wrong. It doesn't help people. The way to help people truly is to help them become self-sufficient and independent of some other, you know, support system.

That's the way to really help people. And so, Paul, not wanting the church to come under an undue burden, he lays down a pretty rigid standard for the widows that are going to be taken in. First of all, no one under 60.

Now, exactly why he said that, I don't know. I mean, he's going to go on to talk about the problems with the younger widows in a moment, and I guess it would be right up to that age. But probably because somebody under 60 was still capable of taking care of themselves to some extent.

But then he goes through these other things. The wife of one man, and, you know, reported for good works, brought up children. All of these things, I think Paul lists these things for two reasons.

Number one, because they wanted to make sure that the right people were going to come into this situation. Number two, remember, these widows are going to be involved in the ministry. These are the kinds of things that they're going to be doing.

They're going to be taking care of children. They're going to be ministering to strangers. They're going to be washing the saints' feet.

They're going to be relieving the afflicted. And they're going to be involved in a variety of different works. So Paul says, we're going to bring them in, and we're going to take care of them, but we want them to be able to minister to others as well.

And that's the way it is done right. I remember one time we had a guy. Gaylord could tell you a thousand stories.

I can only tell you a hundred because I used to send everybody to him, and we still do. But I remember a guy came one day, and he, you know, had some big story about how he needed this and that, and he couldn't, you know, he had no money, and he couldn't get a job and all this stuff. And I said, you know what? I want to help you.

And I said, you see that field right there? We had a field out in the back. And I said, we need to take care of the weeds out here. So I'll tell you what I'll do.

I'll give you a rake and a shovel and all that, and you give me a couple of hours of work, and I'll give you what you're asking. And he says, oh, you don't understand. I can't do that.

I said, well, why not? And he said, well, you see, you know, I'm in the middle of an insurance investigation, workman's comp, and I'm just afraid there might be somebody around here with a camera or something that's going to see me working, and then, you know, it'll kind of blow my case. The guy was dead serious. And I looked around.

I said, you know what? I can confidently tell you there's nobody around here with a camera. There's nobody around here, period. You're going to be okay.

No, no, I can't do it. I just don't think I could do it. But, you know, you're a Christian, so you need to give me what I'm asking.

I said, you know what? I'm going to give you a job, and if you take the job, then you'll get what else you're asking. He wouldn't do it, refused to do it. So I just said, okay, sorry, I can't help you.

But see, these are the kinds of things that we do deal with, and we must deal with them wisely. Now, Paul says, but refuse the younger widows. Now, as I read this today, I was thinking, you know, it seems like Paul, like I said, he has made some observations, and he's seen, it seems to me anyway, some attempts to minister to the widows that he feels are failures.

And so now he's giving Timothy, I think, instruction based on his observation, but, of course, there's the divine wisdom element of it here as well. But he says, refuse the younger widows. Don't even bring them in.

Why? For when they have begun to grow wanton against Christ, they desire to marry having condemnation because they have cast off their first faith. Paul said, here's what's going to happen. You bring in a younger woman, and, you know, they would bring them in on the commitment that they were going to dedicate their lives in the future to the Lord, to serving Him.

But he says, a younger woman, she might do that temporarily, but there's going to come a point where she's going to long to be married again. And when she longs to be married again, she's going to then fall under condemnation because she made a commitment the rest of her life. She's made a commitment to serve Christ, but now she longs to get married again, and now she's under all of this condemnation.

And Paul says, beside that, other things happen. They learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, not only idle, but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not. Therefore, I desire that the younger widows marry.

What he's saying is, encourage these younger ladies to get married. He's saying, don't take them into this particular group that you would bring in. And evidently, they were bringing them in with a lifelong commitment.

That's why he says, don't receive anyone over 60 years old. It wasn't likely in those days that anyone over 60 was going to remarry. But of course, it was highly likely that somebody younger would.

So, encourage them to remarry. That's what he's saying. To bear children, to manage the house, and to give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully.

For some have already turned aside after Satan. So, what Paul is saying is, I've seen this, and it doesn't work, Timothy. So, don't let them bring the younger women in.

Now, Paul's not saying, don't take care of them if they're destitute. Of course, they would take care of them temporarily until another situation would come along. But Paul's encouragement is that they would get married.

You know, it's an interesting thing. Paul here is encouraging the widows to remarry. There, within the Roman Catholic Church, there, of course, was the big emphasis on celibacy.

The priests are celibate. The nuns are celibate. But, you know, that mentality did not arise out of New Testament teaching.

That mentality came out of the ascetic groups that kind of rose up. They were there during the apostolic period, but the apostles kept that out of the church. But after the apostles passed off the scene, ascetic practices came in.

Ascetic practices meaning a hard approach to, you know, just anything enjoyable, a real denial of the flesh, you know, a self-inflicted kind of holiness. And with the asceticism, there was always that little idea that celibacy was a preferred and more spiritual position and that sex was tolerated by God, but something that, you know, He probably didn't really want us doing, but you've got to, you know, create some more people so you can do it once or twice, you know, just to get a few more people in the world. I mean, that is the Roman Catholic mentality.

It was much more so in earlier times, but still is to this day. That's why when you see a family with 12 kids, you go, are you Catholic? But you see, the apostles didn't have those kind of hang-ups, and they obviously didn't see the single life or the celibate life as superior. Paul talked about the advantages of being single simply because it's easier to serve God when you're single, and that was the only point that he would make about it.

But here, he specifically says, these young girls that are widowed, they need to get remarried. That's the counsel that Paul gives. Now, if any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened that it may relieve those who are really widows.

So that's the whole point. The church obviously can't do everything. The church would have its limitations.

Paul says the family has the first responsibility. The family is to take care of their own widows, so the church can take care of those who are truly widowed in the sense that they have no family. They have no one available to take care of them.

Today, we have, of course, the situation. Occasionally, we do have people who are widowed. We do have elderly parents, grandparents, and things like that in our day who become ill or become, in some way, incapable of taking care of themselves.

And we have retirement homes, convalescent homes, different things of that nature today. And those are things that I know are challenging for people. You know, what are we supposed to do? Many people have been in great anguish looking at their aged parent and saying, what am I supposed to do? I can't take care of them.

They could be taken care of quite well over at this retirement home or whatever, but I feel so horrible. I feel so guilty about doing that. And those are challenging things.

Those are difficult things. How do we know what to do in those situations? Well, we have to look at, first of all, at the biblical principles, and then we've just really got to pray through those things individually. But, you know, it has to go both ways.

There has to be a willingness on the younger to take care, but there has to also be a willingness on the part of the elder one to be taken care of. And sometimes you have a situation where, you know, a parent or a grandparent comes into a home and they just want to take over the thing. And they, you know, pretty much kind of just wreck the place emotionally and, you know, all of this, and it doesn't work out.

There has to be a mutual cooperation and a willingness to mutually approach this kind of a thing. But the principle is, as we've seen, the principle is that the children or the grandchildren have a responsibility to provide for, to take care of those individuals. And then you have to determine amongst yourself, your family, and everybody involved what the best way to do that is.

So that would be, I think, some of the application for us today. You know, the wonderful thing that we have as Christians is we have a personal relationship with God and we have direct access to His throne and we have a God who speaks to us. And I tell people this all the time.

You know, the Bible doesn't spell out every little detail of life. The Bible does not give you a specific prescription or instruction on every facet of life. Why? Why? Because we serve the living God.

You know, it's an interesting thing. Religions, which are man's invention, generally speaking, religions are full of rules, regulations, minute detail about every conceivable facet of life. Boy, Judaism itself, rabbinic Judaism, God gives ten commandments, they take it and they turn it into thirty volumes.

You could barely read through it in a lifetime, let alone practice it. But you want to know anything. What's the proper way to blow your nose? Well, they've got a little paragraph on it.

You know, it's unbelievable. But that's what happens with religion because religion is man-based. But Christianity is a relationship with the living God who speaks to you.

And so a lot of times people call and say, well, what about this? And I want to know about that. And I'll say, you know what? The Bible doesn't specifically address that. So here's what you do.

Let's look at what the principle in Scripture is regarding that. And then you go pray about it, and God will tell you what to do about it. That's a wonderful thing.

That's a glorious thing. God will tell you what to do about it. He'll speak to your heart.

He'll give a word of wisdom. He'll give a word of knowledge. Somebody will come forth sometimes with a word from the Lord to say this is what you need to do.

That's such a wonderful thing. I love that aspect of our Christian lives, to know that it's not about a list of rules up on my refrigerator. It's about a relationship with God who could say, Brian, do this.

Brian, don't do that. Brian, in this situation, this is what I want you to do. And, of course, having those biblical principles there to guide us along, to make sure, yes, I'm hearing the voice of the Lord on this

matter.

Now, moving on, Paul now addresses the issue of elders. Elders, not in the sense of the older people, like he was talking about initially, but elders in the sense of those who are leading the ministry. And so he says, let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.

So the elders who rule well. In the early church, in the churches, it does seem that there was a plurality within the leadership. Now, somebody asked me a question the other day.

You know, what's right? Is it right to have a church led by elders? And elders and pastors are synonymous. They mean the same thing. Is it right to have a church that's led by pastors, plural? Or is it right to have a church that's led by one pastor solely? And I said, the Bible, I believe is intentionally ambiguous on that issue because God gives us an element of freedom to work out what works best in our particular situation.

So the scriptures are not dogmatic. The scriptures do not say in any place, there has to be a plurality of pastors who lead a church. Now, practically speaking, that does happen.

We are as Calvary chapels. We are pastor led churches rather than plural. But, of course, when you have a large ministry, we have a number of pastors on the staff and, you know, not every pastor here goes to Pastor Chuck every time they want to make a decision or they want to, you know, do something in regard to the ministry.

They don't go to Chuck and say, now, Chuck, what should I be teaching in my group? Or things like that. So in reality, even though we are a pastor led ministry in the singular sense, there is a plurality in the sense that there are many pastors who are carrying on the ministry and being given freedom to be led by the spirit to do it. So, you know, some people get real dogmatic about this thing of there has to be a plurality of elders.

Those who come from a Presbyterian background, that's what the Presbyterian church was built on. It was built on a plurality of elders. The Episcopal church was built upon the rule of a bishop.

That's what the word means. Episkopos, those who, that's the Greek word for bishop. So which is best? Well, again, the scripture gives some liberty there.

Some freedom so that we can, in a sense, I think through prayer, decide what works best for us. Now, the elders who rule well, they are to be counted worthy of double honor. The honor here that's being referred to is actually talking about remuneration.

Basically what Paul is saying is that those who rule well, those who, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine, they are to be given double honor. They're to be taken care of financially. That's what Paul is saying.

Now, this should not strike anybody as strange because this is the way it's always been. Remember the Levites? The Levites back in the Old Testament, they were the priesthood. The priesthood arose out of the Levites.

And the Levites and the priests, they were provided for by the rest of the nation. Their job revolved around the worship of God. That's what their lives consisted of.

It consisted of the tabernacle worship and then eventually the temple worship. And the Levites were provided for. They were one tribe.

This is two. They were one tribe. And all of the rest of the tribes were responsible to provide for the Levites so they could be free to carry on the ministry.

That same sort of principle was transferred over into the church. Those who preach the gospel, Paul said, are to also live from the gospel. But notice he makes it clear here that the double honor is to be given to those who labor in the word and doctrine.

The word and doctrine. Those who are preaching. Those who are teaching.

But notice the word labor. You know, the guy who preaches a 15-minute sermon on a Sunday morning and golfs five days a week is not laboring in the word and doctrine. Paul is referring to those people who give their heart and soul to understanding the scriptures, studying the scriptures, applying the scriptures.

That's what he's talking about here. Now he says, You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain, and the laborer is worthy of his wages. So Paul says, I'm only telling you what the law said.

He quotes from Deuteronomy, and he also quotes from Jesus. So this is what the scriptures say. You're not to muzzle the ox, and the laborer is worthy of his wage.

Then he says, Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses, and those who sin rebuke in the presence of all that the rest also may fear. And then he says, I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality. Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins.

Keep yourself pure. Now, a person became an elder through the laying on of hands. So Paul is giving instruction on elders, and then he says, Timothy, do not lay hands on anyone hastily.

In other words, do not promote a person to the position of elder hastily. Be patient about that. Take time.

Paul will say again to Timothy when he writes him a second time regarding those who are in church leadership. He said they're not to be novices. In other words, Timothy, don't just grab the first guy that comes into the church and say, Hey, we need another elder.

Come on. Join the club. He said, don't do it that way.

He said, Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins. The implication is, if you do that, you're going to end up in trouble down the road, and you're going to be responsible because you put the guy in the position. That's what Paul is saying to Timothy.

You're going to end up sharing in somebody else's sin. If you take somebody and prematurely put them in an exalted position, there's a strong chance they're going to be lifted up with pride, they're going to stumble, they're going to do some really dumb things, and maybe even some really bad things, and then Timothy, to put it in the modern vernacular, Paul is saying, it's going to come back to bite you. So don't do

it.

We have to be careful when it comes to putting people in leadership. A lot of times, people will come to the church and say, Oh, I love this church. It's so wonderful.

I've been here two weeks. Man, I want to just be involved. I want to serve.

And you know what I say to people? I say, I'll tell you what. Stick around for six months. Get plugged in.

Get the word of God into your life, and come back and see me in six months because you know what? I've seen people that have done that. They've come to me and say, This is the greatest church in the world. I love this church.

I want to sacrifice my life for this church. Three weeks later, they say, I hate your guts. This is the worst church I've ever seen, and I'm getting out of here, and I'm going to tell everybody never to come here.

So you know those things can happen, so you don't want to be hasty. Sometimes there's a temptation, though. Somebody comes in.

They seem so gifted. Oh, I remember years ago, we desperately needed a worship leader, and here's a guy. He's so gifted.

He can do it, but at the same time, no, the guy, he's a baby spiritually. He doesn't know anything, and just the need is there, so you want to just take him and say, Well, come on. Just do this, but you have to say no.

It's not going to be good for him, and it won't be good for us either. We must wait. We must be patient, not laying hands on anyone hastily because you end up sharing in other people's sins.

He says, Keep yourselves pure. Now, I wanted to finish this chapter, but I can't. We've run out of time, so we'll pick it up sometime in the future.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for just the clear and simple but profound instruction that we find in your word, and Lord, we thank you that you love us. You love people.

You care about the poor. You care about the widows. You care about everyone, and yet, Lord, in your word, we see that there's a right way and a wrong way to go about helping people, so, Lord, as we have opportunity, give us wisdom in regard to these things.

We thank you, Lord, for those who rule well and labor in the word and doctrine and teach us. We pray your blessing upon them. Lord, as we head into this week of anticipation of celebrating together your death and your resurrection, Lord, we pray for your blessing upon this week, and Lord, we pray that opportunities would come our way during the week to speak with people about your death and resurrection, opportunities to invite people to join us for the different services that we'll be having.

Lord, we thank you for those many opportunities. Use us in this week to come, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen.

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