

Leaders – A Biblical Requirement

How to Act in Church – Part V

Selected Scripture

Introduction

Aristotle once wrote these perceptive words, “We shall stand a far greater chance of hitting the target if we can see it.”

This makes sense, does it not?

I think the crisis in leadership today, is the result of the fact that the path we are traveling is one on which our society, and now even the church, is changing the rules. We are really not sure what the target is.

What does it mean to be a leader? What does it mean to be spiritually mature? What does a spiritually mature person look like? What does a spiritually mature person act like?

We have, told to us by Paul in I Timothy chapter 3, specifically the requirements for those who lead the church, and generally what a spiritual person is all about.

Able to Teach

We will begin our study today by looking at I Timothy 3:1-2.

It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do.

An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,

We have covered all of these requirements, in our previous discussions on the subject of leaders, except “able to teach”.

This is a natural progression because, as we studied in our last session, leaders are to be those who hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience (I Timothy 3:9). Titus 1:9 also said that leaders are to hold fast the faithful word; that is, cling to God’s word, which is reliable. So, it makes sense that these would be the men who would, in turn, give to the body God’s word, which they hold and cling to.

Frankly, we are in desperate need today for men who know God’s word and are able to teach others also.

II Timothy 2:2

This was the major function of Timothy, who was exhorted by Paul, as you may remember, in II Timothy 2:2,

The things which you have heard from me... entrust [deposit] these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

Two mistaken interpretations of II Timothy 2:2

There are, in this view, very important implications. However, let me give two wrong ones before we go any further. These are two mistaken interpretations from this verse.

1. The first misinterpretation is that Paul is referring to a one-to-many teaching.

This is someone who can get in front of a class of many people to teach, and keep all of the class members awake.

Many believe that this is what Paul is referring to in this verse. I do not believe so and I will try to show this in a moment.

2. The second misinterpretation is that Paul is requiring the spiritual gift of teaching.

I know that many of you have taught and I am going to turn this around on you and let you know in a moment that it is the responsibility of everyone who follows Christ to be involved in teaching of some sort. However, perhaps you have tried your hand at teaching one-to-many and are not certain that is where you should be. After the first session, you were ready to run and everyone in the class wanted to run with you!

I can remember when I was a junior in college, having the wonderful experience every Wednesday night of going to Jump Off Mountain, Tennessee. This name was no indication of what you were supposed to do when you got there, but it was the name of the mountain. The name of the church was

Jump Off Baptist Church. It is a name that gives a warm welcome, does it not? “Welcome to Jump Off Baptist Church!” I would go there every Wednesday night to the people who lived on the top of the mountain. The only things of notice on that little mountain in Tennessee were a small private college and a golf course – that was about it.

The little white clapboard church that had been around for nearly a hundred years had pine floors covered with a very thin indoor/outdoor carpet and a couple of small pew areas. The platform was about three inches above the floor and there was a small pulpit. I would go every Wednesday night and about thirteen people would show up. It became my deep desire to keep one particular man awake because he would come every time fully awake, but I would start teaching and he would doze off. It was at that time I began thinking twice about what I thought I might be gifted to do. After a year of that, I went on to other things. However, I will never forget the delight of going there and learning so much about teaching God’s word, especially to that man.

Implication of II Timothy 2:2

Now, let me clarify the responsibility of what I believe Paul is talking about in this verse. I am going to turn your attention to several other verses and want you to note the implications.

Look at II Timothy 2:2 again,

The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

This does not say to elders only, but to “faithful men” – “who will be able to teach others also.”

The implication of this verse is that teaching is the responsibility of mature men.

Implication Titus 2:3-5

Now look at Titus 2:3-5,

Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good,

so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children,

to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.

Note the phrase “teaching what is good”. This word “teaching” is from the same root found in the word in I Timothy 3:2.

What are older women to teach? They are to teach the younger women how to love their husbands and how to love their children.

Now the word, interestingly enough, just in this passage, has a different shade. It does not refer to formal instruction. An older woman is to get a class of younger women around her and teach them. She is to give them propositional truth, as the “didaskalos”; the teacher.

This phrase is talking about an informal, private setting in which teaching is one-to-one.

An older woman comes along to a younger woman and invites her over for coffee, or whatever, and encourages her. And, in that encouragement, she is teaching her how to love her husband and her children.

The implication of these verses is that teaching is the responsibility of mature women.

Implication of Hebrews 5:12

Turn to Hebrews 5:12.

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

This writer is writing to the believers at large.

The implication of this verse is that teaching is a sign of maturity for all believers.

Now obviously, in I Timothy 3, Paul is telling us that one of the primary indicators of maturity and leadership is the desire and the ability to teach God’s word. However, it may be one-to-one.

A spiritual leader in the church may have a ministry of one-to-one teaching. It may be one-to-many as well; such as a class teacher or a pastor/teacher.

We need to note, however, as we now focus on the specific application, that this particular qualification is the only qualification we find that expressly divides the offices of deacon and elder. The ability to teach is not given to the deacon. I think the responsibility of teaching is given to the

deacon, however, as a mature believer, whether one-to-one or one-to-many. This is the one qualification that Paul gives, however, that he almost marks “elders only”. It is a distinction for their office.

Three arenas encompassed by the teaching responsibility of elders

Commentator Lightfoot writes these words:

The duties of the elder are two-fold: he rules the congregation and he instructs the congregation. The dualistic nature of the office can best be observed in the work of the pastor/teacher, who by his very name, shepherds and instructs the flock.

By the way, I am going to raise questions in your mind about elders that I am not going to answer today.

Turn to John chapter 21:15-17. Jesus is talking to Peter, who would become one of the churches first elders. How do we know this? In I Peter 5:1a, Peter writes,

Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder . . .

Jesus is talking to Peter, knowing his ministry, and tells him to do three things. These are very, very important.

1. Number one, Peter is to feed the lambs.

Look at John 21:15.

So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Tend [feed] My lambs.”

This means to feed or tend lambs as a herdsman.

In other words, “You make sure, Peter, that the young ones get fed. For the spiritually immature; the ones that are new in the faith, it is your responsibility, as an elder, to make sure that when you teach, these young ones get fed.”

Jesus then continues.

2. Number two, Peter is to shepherd the sheep.

Look at John 21:16.

He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Shepherd My sheep.”

The word “shepherd,” in this verse, is the word “poimenos”. This is the same word from which we get our word “pastor”.

Jesus is saying to shepherd or pastor the sheep. This means “lead the sheep”. He is saying to lead the ones who are mature. He is moving from little lambs to mature sheep.

Jesus goes on.

3. Number three, Peter is to tend the sheep.

Look at John 21:17a.

He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” . . .

Perhaps this was a reminder to Peter of his three-fold denial of the Lord. Continue to John 21:17b.

. . . And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Jesus said to him, “Tend [feed] My sheep.”

The word “tend” is the same word as that used for tending the little lambs, but now Jesus is saying, “Peter, when you teach, make sure you are giving food to the young ones and to the older ones.”

I cannot think of a greater challenge than this. Those who teach know this to be true as well.

So, the teaching responsibilities of elders encompass three arenas. Let me give them.

1. First, the elder is to teach and instruct the new believer – the little lambs.

2. Secondly, the elder is to lead the flock.

This includes *all* of the flock and involves protecting, ruling, giving direction, training, comforting, encouraging, admonishing, and restoring. All these come from passages dealing with the office of elder or pastor or shepherd.

3. Thirdly, the elder is to feed the body – both new believer and old alike.

Ephesians 4:11-12 says,

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,

for the equipping of the saints for the work of the service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

Ephesians 4:12 in the Amplified Bible reads,

. . . the full equipping of the saints that they should do the work of ministering

toward building up Christ's body (the church),

We have a problem in our churches today. When you look at me, your pastor, you might think, "Yes, he is the one set aside to be a minister." This thinking is absolutely incorrect.

The body is to be equipped for what, according to this verse? They are to be equipped for the purpose of ministry.

One of the most exciting things to see in our church is ministry evolving from people who are taking responsibility.

I think also in this, we find the beauty of a plurality of pastors or elders, in that there may be one that is clearly gifted and set apart as a teacher and another that is clearly gifted as an administrator and another who is set aside as a counselor and another as a discipler and another as a ruler. It is clear, however, that the primary job of this office is teaching.

Turn to I Timothy 5:17, which tells us the priority of all that the elders do. Notice this rather shocking verse.

The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.

This is interesting. What does the word "honor" mean? And what is "double honor"?

The word "honor" is "time," which can be understood to mean one of two things: financial remuneration or respect. The meaning depends on the context in which the word is found.

Look at I Timothy 5:18 for the context of this word.

For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages."

I do not think I appreciate the parallel between an ox and a pastor/teacher! However, the context is one of wages. By this time, there were elders who were supported by the body at large.

I did not pick this series to give a plug for a raise, by the way! In fact, I feel a little uncomfortable emphasizing what I do – I would rather de-emphasize my role.

It is clear in scripture, however, that the highest priority is placed on teaching the flock. Those who work hard – and, in fact, the word "work" means "to labor to exhaustion" – at preaching and teaching deserve "double honor".

I see preachers today who are exhausted, but many for the wrong reasons. They are in charge, unfortunately, of everything from the bulletins to the bathrooms; from visitation to Sunday school, and on and on.

Paul thought it worthy that a man be exhausted doing his primary task.

Now the word for "work," as in "those who work hard at preaching" has a literal translation of "those who work hard at the 'logoi,' or 'words,' of scripture teaching". If there is to be exhaustion, it should be from this.

I am going to stop at this point and go in a different direction. You might call it a rabbit trail, but it really is not. I want to clear up a misunderstanding.

I have heard men in the ministry avoid this responsibility by saying something like, "Well, I'm a preacher, not a teacher."

In other words, "I'm just going to get up in the pulpit and say what I think ought to be said and leave the studying to somebody else."

No. Every pastor; every preacher is a teacher. There is no delineation in scripture between the two.

The word "preacher" is biblical and comes from the word "kerugma," which means, "someone who stands up and makes an announcement of biblical truth". The problem is that every preacher or announcer is not a teacher.

Turn to Ephesians 4:11 again. This problem may not bother you as much as it does me, but I want to stop long enough to point this out.

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,

This is as clear as can be that there can be a pastor who is not a teacher, is it not? No, this is not the case. Let me give a grammatical lesson on this.

If, in the Greek grammar, there are two nouns that are in the plural; such as the nouns "pastors" and "teachers," and they are separated by a conjunction "kai," which means "and," and before the first noun there is no article "the," it means that the two nouns are intricately involved with each other. In fact, the first noun is intended to incorporate the second, however, the second noun does not necessarily involve the first one.

This is true, is it not? There are a lot of gifted teachers who are not pastors. However, in this phrase, Paul is saying that everyone who is a pastor is

to be a teacher. In other words, the second noun is incorporated in the first.

I think I will cry the next time someone comes up to me and says, “You’re really enjoyable, but you’re really not a preacher – you’re more like a teacher.”

I just want to put my arms around them and say, “That is the responsibility of every pastor you have ever sat under.”

I cannot think of anything that is more clearly taught in scripture.

Why is it so critical that pastors are teachers? Look at the next verse again, Ephesians 4:12a,

for the equipping of the saints for the work of [the ministry]...

If we are not given anything to build on, how can we minister? However, if we are given much, then God demands much, in terms of ministry.

Let me draw this together with two principles. The maturity of a church can be determined by these two bottom-line questions.

1. **How clearly is the pastor/teacher feeding the flock?**
2. **How directly is the flock involved in ministry?**

If all the programs are taken away and all the architecture is taken away and everything in the church is stripped down to the essentials, what is left? There is the priority of the teaching of God’s word and there is the involvement of the body in ministry.

Manages His Own Household Well

Now let us turn back to I Timothy and cover one more thing. Look at I Timothy 3:4.

He must be one who manages [rules] his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity

As we get into this passage, would you forget the fact that earlier, my daughter was running around up here? I could not keep her under control because I was at the piano! Should we just skip this verse today?

The key principle in this verse of scripture is that a man’s right to rule in the church is dependent upon his ability to rule in the home. If a man is unwilling or unable to, with dignity, manage his home, then he obviously cannot rule the church with dignity.

We would think this would be the other way around. We would think that if someone could rule,

with dignity, a church body with all of the different personalities, then the home would be no problem. However, this is not what Paul said. He said, in effect, “If you can rule the home with dignity, the church will be a snap.”

Why is this true? Those of you who have children can just smile – because you know. However, before I talk about this, let me focus on the key word in this verse.

What is the key word in I Timothy 3:4? It is “rule,” right? No, I believe the key word is “dignity”. This word means, in the original, “the man who carries himself with a balanced blend of composure and courtesy”.

We would like to think the key word is “rule”. Men could have the theme verse written over the door of their home, so it could be seen and felt as soon as anyone walks in,

*... Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord
... (I Peter 3:6)*

This is not the theme at all. The theme is the way he manages; the way he rules. He will never have his hand on it, so does he have dignity while he does it?

Why are children the testing ground?

Why are the children – and the wife is included in this verse too – the testing ground?

Let me focus on the children.

1. **First, the children do not automatically respect your authority and neither does the church.**

Children have a limited understanding within them that Dad is the authority. By nature, Dad is bigger, stronger, louder, so children have an innate sense that he is supposed to be in control as the dad.

My family has been having a fun time around our dining room table in the evenings lately. Our three and a half year old, Candace, whom you saw earlier, has been pulling her chair over to sit right by me. The table is set, but she pulls her chair over to sit by Dad. She is crazy about me! I have her wrapped around my little finger! She slips beside me. The other night she was looking up at me and was just watching me as I was eating. I figured, “She is wild about me; she just can’t take her eyes off me.” She finally blurted out, “I know why you’re the daddy.” I thought, “Why, my brilliant daughter?” Then she said, “It’s because you’ve got the biggest mouth.”

2. Secondly, the children may not automatically respond to your leadership and direction and neither will the church.

The church has a group of elders praying and seeking the will of God and they get it. They go to the congregation and say, “We’re going left.” Then the congregation says, “We’re going right.”

Is there dignity in this?

The testing ground, as a leader, is your children who do not automatically respond to your leadership and direction.

Frankly, a lot of times when you give direction, you are wrong.

Last week, my family went to the zoo and we had a friend from Detroit with us. We were late getting there, so we were rather quickly going through the zoo. It is a beautiful zoo and walking on the paved pathways surrounded by trees is like a nature hike. We were moving right along, hitting all the good spots. We went to the elephant exhibit and watched them for a while. Then I thought we should take a shortcut, so with my family a little behind me, I went through the woods and down a little ravine and up onto another path and motioned for them to follow. They followed and I was kind of proud of myself at finding a shortcut. We were walking on a cement path and heard a “toot” behind us and turned to see that it was a bus filled with people. We were on the path that the buses use and no one is supposed to be walking on that path! The problem was made worse by the fact that the bus takes every inch of the path and we were beside a hill and could not get off the path. So we were jogging along with the bus, being watched by all the people on it. We finally got off the path into the woods. My wife was looking at me and grinning!

Anyway, let us say you are leading in the right way, but they are not automatically going to respond.

3. Thirdly, the children may not automatically appreciate your efforts and neither will the church.

Your children and your church will not automatically respect you, respond to you, and appreciate you.

I know of pastors who starve for some word of appreciation and never get it. Frankly, this is hard for me to understand because the congregation at our church has been the most encouraging congregation I have ever seen in my life. My heart goes out to pastors who never hear a word of appreciation.

Do you know what you have to do with your children? You have to teach them how to say, “Thank you.”

This may be the process of a leader who, with dignity, teaches his church what to appreciate about the ministry.

What if they do not appreciate you? Do you lose your dignity?

4. Fourthly, the children may not automatically receive your teaching and instruction and neither will the church.

This is when it is really easy to lose control and think, “Will they ever learn?”

I have heard this as much from pastors as from parents.

Let me ask and answer a very serious question, “What if your child grows to maturity and ultimately rejects what you believe and teach?”

I will give some hard words that I hope, by the grace of God, I do not have to live out. Let me turn your attention to Titus chapter 1.

Look at Titus 1:5-6.

For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, . . .

In other words, when the children reach an age – and I believe Paul is talking about mature children capable of living on their own and I will show why in a moment – at which they have heard what you have taught and say, “No thanks,” this can destroy the credibility of what you represent and it can be a disqualifier.

Titus 1:6 continues.

. . . not accused of dissipation or rebellion.

Your children are to believe and not be accused of dissipation. This is talking about a person who is spending his life pursuing immorality.

The next word is rebellion, which means “unteachable and unruly”.

In other words, it is possible for children to grow up in the home of a man who is an elder and to reject his beliefs.

I believe Paul is saying that this rejection, when it is known by others, destroys the credibility of your ministry.

I will never forget a story my wife told me several years ago that marked me. A pastor who was committed to Titus chapter 1 had raised his children. One of his children, who was in his teens, was known all around town as being morally loose and rebellious and was in trouble with the law. This pastor went to his son and read these verses to him and said, "I'm going to give you a week and at the end of a week, I want an answer from you."

The son said, "What do you mean? What do you want an answer from me for?"

The pastor said, "I want you to tell me if I am to continue as a pastor."

This is putting it right where it belongs; right where it hurts.

The good news is that this son came back later hardly able to bear the responsibility of his dad's ministry and he turned his life around.

What if this son had not done this? I think it these verses are clear.

I think Paul is doing a couple of things in this.

- 1. Paul is relating, first of all, the principle that the foundation for effective credible ministry may be destroyed by ungodly adult children.**
- 2. Paul is also, secondly, reinstating the priority of the home. A man must rule his household well before he can rule the church. If he ever hopes for the church to believe what he is saying, there must be the foundation that his grown children have bought it.**

One of the most tragic stories in evangelistic history is Billy Sunday, who was tremendously used by God. His ministry was an attack against alcohol. He would go into a city and preach his campaigns and, by the time he was finished, the saloons would close down for lack of business. But his seven sons *all* died alcoholics.

I never knew the end of this story until I was in high school and researched this for a term paper. I went through all of the old newspapers going back almost a hundred years that could be viewed on a screen on which they could be scrolled through. I came across an article on Billy Sunday that broke my heart. I remember reading this article, as I was just getting ready to graduate from high school, having committed my life to the Lord. There was a big picture of Billy Sunday in one of his famous poses.

If you have ever heard of Billy Sunday, you know that he would slide across the stage, having formerly been a professional baseball player, and electrify the crowd with his performance as well as his preaching. In this article, he was all dressed up and in one of his famous poses for the reporter, who was sympathetic.

This reporter gave the story of the fact that Billy Sunday had come to town alone. Billy was older in life and told of the way he used to have front-men go into a town to get everything ready for the evangelistic crusade. Now Billy came alone and would go to the newspaper office and say, "I'm here in town. Could you put something in the newspaper?" Why? It was because by this time, his sons had destroyed the credibility of his ministry.

Is this serious? You bet. It is something the men who lead in our church take very seriously.

Turn to I Timothy 3:5 and let us wrap this up.

(but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?),

Let me close by pointing out for your attention the little word "care". It is a rich word. It is the same word used in the parable of the Good Samaritan. (Luke 10:30-37)

This parable talked about the man who was robbed and left for dead and the Good Samaritan came along and did what? He got off his donkey, put oil and wine into the man's wounds and bandaged them, and put the man on his donkey and took him to a Palestinian inn and talked to the innkeeper and gave him money.

The parable says of this Samaritan that he took "care" of the injured man. This involved the giving of his life, his resources, his time, his energy to care for the man.

If we summarize Paul's words, he is saying that a man should have this attitude toward his home. In other words, he cares for his home; he gives his time to his home; he gives his resources to his home – he is committed to caring for his home.

If this is so, this man will be qualified for having the highest position of authority in the church; that is the under-shepherd responsible for the well being of the flock, entrusted to him by the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ.