

You please turn to 1 Timothy chapter five.

If you don't have a Bible, there should be a Bible in one of the chairs in front or behind you.

1 Timothy chapter five, starting in verse 17, and we'll read through the remainder of the chapter.

Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.

For the scripture says, you shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain, and the laborer deserves his wages.

Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.

As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.

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

Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others.

Keep yourself pure.

No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.

The sins of some people are conspicuous, going before them to judgment.

but the sins of others appear later.

So also good works are conspicuous, and even those that are not cannot remain hidden.

Thanks, Scott.

I've got to say a couple things about this passage.

I see some new faces, and I feel like I've got to clarify a couple things.

One, I don't pick the passage based on what I think the congregation needs to hear this morning, so this was not me saying, hey, I need a raise.

Church is very generous with me and my family, but we preach expositionally, so verse by verse, and we've been working through 1 Timothy, and this is the next passage.

So this is the one we're going to address today.

Also, I just want to say, you know,

We talked about Mother's Day sermons versus deviating from our normal pattern through 1 Timothy.

And I just want to say that this was the passage that was actually slated for Mother's Day.

But I figured if I preached a passage on paying your pastors on Mother's Day, that that was not going to go over very well.

So we brought my dad in and he bumped us back a week and we actually had a passage that was on womanhood.

So, you know, I was thinking about it a little bit.

I just want to throw that out there.

All right, let's go to the Lord, ask for his help this morning as we open his word.

Heavenly Father, every line and word from your word

is good and useful and helpful to us.

Lord, you have given us the whole counsel, your whole counsel, for our good and your glory.

So Lord, as we look at this passage today, we ask that you would help us to first and foremost see you in your beauty and your glory, to know you better and how you view us and have established your people, your church, and how we're to relate to it

And Lord, would you, as we admire you more, would you mold us and shape us from the inside out?

We pray all this in Jesus' name, amen.

We don't live in an honor culture.

If you talk to sociologists, they would say that honor culture tends to be more of an Eastern thing in Asia.

But who or what we honor matters still, and honor and shame shape us as a people regardless of whether or not we value it or not.

So who or what we honor and hold up as admirable can, in a mysterious way, both reveal our hearts to us, but it can also shape us.

On the one hand, who and what we honor and find attractive can reveal our heart, our deepest desires.

At the same time, though, we can choose to show honor and speak well of people or things that we don't find attractive or admirable.

And often when we make this choice to honor something or to give it a privileged place in our lives and to prioritize it, when we make that choice long enough, our hearts tend to turn in attraction to it.

Jesus said, where your treasure is, your heart will be also.

If you treasure something long enough, if you make a choice to honor it and admire it and give it a privileged place in your life,

your heart will go there, right?

Your desires and what you find attractive will go there.

This is why storytelling in all of its forms, movies, books, shows, poetry, is so powerful.

Every story is an invitation by the writer or the author to admire what they admire or to find repulsive and ugly and shameful what they find shameful.

Which means, just side application here, we're only like 30 seconds into the sermon and we're already drawing application.

But when you're consuming media, when you're consuming things that are telling you a story, it's good to ask, what does the writer want me to find admirable?

What do they want me to admire?

What does the writer want me to loathe and despise?

And are these things that God loves and finds admirable, are they things that God loathes and despises?

Well, Paul's not writing Timothy a novel here, but as we've seen, there is a plot hanging over this letter.

So Paul's writing Timothy a letter with some instructions and some encouragement, but it's a letter from one man to another.

But there's a plot in the background that comes through in the letter.

There's a few elders within the Ephesian church that are teaching a false gospel for selfish gain, and they're especially taking advantage of young single women.

And before we feel too bad for these young single ladies, we find out that they too have their own ugly selfishness that is showing up as laziness and gossip and refusing to marry so they can live on the church's dime and on the church's support rather than being productive.

So Paul's writing to tell Timothy this.

that it's time to expose this rottenness within the church, especially in its leadership, right?

And to cut out the cancer in hopes that those who are teaching this false gospel and straying from the Lord, proving to be unbelievers, that they would turn to the Lord or return to the Lord in humility.

But not only is Paul writing to Timothy and the Ephesian church to instruct them and to show them what they ought to loathe and find shameful,

you know, specifically the false teachers and these self-centered women.

But he wants them, as we saw last week in chapter 5, verse 3, to honor true widows who serve others out of a position of dependence on the Lord.

And in our passage, he instructs them to honor the elders that are fulfilling the office well.

So we'll see today, as we look at this passage, that we ensure that church leadership honors God and is helpful to the church by honoring, guarding, and properly calling its elders.

So we ensure that church leadership honors God and is helpful to the church by honoring, guarding, and properly calling its elders.

So we'll just break them down right here.

Honoring at the beginning.

Paul gives specific instructions to Timothy that he and the church is to honor their elders.

Look at verse 17.

So really quick, we just want to be clear about who Paul's talking about.

He's talking about elders who rule well and labor, especially labor in preaching and teaching.

So apparently not all of the elders in Ephesus were teaching a false gospel, right?

In chapter one, it seems like there were two in particular that were teaching this false gospel that was leading people astray.

But there were godly men who were ruling well.

And in Acts 6, we're told that the leaders of the church

The elders, the apostles at the time, elders later found it right that they would give themselves to the word of God in prayer.

So job description in Acts 6 for those leading the church was to devote themselves to the teaching of the word of God.

and to prayer on behalf of God's people.

But in this passage, we're also reminded that there's a ruling or a leading component to being an elder, right?

That there's an oversight to life together as the body of Christ or as a church, right?

Out of necessity, there are some decisions that need to be made about how we will live together and be faithful to the things that we're called to do in the New Testament and that the elders are to oversee that.

So I'm not going to break down this morning the division of authority and responsibility that's both commanded and modeled in the New Testament, but we do see elders, deacons, and the congregation as a whole operating within their God-given positions at different levels of authority and responsibility in the local church.

Not going to break that down.

We'll do that at a Sunday school sometime or an evening service where we'll take a little more of an academic approach to breaking all that down.

What we need to see here, though, is that Paul is specifically addressing the elders that fulfill the office well, especially those that labor in preaching and teaching.

And Paul's acknowledging two things.

He's acknowledging that preaching and teaching properly, doing that properly and well, requires time and energy in order to

teach the word and to present it to folks, it's going to require time and energy.

I'd say about 20 to 25 hours of my work week, on average, is spent preparing to preach.

Sometimes longer, sometimes shorter, depending on the passage, how difficult it is.

Also, the kind of background I have in the passage, if I'm really familiar with it, it's something I've studied out a lot.

sometimes shorter.

If it's something that's relatively new to me, then it takes more time, right?

So to do it well, you have to devote time to also not just studying the specific passage, but you also have to stay up to date on current events

debates and controversies to be able to apply it well.

You also just have to do general study of the scriptures for six years of education, right?

And looking to just gain the basic background and ability to handle the word well and to do that study.

So rightly understanding God's word and declaring it in a comprehensible and winsome way in order to make disciples is

is a great calling and responsibility of the church, but it requires time and energy, right?

So Paul's saying that it's right that the church would set aside a couple of men to teach and preach the church, to put in that time and energy to teach and preach the church well.

So Paul's also acknowledging here, one, he's acknowledging that teaching and preaching requires time and energy, but Paul's also acknowledging that while all elders have the same qualifications, we looked at those in chapter three, the qualifications for elders and deacons, while all elders must meet those qualifications, which includes one of the qualifications for elders is teaching,

not all of the elders are going to be gifted in the same way as far as teaching goes or any of the other gifts, right?

So he's acknowledging that some elders are going to have certain strengths and certain weaknesses and that they're all not going to be uniform across the board, even though they all meet a certain set of qualifications.

So each of our elders are not going to have the same gifts and strengths, but that also means that they're not going to have the same weaknesses either, right?

And that's one of the reasons that a plurality of elders is important, that we have multiple men on the elder board, because we want a plurality of gifts and a plurality of weaknesses on the board as well.

Not weaknesses, obviously, but a plurality of gifts and usually the weaknesses that go with that as well.

I'm just laughing because I think even in this last elders meeting that we had recently, we were providing some honest feedback, and I mean, you could call it criticism, I guess, to one another, and just acknowledging that we're, even on our board, we're gifted in different ways, we have different strengths, different weaknesses, and that's okay.

Not everybody's gonna be good at everything all the time, right?

And that's why we have multiple men on the board.

So elders that rule well, and especially those that are engaged in the labor of teaching and preaching, ought to be worthy or ought to be considered worthy of double honor.

That's what he says here in verse 17.

So double honor here means respect and remuneration, which I can say that word, right?

Remuneration.

First, respect is the obvious one.

because Paul's already talking about respect in regards to widows.

So honor true widows earlier.

Also, Paul makes it really clear that he means respect in 1 Thessalonians 5, 12-13.

He says,

and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work.

Be at peace among yourselves.

I smile every time I read this verse, too, because I would fish with Dave, one of the pastors on staff at the church that I served at before, and Rick, who was on the elder board, kind of retired from the elder board, didn't go to the meetings all the time, and me, Dave, and Rick would always be giving each other a hard time, maybe calling each other names, like Knucklehead and stuff like that,

And every now and then, Dave would just turn to Rick, and he'd be like, hey, Rick, you're supposed to esteem me very highly.

Just remember.

So I chuckle every time I read it.

But really, the point here of this verse is that respect and esteem are a choice, right?

Respect and esteem are a choice here.

Paul's not talking about feelings of respect and esteem.

If you've been in the military, you know what I'm talking about, right?

Where you may have a knucklehead over you that you don't necessarily respect, but you respect, you choose to respect and esteem the position, right?

So Paul knows elders aren't perfect.

He's gonna talk about what to do when they don't repent here in a second.

He knows that they're not gonna be perfect in every way, but he still calls us to choose to respect and esteem them highly.

Paul also knows that we just tend to

Focus on the negative, right?

He's saying choose to not focus on the negative and to respect and esteem them highly.

I found this to be good marital advice as well, as an aside.

You know, we can just be fixated on our spouse's problems and shortcomings and the little things that bug us about them.

I would encourage you, when that starts to happen, for every one thing that you're just really annoyed about your spouse, to list 10 positive things in your mind that you love about your spouse that you find really helpful and beautiful.

And that one will seem a lot smaller by the time you get done that list of 10.

So honor means respect.

Respect.

But double honor doesn't mean respect a lot.

It also means remuneration or honoring them with financial compensation for their time and labor.

Now, we know this means financial compensation because of the quotations that are given that we'll look at in a second.

But Paul teases out the argument in 1 Corinthians 9, 7-12 and makes it really clear that he's talking about money.

He says...

Who serves as a soldier at his own expense?

Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit?

Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk?

Do I say these things on human authority?

Does not the law say the same?

For it is written in the law of Moses, you shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain.

Is it for oxen that God is concerned?

Does he not certainly speak for our sake?

It was written for our sake because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop.

If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?

If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more?

Now, got to be honest about the context here.

In those particular circumstances, right after Paul gets done talking about the right, the God-given right that they have to reap material things as they sow spiritual things, he says, but...

We're not going to make good on that right or we're not going to claim that right from you and we're going to do it for free.

But Paul tells Timothy here in 1 Timothy that it's right for the Ephesian church to honor these men in this way and he instructs them to make good on that right.

and to compensate them financially.

And one of the reasons is not just for the men that are doing it, but we give our money to what we find valuable and honorable.

We show value and honor with what we invest in financially.

And it's right that we doubly honor the preaching and teaching of God's word and those who rule in God's house well.

We want that to be honored in our hearts and we want it to be honored within the

structure and organization of the church.

And Paul, just to make it clear, says, you know, makes it clear that he's not speaking on his own authority, although he is speaking with apostolic authority as scripture.

He quotes other scripture to support his case, just in case people accuse him of, you know, speaking out of selfish gain or ambition here.

So he quotes the Old Testament and the quotes from Deuteronomy 25.4.

And Paul's saying, this is how it's always been.

So this kind of exacting a physical living off of spiritual work is how it's always been.

Don't muzzle the ox.

It wasn't just written for the ox, but it was actually talking about the priesthood.

And the priests would live off of the spiritual work that they were doing.

But then he also quotes Jesus in Luke 10, 7, which...

Again, real quick side note, Luke was alive when Paul wrote this, and he's quoting Luke as Scripture.

It's very clear that the early church saw these apostolic writings and viewed them and treated them as Scripture, even as they were being written.

This wasn't something that was imposed on their writings later.

The church recognized, even while these men were alive, that they were inspired by the Holy Spirit and delivering authoritative Scripture words.

to the church.

That's a little bit of an aside, but I didn't want to run by that.

But Paul's quoting Jesus in the book of Luke to just reiterate and confirm this Old Testament concept.

All right, so we ensure that church leadership honors God and is helpful to the church by honoring it, doubly honoring it with respect and remuneration, but also by guarding it.

So look at verse 19.

Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.

So one of the first ways that we guard elders and eldership within the church is by assuming the best.

He says, do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.

Again, this is a reiteration of an Old Testament law.

But we should note, before we get too far on assuming the best, that Paul isn't saying that no charges can be brought against an elder.

He's just saying that after being called by God, by receiving the affirmation of God's call by the congregation, after having been found to meet the qualifications for an elder as laid out in 1 Timothy 3,

that this man's to be given the benefit of the doubt in the face of a single accusation without evidence.

So he says when it's one word against another, there's no contrary evidence, he's to be given the benefit of the doubt.

In other words, just generally assume the best.

John Calvin puts it this way.

He says,

John Calvin talks about our tendency as human beings.

He says, as soon as any charge is made against ministers of the word, it is believed as surely and firmly as if it had been already proved.

This happens not only because of a higher standard of integrity is required from them, which it is, but because Satan makes most people, in fact, nearly everyone, over-credulous, which is not a word, he just made that up, so that without investigation, they eagerly condemn their pastors whose good name they ought to be defending.

I just pulled this quote because John Calvin, by the way, had a very tumultuous tenure as a pastor.

So he met opposition just about everywhere he went, and he's not prone to understating things.

He tends to be a little dramatic in how he states things, which you don't have to read much of his writings to find that out.

But I quoted him for this reason, is that this is a timeless truth, right?

We love to assume the worst possible.

Pretty much all the time, right?

When we hear an accusation or report, it's just kind of our sinful, natural tendency to assume the worst.

But Paul's telling us here, assume the best, right?

Assume the best, unless, in verse 20,

As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all so that the rest may stand in fear.

Assume the best unless they persist in sin.

Persist in sin is the key phrase here.

Again, elders are not perfect.

Like, we're going to step on your toes.

We're going to get frustrated.

You're going to get frustrated with us.

We're going to have rough patches in our marriages.

We're not always going to handle sensitive personal issues perfectly.

In short, we're fallible, sinful men that are going to let you down at some point.

Being an elder is not being perfect, but it's being quick to confess.

It's being quick to repent and

when confronted with sin, and it's to not persist in sin when confronted with it.

Elders ought to be the first to confess sin and repent of it when we're made aware of it.

So again, above reproach, the qualifications for elders are very specifically laid out, and it's possible to confess and repent of sin and then not meet those qualifications.

So I'm not saying that somebody remains an elder when they fail to meet those qualifications,

But a public rebuke here is only necessary, and a public rebuke would be calling somebody out in front of the congregation for something specific that they're doing.

A public rebuke is only necessary if the sin is persistent and a man proves to be unrepentant, which is a function of following Matthew 18 and the process that Jesus lays out there for confronting someone with their sin.

So whether or not he remains an elder, like I said, or whether or not a public statement needs to be made about an elder's sin ought to be determined upon whether or not after he's repented that he still meets the criteria and qualifications of 1 Timothy 3.

But if someone in a public role, if an elder in a public role refuses to repent, Paul says that he ought to be confronted and corrected publicly as an example to everyone.

So taking on the role of an elder ought to be done thoughtfully and prayerfully because once you do, your life is an example either of the joy of godliness or of the discipline and correction of a holy God.

Once you take on that public role, your life is an example to the church one way or the other, for good or for bad.

So we ensure that church leadership honors God and is helpful to the church by honoring and guarding eldership, but also by properly calling, right?

So in light of that, right?

So in light of this process for bringing a charge against an elder, assuming the best, but also publicly rebuking an elder that's in unrepentant sin, in light of that, Paul's like, you know, don't be hasty here, right?

Don't be hasty.

I'm sorry, got ahead there.

Don't be hasty and don't go with the flow.

We'll start with don't be hasty here.

Verse 21 to 22, he says, in the presence of God and of Christ and of the elect angels, I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality.

Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands.

There's a few reasons an elder board and a church might be eager to call a man to eldership.

But the first one, the one that Paul mentions here, is partiality.

Whether it's race or socioeconomic status,

success in the business world or just general charisma and swagger.

It's easy and we tend to show partiality to people who appear to have what we really desire.

We tend to show partiality to people who seem to have achieved

or have somehow attained what we really deep down desire, whether that's like just confidence or money or whatever, we tend to show partiality to those people.

And Paul's saying here, partiality, prejudging based on things that are not the qualifications, not the godly character laid out in 1 Timothy 3, will lead us to hastily make men elders who should not be elders.

So prejudging people based on some other standard that's not the godly character laid out in 1 Timothy 3 will lead us to hastily make men elders who are not qualified to be elders.

So don't be hasty.

Don't be blinded by our own self-serving judgment and put unqualified men into leadership.

Because, again, go back to the process of what has to happen if there's an unqualified man in eldership who's in unrepentant sin.

It's a...

A difficult process to walk through.

Also, he says, don't go with the flow in verses 22 to 23.

He says, nor take part in the sins of others.

Keep yourself pure.

No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.

Paul is basically given two sides of the same coin here.

First, he says, don't partake in the sins of others.

Don't find somebody attractive and hastily make them an elder and in so doing go along with their sin.

Don't cave to the peer pressure.

Maintain a standard of holiness.

and a sense of being above reproach in leadership, right?

So make sure you're maintaining that.

But the other side, you know, with the whole wine thing, the water and wine thing, don't be so worried about how everyone is going to perceive your actions that you fail to do something good, right?

So be aware of what your actions look like and make sure you maintain a standard of holiness.

But don't be so aware that you fail to do something good because you're worried about what it's going to look like.

Like take a little wine as medicine.

In other words, Paul's saying, don't be swept along with the current.

Don't be worried about public approval.

Don't be worried about what other people are thinking.

But exercise godly wisdom and judgment, even if you have to swim against the current.

Teens, this one's for you.

Kids, this quote, it's a great quote.

I need to quote it to my kids more.

It's by Spurgeon.

He says, "'Dead fish are always carried down the stream.'"

Any dead fish can float with the current, but it takes a live one to swim against it.

Great quote.

Don't be a dead fish.

Don't be a dead fish at school, swimming along with the stream, but have conviction, right, from the Bible.

Be grounded in the scriptures.

Know what God says.

Hold those as convictions.

And regardless of whatever anybody else says to you, hold to those, even if you've got to swim against a stream.

Even at a Christian school, right?

Even at a Christian school.

I'm going to, I feel myself going on a soapbox.

I'm just going to not.

Being an elder means, one of the main responsibilities of an elder here is to walk with the Lord growing in those biblical convictions, and then leading in those convictions, right?

So you're not swept with the flow of just how things are going, but you're looking to hear from the Lord and be rooted and grounded in the Lord and to grow in wisdom from the scriptures and say, hey, where are we just being swept along and where do we need to swim against the current in more faithfulness and holiness?

All right, so properly calling.

Don't be hasty.

Don't go with the flow.

But lastly, trust God to make the truth known in verses 24 to 25.

It says, Patience in calling elders and deacons is difficult to have, right?

There's a lot of work to be done.

It can be lonely and leadership challenging.

But calling the wrong men can destroy the church.

It's a quick way, right, to destroy the church.

Prayer and patience are necessary.

Trusting that the Lord will allow the fruit of a man's life to be seen one way or the other is important.

Waiting on the Lord is often important.

And it's most of the time we don't, 99.9% of the time, we don't wait long enough, right?

We don't wait on the Lord enough.

long enough.

Very rarely do we look back, and in my 39 short years on this earth, I can't think of a single time where I've looked back and be like, you know what, we waited too long on bringing that person into leadership or giving that person responsibility.

Usually just waiting, waiting and seeing, and letting the Lord make it clear when the time is right.

So we ensure that the church leadership honors God and is helpful to the church by honoring, guarding, and properly calling its elders.

Just a couple points of application here.

Elders, those of us on the, you know, Travis, Mike, Scott, Drew, myself, this whole passage ought to be sobering.

It was for me working through this passage this week.

But we ought to live and serve, do everything we do here for the church with this one part in mind.

He says, in the presence of God, right?

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels, I charge you to keep these rules.

You know, everything we do and everything we don't do is in the sight of God, right?

Every decision, every word spoken in private, every recommendation to the congregation, every word of counsel, every lesson, every sermon is all given as if God was sitting in the back row right now, you know, hearing what I'm saying to you all.

All given in the sight of God.

And again, John Calvin, one more time.

A little dramatic, but very poignant.

And indeed, the man who is not shaken out of his carelessness and laziness by the thought that the government of the church is conducted under the eye of God and his angels must be worse than stupid.

Let's not take this calling lightly.

He's being a little sarcastic and a little funny there, but it's true.

Worse than stupid would be, I know God's watching and I don't care.

We can't forget.

We can't forget, nor can we become callous to the reality that God exists.

is in those board meetings.

He's in those counseling sessions.

He's here when we teach and when we preach.

Men, I would just encourage you, we saw earlier in the book that if a man aspires to be an elder, he aspires to a good thing.

It's a noble calling.

If you're not sure how you can pursue becoming an elder, come talk to me.

I'd love to talk with you.

Being before doing, as we've said before, it's about character.

It's not necessarily tremendously about ability.

Being able to teach is a requirement, but primarily God calls men.

who are humble and walking with him, and who meet those godly characteristics.

We would love to help you to grow in that.

Beloved of God, the congregation here, esteem your elders highly.

Pray for us.

Pray for our holiness.

Pray for our selflessness.

but Paul gives some really clear instructions here.

He says, show double honor to those who rule well and labor in preaching and teaching.

Guard the current elders by assuming the best, but also holding them accountable to the word of God.

And don't be hasty in calling men to eldership, but patiently call them properly.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, as an elder of this church, I am immensely grateful

that you have given us a head shepherd in Jesus.

Lord, that he has made a way for us to stand right before you, even with all of our flaws and shortcomings, and

mishandling of situations and just even lack of wisdom at times, Lord.

We're grateful that we have such a great over shepherd and head shepherd to follow.

And Lord, we trust that you and your spirit by your son are filling in those gaps.

Lord, that you are leading your people.

But Lord, you've also established your church and local churches, even this church, Lord, as a manifestation of that.

And so Lord, we just ask.

for holiness and wisdom for those of us leading the church here.

Lord, we pray for wisdom for the congregation to know how to affirm their elders, Lord, but also how to call men that are qualified to be elders.

And also, Lord, to know how to be Bereans and both test what the elders are saying and teaching by the word, but Lord, also how to affirm elders

affirm their elders and support them as they lead the charge.

Lord, we're thankful that you have given us these good gifts.

We trust that the gifts are good, even though they may be difficult to live out, Lord.

And Lord, we trust that your hand is guiding us through this as well as we humbly look to you for leading and wisdom.

Lord, again, thank you for Jesus, his work on our behalf, and the fact that he's our head and the sole ruler and shepherd of the church.

Pray all this in Jesus' name.

Amen.