Small Group Discussion + Leader Guide

Sunday - November 1, 2026

Preached By: Jake McMillian

"Dealing with Elders"

Message #11
"Set In Order: God's Design for His Church" 1 Timothy Series
1 Timothy 5:17-25

Homiletical Bridge:

CIT- Paul instructed Timothy how to honor elders and hold them accountable.
Thesis- We should honor elders and hold them accountable.
Proposition- I want FC to honor elders and hold them accountable.
PQ- How do we honor elders and hold them accountable?

1. **Compensation of Faithful Leaders (v. 17-18)**
2. **Caution in Accusations (v. 19)**
3. **Correction of Sin (v. 20)**
4. **Charge of Impartiality (v. 21)**
5. **Care in Appointment (v. 22-25)**

Before You Begin

Encourage group members to have their Bibles open to 1 Timothy 5:17-25 throughout the discussion. Open your time together in prayer, asking God for honest hearts and a willingness to examine how your church community relates to its leadership.

Key Takeaways

1. Compensate the Faithful (v. 17-18) Elders who lead well, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching, are worthy of financial compensation. This is not greed or worldliness on the pastor's part -- it is a biblical principle rooted in both Old Testament law and the words of Christ himself.

2. Caution in Accusations (v. 19) Accusations against elders must not be received carelessly. While pastors are not above accountability, they are also not above being falsely accused. God calls his people to seek truth on the basis of evidence, not rumor or assumption.

3. Correct Sin (v. 20) When an elder is proven to be in unrepentant sin, the congregation must have the courage to address it publicly. This protects the congregation and produces a healthy, reverent fear of sin among the whole body.

4. Charge of Impartiality (v. 21) All procedures involving elders -- whether care, correction, or discipline -- must be handled without personal bias or favoritism. This reflects the character of God himself, who shows no partiality.

5. Care in Appointment (v. 22-25) Ordaining or appointing an elder must never be rushed. A hasty appointment can open the door for sin to damage the congregation. Thorough, patient examination is not optional -- it is a biblical responsibility.

Discussion Questions

Opening

1. Before this sermon, how much had you thought about the relationship between a congregation and its elders as something that requires intentional, biblical structure? What assumptions did you bring into this passage?

2. Pastor Jake noted that throughout 1 Timothy, Paul's overarching concern is that the church be set in proper order to honor Christ. How does the way a church treats its elders reflect on its view of Christ?

Compensate the Faithful (v. 17-18)

3. Paul describes elders who "rule well" as worthy of double honor, with particular emphasis on those who work hard at preaching and teaching. What does this tell us about how God views the work of ministry?

4. Pastor Jake listed many of the demands placed on a pastor beyond preaching -- counseling, crisis management, conflict resolution, facility concerns, and more. Were any of these surprising to you? How does this shape the way you think about your own pastor's workload?

5. Some people feel uncomfortable with the idea of a pastor receiving financial compensation, as though it is somehow unspiritual. How does Paul's argument in verse 18, drawing from both Deuteronomy 25:4 and the words of Jesus in Luke 10:7, address that discomfort?

Caution in Accusations (v. 19)

6. Pastor Jake made the point that just as pastors can fall under legitimate accusation, they can also fall under illegitimate accusation. Why do you think our culture is often resistant to accepting the reality of false accusations?

7. He also noted that "it only takes one accusation to ruin a man's life and ministry." How should this reality shape the way church members talk about their pastors, even in casual conversation?

8. The standard of two or three witnesses comes directly from Deuteronomy 19:15. What does the fact that Paul grounds this protection in Old Testament Scripture tell us about God's concern for justice within the church?

Correct Sin (v. 20)

9. Pastor Jake acknowledged that many believers have experienced the pain of a pastor's sin damaging a congregation. How does verse 20 provide both a warning and a protection for the church in those situations?

10. The purpose of public rebuke, according to the text, is so that "the rest also will be fearful of sinning." How does witnessing accountability in a church community affect your own personal approach to sin and repentance?

11. How do you think a church can hold both of these realities together -- protecting elders from false accusation while also having the courage to correct proven sin?

Charge of Impartiality (v. 21)

12. Paul calls upon the witness of God the Father, Christ Jesus, and the angels as he charges Timothy to act without bias. What does the weight of that language tell you about how seriously God takes partiality within the church?

13. In what practical ways might partiality show up when a church is dealing with an elder -- either in his favor or against him? What safeguards might a congregation put in place to guard against this?

Care in Appointment (v. 22-25)

14. Pastor Jake explained that a hasty appointment of an unqualified man makes Timothy partially responsible for the resulting sin. How does this principle challenge the way churches sometimes approach filling a pastoral vacancy quickly?

15. Verses 24-25 remind us that some sins are obvious while others remain hidden, and the same is true of good deeds. What does this

tell us about the importance of patience and time in evaluating a candidate for ministry?

16. What does it look like practically for a congregation to be involved in the thorough examination of a pastoral candidate? What questions should a church be asking?

Practical Applications

For Individual Members

- Reflect honestly on your own posture toward your pastor. Do you show genuine honor and appreciation for his labor, or do you take his work for granted?
- Examine whether you have ever repeated an accusation or negative comment about a pastor or church leader without verified evidence. Commit to holding yourself to the standard described in verse 19.
- Use this passage as an opportunity for personal examination. The public rebuke described in verse 20 is meant to produce a reverent fear of sin in the congregation. Ask yourself where unrepentant sin may be present in your own life.

For the Group

- As a group, discuss one practical and meaningful way your church community could better honor and support its elders this month. Consider whether this takes the form of financial generosity, expressed gratitude, or simply increased prayer.
- Pray together specifically for your pastor -- for his personal holiness, his family, his endurance in ministry, and his protection from false accusation.

For Church Life

- If your church does not have a clear, written process for evaluating accusations against elders or for examining candidates for ordination, consider raising this with your church leadership as a matter of biblical faithfulness, not suspicion.

- Commit as a group to being the kind of congregation that makes it possible for a faithful pastor to stay and thrive, rather than one that drives good men out of the ministry.

Closing Reflection

Pastor Jake reminded us that "noble things lose their romanticism in practice, yet their inherent nobility remains." The pastoral office is hard, holy, and high in God's estimation. The way a congregation deals with its elders is not a minor administrative matter -- it is a reflection of how seriously that church takes the order and honor of Christ's bride.

Close your time together in prayer. *Thank God for the men he has placed in your church to shepherd his people. Ask him to make your congregation one that handles its elders with biblical faithfulness -- compensating them generously, protecting them justly, correcting them courageously, appointing them carefully, and always reflecting the impartiality of God himself.*