

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **The Call to Lead the Church--Elders, Part 6**

Scripture: 1 Timothy 3:4-5

Code: 54-23

Let's open our Bibles together as we come to the study of God's Word. And we're looking at 1 Timothy chapter 3...1 Timothy chapter 3. Our examination of the first seven verses deals with the call and character of church leaders...qualifications for those who are pastors, elders and overseers in the church.

Let me begin by relating to you a story that I read this week and I confess to you that it may well be an apocryphal story, it does sound a bit far fetched, but nonetheless will serve to establish a point.

Supposedly there is a community high in the mountains of Colorado. In fact, it's so high in the mountains that it is a tourist place and many folks come there because from that vantage point they can look out on some beautiful scenery, particularly one section of the town which is on the edge of a sheer precipice, dropping hundreds of feet below to a magnificent and beautiful valley.

As the story goes, many people would go out to see this view and get as close to the edge as they could to see all of it and it was not uncommon that someone should slip and fall over. If they were fortunate and happen to fall in an area where there was a gradual slope, they might only come to the bottom with severely broken bones. However, many of them fell off a rather sheer edge and plunged to their death. Even little children played in the area because of the view and they too had lost their lives over the years.

Well the townspeople got together and they decided that they had to do something about this situation. And so, by vote of the committee they decided to purchase several ambulances to be parked at the bottom of the hill. And the idea was that the ambulances would be there and ready and available to take the broken to the hospital and the dead to the funeral parlor. And through the years this particular ambulance program was very successful and they delivered people as rapidly as they could to the proper place.

However, it became quite costly to maintain this program. What with maintenance on the ambulances and hiring the people and so forth...the committee reconvened to see if there wasn't a better and cheaper way to accomplish the same purpose and somebody came up the with the absolutely unthinkable idea of putting a fence at the top of the mountain. And after some debate it was determined that that might be a good idea. And so a fence was erected at the top of the mountain and from then on there have been no casualties and the expenses have been markedly

reduced.

You say, "That's a pretty bizarre story." I told you I thought it was apocryphal. You say, "What's the point?" As I read that I couldn't help but think of how that reminds me of the church. The church is very good at assembling ambulance programs and trying to pick up the crushed and the dead from the bottom of the precipice. But not nearly so good at putting up a fence at the top to stop them from falling in the first place. We have a myriad of ambulance programs, means to repair broken lives. And we are unsuccessful, I think, at trying to play as if we were all the king's horses and all the king's men who couldn't put Humpty together again.

And somewhere along the line we need to sort of recommit ourselves that there needs to be a fence at the top, something that shields people from the initial danger, something that holds them back from the precipice to start with, something that stops the plunge of individuals and families and marriages. And I want to submit to you that I believe the fence at the top has to be the leadership of the church. I believe that the design of God is that at the very top there would be such Christlike and exemplary life, such character with spiritual integrity that they would become the fence that shield the people from falling into danger. And as I said, the church spends an awful lot of time, energy and money developing ambulance programs to pick up the pieces because there wasn't anybody at the top providing the fence.

As you look at 1 Timothy chapter 3 what you're seeing here is a list of standards by which the leadership of the church can put a barrier at the top so people don't fall off in the first place. It's a long way of saying, beloved, that the leadership of the church is its protection because the leadership of the church sets its standard. And I'm not talking just about articulating its theology, I'm talking about setting its patterns of godliness. Just as the fence influences the people from coming near danger, so Godly leadership influences the people from coming near spiritual danger. The church must have godly leadership. And all of the programs that we design to pick up the pieces that really are the result of inadequate leadership, never do deal with the problem.

This isn't something only the church recognizes, I think the whole world recognizes the premium on leadership. I was reading this week some comments from Dwight Eisenhower, our former President and great General of our armed services, he said this, and I quote him, "In order to be a leader a man must have followers, and to have followers a man must have their confidence. Hence the supreme quality for a leader is unquestionably integrity, without it no real success is possible no matter whether it is on a section gang, a football field, in an army or in an office. If a man's associates find him guilty of phoniness, if they find that he lacks forthright integrity, he will fail. His teachings and actions must square with each other," end quote.

Everybody seems to understand that. The premium in the church is really on leadership. And the standards here are very high because the Spirit of God is saying this is what I want all of you to be

and so I must establish a model for you. As we've been learning, the standard is not higher for church leaders than for just everybody else, it's just that church leaders are to be at that high standard so as to nurture everyone else to that same high standard. They are the models.

Now leadership is best defined...if you want a MacArthur definition and I believe in brevity of definitions...I would like to define leadership for you in one word and that is the word "influence...influence." Leadership is influence. And influence primarily is a direct result of example. What you are or what I am is the example which influences. And that is why in 1 Timothy 3 when he lists the characteristics of an overseer, elder or pastor in the church, they have to do with the character of his life because it is the influence of example that sets the fence to protect people from falling. Scripture has always laid a heavy heavy emphasis on the matter of example and its influence.

I am reminded, for example, in the Old Testament how God in Leviticus 18:3 warns His people and says, "After the doings of the land of Egypt shall you not do." And then He says, "After the doings of the land of Canaan shall you not do." And what He is saying is don't let evil pagan peoples influence you. We tend to be mimics. We tend to be copyists and copiers. And we tend to reproduce what we see. Influence is so powerful.

In Deuteronomy 18 and verse 9 the Scripture says, "Thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of the nations." And Proverbs makes it very specific in chapter 22 verse 24, the Proverb says, "Make no friendship with an angry man, lest you learn his ways." Be careful who you're around, they'll influence you. In Proverbs also I'm reminded of chapter 29, a very very insightful proverb given in verse 12, "If a ruler listens to lies, all his servants are wicked. Show me an evil ruler and I'll show you the people under him learning to do evil as he demonstrated it by his example." If a ruler is evil, then all servants are wicked. Leadership is influence.

In Ezekiel chapter 20 verse 18 through the prophet God says, "Walk ye not in the statutes of your fathers, neither observe their judgments nor defile yourselves with their idols." Don't let your evil fathers influence you. Hosea 4:9 says, "Like people like priest, as your priests have gone so have you." And I'm also reminded in Matthew 23 that Jesus said about the scribes and the Pharisees, "Do not after their works for they say and do not." In other words, don't do the way they do.

From the positive side the Scripture not only includes warning against evil influence but it includes encouragement to good influence. In 1 Thessalonians 1:6 Paul says, "Become followers of us." In 1 Timothy 4:12 Paul says, "Be an example of the believer....you know that familiar text...in word, in conduct, in spirit and love and faith and purity." In Titus 2:7 it's the same thing again, "In all things, showing thyself a pattern or a model of good works," Paul says to Titus. In Hebrews 13, "We are all called to follow the faith of those who are over us in the Lord." In James 5 we are to follow the modeling of the prophets. In 1 Peter 5 we are to be examples to the flock who are under us. Paul calls out, "Be followers of me as I am of Christ." He says you've seen the pattern in me, do it,

## Philippians 4.

Influence for good or for evil flows out of us. And that is why the modeling of life and the example of life is the most crucial element of leadership and that's why the standards by which leaders of the church are qualified have to do with their moral character.

If you want to see the sad result of poor examples, you need only go back to the Old Testament for a moment in your thinking and remember the story of the kings of Israel and Judah. Listen if I might for just a moment refresh your mind to the power of an evil influence.

In 1 Kings 15:25 we read this, "And Nadab the son of Jeroboam began to reign over Israel in the second year of Asa king of Judah and reigned over Israel two years. And he did evil in the sight of the Lord and walked in the way of his father and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin." He lived just like his father, the power of influence, the power of example.

In 1 Kings 22 verse 51 and following we read, "Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah and reigned two years over Israel. And he did evil in the sight of the Lord and walked in the way of his father and in the way of his mother and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat who made Israel to sin: for he served Baal and worshiped him and provoked to anger the Lord God of Israel according to all that his father had done." And here it comes again, evil produces evil because of the power of an evil example.

In 2 Kings 8 we read, "And in the fifth year of Ahab king of Israel, Jehoshaphat being then king of Judah, Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah began to reign. Thirty and two years old was he when he began to reign and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. And he walked in the way of kings of Israel as did the house of Ahab; for the daughter of Ahab was his wife and he did evil in the sight of the Lord. In the twelfth year of Jehoram the son of Ahab king of Israel did Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah begin to reign. Two and twenty years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Athaliah the daughter of Omri king of Israel and he walked in the way of the house of Ahab and did evil in the sight of the Lord as did the house of Ahab for he was the son-in-law of the house of Ahab." A wicked father, a wicked son, a wicked daughter, wicked marriages produced wicked children...the power of influence.

In 2 Kings 17:21, "For he rent Israel from the house of David and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king and Jeroboam drove Israel from following the Lord and made them sin a great sin for the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did, they departed not from them." The power of an influence to change the course of a whole nation...tremendous power in influence.

We are reminded also of the same things in 2 Chronicles. In 2 Chronicles 33, for example, in verse 9, "Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err and do worse than the heathen

whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel." He made people act worse than heathens...influence, powerful powerful influence.

It is not enough in the church to teach the truth. The truth must be modeled, that's integrity. Integrity is living and teaching the same thing. That's why the standards for church leadership here all relate to moral character. The power of influence. You recall, do you not, in the Old Testament that Scripture tells us that evil is visited...the evil of the fathers is visited upon the third and fourth generation. Now please, don't misunderstand that. That does not mean that an evil man has his children cursed by God for three or four generations. That does not mean that you shouldn't adopt children because they might be under some curse because they had an evil grandfather or great grandfather. That is a ludicrous thought. What it means is that influence is so powerful that once you have an evil generation it takes you three or four generations to root out that evil and turn it around. It is not a statement about God cursing children, it is a statement about the power of an evil influence.

Scripture says much also about good influence. First Kings 22:42 says, "Jehoshaphat was thirty and five years old when he began to reign and he reigned twenty and five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi and he walked in all the ways of Asa his father, he turned not aside from it doing that which was right in the sight of the Lord, nevertheless..." and it goes on to describe what he didn't accomplish but he walked in the things that were right in the sight of the Lord like his father had...the power of a good influence.

Second Kings 15, "In the twenty and seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel began Azariah son of Amaziah king of Judah to reign. Sixteen years old was he when he began to reign, he reigned two and fifty years in Jerusalem, his mother's name was Jecoliah of Jerusalem. He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father Amaziah had done. In the second year of Pekah the son of Remaliah king of Israel began Jotham the son of Uzziah king of Judah to reign. Five and twenty years old was he when he began to reign, he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jerusha the daughter of Zadok and he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, he did according to all that his father Uzziah had done."

Isn't it interesting how the Scripture emphasizes the power of influence? You have the godly example of Hezekiah and the godly example of Josiah and how as a result of their life good was affected among the people of Israel. You have the power of influence. I wish we had time to study it that came through Ezra and Nehemiah in the restoration after the Babylonian captivity. But all of this is to say that in terms of leadership the crucial aspect is the matter of influence. And influence flows primarily out of example...out of example. What the Spirit of God desires in the church is to set a standard for exemplary living.

That is why as you look at 1 Timothy 3 you don't see a list that a might have been written by a typical corporate analyst today, a list of things like...listen, if you want to be a leader in the church you need

to have diligence, foresight, conceptual vision, administrative skills, decisiveness, courage, humor, eloquence, friendliness, tact, diplomacy, etc., etc. Those are human characteristics that might equip a man to be effective in a secular situation and they're fine. I'm not arguing with them. They're right in the right place. But the issue here is not leadership skills, the issue here is spiritual example. The issue here is influence. And the man who leads the church by example and influence, the man who leads the church to work for the salvation of the unconverted to build up the saints to maturity, to feed the flock, to encourage strong families, to lead the church to Christlike maturity, to become salt and light in the world, that kind of spiritual enterprise has to be...has to be at its very heart a matter of modeling godly virtue. And when will the church awake to this that this is the standard of spiritual leadership?

Look at verse 2, 1 Timothy 3, "An overseer then must be blameless." And that's the key word we've been looking at each time. Blameless, no place for hypocrisy...he is to be without blame, there's nothing in his life for which he can be held blame worthy which would be a blot against his purity. His life is to be exemplary.

John Stott in his very helpful book Between Two Worlds speaks to this matter of integrity when he says, "Communication is by symbol as well as speech. For a man cannot only preach, he must also live. And the life that he lives with all its little peculiarities is one of two things, either it emasculates his preaching or it gives it flesh and blood. We cannot hide what we are. Indeed, what we are speaks as plainly as what we say. When these two voices blend, the impact of the message is doubled. But when they contradict each other, even the positive witness of the one is negated by the other. This was the case with the man Spurgeon describes as a good preacher but a bad Christian. He, says Spurgeon, preached so well and lived so badly that when he was in the pulpit everybody said he ought never to come out again. And when he was out of it they all declared he ought never to enter it again. But at this point, it is a practical problem presenting itself to us, pastors are to be models of Christian maturity," end quote.

It's true and we all know it to be true. In Acts 20:28 in 1 Timothy 4:16 the Scripture says to those in leadership, "Take heed to yourselves." Spiritual leadership begins with character. The great preacher of our own nation, Henry Ward Beecher once said, "A preacher is in some degree a reproduction of the truth in personal form," end quote. And so we are to live that blameless life that stands behind the message so that we have true and lasting influence for good and for God.

William Golding is a contemporary novelist. And he has vividly illustrated the negative power of Christian hypocrisy in a novel that he calls Freefall. It is the story of a boy by the name of Sammy Mountjoy, he is an illegitimate child. He was brought up in a slum. He became later in life a very famous artist. During his school days he was torn between two of his teachers and the two worlds they represented. On the one hand, in the book, there is Miss Rowena Pringle, a Christian who taught Scripture. And another one of his teachers, a Mr. Nick Shaels(?) an atheist who taught

science. Hers was the world of the burning bush. Hers was the world of supernatural mystery. His, the scientist's, was the world of rationally explainable things.

Instinctively Sammy and his childhood was drawn to the burning bush. Unfortunately the advocate of this Christian interpretation of life was a frustrated spinster who plunged her knife into little Sammy every time she could because he had been adopted by the clergyman she had hoped to marry. She took her revenge by being cruel to the boy. And Sammy later asked himself, "But how could she crucify a small boy and then tell the story of that other crucifixion with every evidence in her voice of sorrow for human cruelty and wickedness? I can understand how she hated but not how she kept on such apparent terms of intimacy with heaven." And it was this contradiction which kept Sammy from Christ.

The novel says, "Miss Pringle viciated(?) her teaching. She failed to convince not by what she said but by what she was. Nick persuaded me to his natural scientific universe by what he was not by what he said. I hung for an instant between two pictures of the universe, then the ripple passed over the burning bush and I ran toward toward my friend. In that moment a door closed behind me, I slammed it shut on Moses and Jehovah," end quote.

How many doors have been slammed shut on Moses and Jehovah not because of what we said but because of what we were? Influence, the influence of example. You see, what the man of God is is the issue. And it's the issue in our text.

Let's go back now to the text remembering that the overarching attribute of leadership is blamelessness and that is defined through four categories of discussion. The Apostle Paul in assisting Timothy and identifying those who should fit into church leadership...and by the way, the Ephesian church to which Timothy was ministering as you know was desperately in need of leadership of a proper kind. The four categories to be considered in regarding his blamelessness; one, his moral character; two, his family life; three, his maturity; and four, his reputation.

Now we've already examined verses 2 and 3 which deal with his moral life. He is to be a onewoman man, temperate, sober minded, of good behavior, loving strangers, skilled in teaching, not given to wine, not violent, patient, not a brawler, and free from the love of money. All of that sums up his moral qualification. Even his skill in teaching which is the only mention of the actual function of leadership has primarily to do with the skill that comes because his life is a model. He is to manifest moral integrity. He is to be like the Apostle Paul who in 1 Corinthians 9 says, "I beat my body to bring it into subjection lest in preaching to others I myself should be disqualified." I have to govern my own life.

Paul understood that when he expressed to Timothy, "Flee youthful lust and follow righteousness." Seek things out of a pure heart. And anyone who seeks a place in church leadership must focus first

of all on moral purity.

I was reading something that had to do with gardening this week. I don't often read that and don't know a whole lot about it but it struck me as something analogous to our own commitment. It said this, "It is not enough for a gardener to love flowers, he must also hate weeds." And that's true. And it is not enough for a leader in the church to love the Word of God, he must also hate sin. If anything comes into his life that is at all doubtful, he must turn from it.

Now I'll let you into one of my most private secrets, how I determine whether a shirt is fit for wearing. The little principle is if it's doubtful its dirty...you just take a short look at the collar and find out, right? That's a good principle for life for one who stands in the place of spiritual leadership, if it's doubtful, its dirty.

I enjoyed reading the account of a former pastor of the Brick Presbyterian Church in New York City by the name of Dr. Maltbe(?) Babcock some years ago. And he says that he was approached by a physician, a medical doctor in his church, and he was concerned about the fact that his pastor seemed to be working very hard and he said, "You need a night off and I have here two tickets to the theater," Broadway theater in New York. He said, "Take them, you need the recreation of going to this theater."

The pastor looked at them and he could see by the title of the play that it was not something he could conscientiously attend so he said to him, "Thank you, sir, very kindly but I cannot go." And the doctor said, "Why not?" To which he replied, "Dr., it's this way, you're a physician, a surgeon, in fact, when you operate you scrub your hands meticulously until you're always clean. You wouldn't dare operate with dirty hands." To which the doctor nodded. "Well I'm a servant of Christ," he said, "I deal with precious human souls and I wouldn't dare to do my service with a dirty life." The power of a pure life to set an example that influences for godliness is wrapped up in moral character.

Now let's go to the second category, the category of home life and see how very important that is in regard to spiritual leadership. Verses 4 and 5, "One who would desire to be an overseer in the church, a bishop, an elder, a pastor, should be one that rules well his own house, having his children in subjection with all dignity, for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of a church of God?"

Now in those two verses we have the summation of a tremendous range of truth. Let me say to you that it is essential for anyone in church leadership to not only have an exemplary personal life but an exemplary home life. By the way, this is a direct statement in opposition to the position of the Catholic Church that those who are in spiritual leadership in the church must be celibate. Quite the contrary. The Word of God affirms that those who stand in the place of spiritual leadership must have demonstrated the capability of such leadership in the home before they would be counted worthy to



demonstrate it in the church. I would have to say that the Roman Catholic Church is not the first religious organization to advocate a celibate leadership, apparently even in the situation in Ephesus that was being advocated by some when Paul wrote this epistle. Chapter 4 verse 3, "There were some with doctrines of demons who were forbidding to marry." Some were setting, no doubt, a level of spirituality that involved nonmarriage and saying that people who wanted to attain the highest level of spirituality would certainly not marry and thus bring themselves down to the level of everybody else, but that is certainly rejected in the text before us. The family becomes the proving ground for leadership skills.

What this is saying is that anyone who leads in the church has demonstrated himself to be a spiritually successful leader in the family...in the family. Notice verse 4. "He is to be one that rules well his own house." The word "rule" means to preside, to have authority over, to stand before, to manage. He is the manager of his house. And by the way, this affirms the consistency of the biblical roles of men and women, always the man is seen as the head of the house, the one who leads in the household. There are obviously shared responsibilities and duties and there is a sense in which the woman...as we shall see later in Timothy...does management tasks within the house but the head of the home is always the man, he rules. And if he is to rule, 1 Timothy 5:17, as an elder...same word, by the way...if he is to rule as an elder as indicated in 5:17, he is to give evidence of being able to do that kind of thing by how he has ruled in his home. He therefore is to be the leader in his home. He is to be a strong spiritual leader in the home. And again I remind you this emphasizes and reinforces the divine order for male headship in the home. We saw that, didn't we, back in verses 9 to 15 of chapter 2, how that women are called to a role of submission in the church to the leadership of men and so it is here in the home.

Notice it says that as he rules at home he is to rule well. It is not just that he rules, there are a lot of men who rule in the home but they don't rule very well. They don't get the desired effect. This one rules well. And the word here is a very rich word, it is the word kallosin the Greek and basically we could translate it excellently but that wouldn't give us the full understanding. In order to grasp what it means, we need to compare two Greek words...agathos and kallos. Agathos is a common word in the New Testament that means inherently good, or morally good, or practically good. Kallos takes it a step further, not instead of that but in addition to that, it is esthetically good, it is appearingly good, it is beautiful, it is lovely, it is appealing to the eye. Agathos, apparently good; kallos inherently good and also appealing to the eye, and so the idea is that here is a man who is to be leading his family in such a way that his leadership is inherently good and it is manifestly good to all those who perceive and see his leadership there. It is reasonable to assume that a man could have his spiritual act together in his own life, he could be morally qualified but disqualified on the family level.

You say, "How so?" Well perhaps he is right with the Lord, he walks with the Lord, everything is as it ought to be in his life, but he became a Christian later in life, his children had already established patterns, his wife had already established a pattern, he may have his act together before God, his

family may be in chaos. No matter how spiritually he may be set before God in a right place, he would not be qualified to lead in the church.

You say, "Well, isn't he cheated?" No, because in the ministry that all of us are called to, our calling is an absolute calling not a relative calling. We would all agree leadership in the church is of high priority, but the issue for every individual is simply to do the thing God has called them to do, not to feel that what they do is in any sense inferior to what God's called someone else to do. It is absolute, not relative.

So, if a man had all the moral qualifications but his family was in disarray, maybe he was not a good parent, maybe he had an unbelieving wife and there was a lot of chaos at home, it is not without reason to assume he may have had children who were not favored with the sovereign electing grace of Christ and therefore he has to deal with that. That man does not fit this qualification and has another ministry that God will use him in and bless him to the fullest intent of his divine plan, but not this position.

In the Old Testament, there were certain physical disqualifications of a priest. The Old Testament text says if he had been wounded in the stones, or had something wrong with an eye, he could not function as a priest. That was not a commentary on his spiritual life, that was simply the fact that God was identifying the priests to stand in a sense before the people as a perfect man, as a model, as an example. And so this is a man who has had exemplary home life and his family is as a family ought to be, the very model of Christian virtue.

Notice it says, "He rules then not only intrinsically well but visibly well, his own house." Not just his family but his house. And the implication here is it isn't just his wife and kids, it's the affairs of his living. What kind of steward is he of his home, of his resources, his finances? You might imagine a man, for example, I know men like this, who have maybe their life in the right order in terms of their spiritual life, they love the Lord, they walk with the Lord, they don't have any blight on their life, they may even be skilled in teaching, they have a wife that believes, now the children are responsive, they are involved, they believe in the Lord, but he's in bankruptcy, he's mismanaged his funds or he's a poor steward or his use of money is out of balance. Somehow he can't seem to pull that into line as it ought to be. He does not rule well his household...that means the people and resources over which he has responsibility.

The home then becomes the proving ground where a man's administrative leadership capability is nurtured, made visible and thus qualifies or disqualifies him from spiritual leadership. How he handles the home, how he handles the assets. The stewardship of his possessions is critical.

Further and more specifically it says, "He must have his children in submission with all dignity." In submission means literally, it's sort of a military term, to line up in rank under those over them in

authority. His children are to be...that is to say subject, lined up in proper control. They are to be respectful and controlled and disciplined children. Now if they're present. If there are no children present, that by God's design is not a disqualification. You can't have a problem with your kids if you don't have any kids. And so that would never be a disqualification. If you manage the assets and the household God gives you and that's only one wife and a partner for life and no children are brought into that, in no way does that disqualify. Those are the assets God has given you and that is the family you have from Him. But where children do exist, they are to demonstrate control and respect for their parents.

Furthermore, look at Titus 1:6. Titus speaking of the same range of qualifications within the family says a man is to be blameless who desires to be elder. He is to be a onewoman man and he is to have faithful children...pistos, that is believing children. His children are to believe the gospel. They are to believe the message the man is to preach and teach.

So, we would say first of all, then, for a man to be qualified to lead in the church he must demonstrate capability in administrating in leading all of the resources within his own household in an exemplary way, handling both the people that are there, the assets that are there, the funds that are there in a stewardship model that can be a pattern for others to follow. Secondly, his children must be under control and respectful. Thirdly, when they reach the age where they make their own commitment to Christ, they must be believing children.

So, you start with the moral character, the family leadership, the controlled children, the believing children and you realize God is identifying a rather narrow track, isn't He, for those who stand in the place of church leadership. You have to see how important this is, beloved, because if the fence isn't set at this point, if the leadership don't live by these exemplary patterns then why in the world would the people feel bound to live at that level? That's why we have to set the fence.

And by the way, chapter 3 verse 12 also calls for the deacon to be the onewoman man who rules his children and his own house well also. A very very important issue.

It also says in verse 4 that the children are to be in submission with all dignity. That's a nice word. That's a good word. It basically means respect. It blends dignity, courtesy, humility and competence all together. Somebody said it's stateliness. It's a sense of class. The children are to be such as bring honor to their father and their mother.

He is a leader in the family. And his leadership, I believe, involves three things. I want to share these with you as we draw to a conclusion. Number one, firmness; number two, wisdom; and number three, love...or number one could be authority...authority, wisdom and love.

In the family I believe it is essential that the father exercise authority that makes it, listen to this, advisable for his children to obey. Did you get that? He must exercise authority that makes it advisable for his children to obey. What do you mean by that? I mean by that that where there is disobedience, there must be immediate and negative consequences. The only way you can train a depraved person which is what your children are and mine, the only way you can train that kind of person is to create pain associated with disobedience...whether it's emotional pain or physical pain. That's why Proverbs says, "Spare the rod and spoil the child." So there must be enough authority coming from the father to make it advisable to obey.

Secondly, there must be enough wisdom coming from the father, enough wisdom to make it natural and reasonable to obey. In other words, it isn't just authority, it is that behind that authority there is a reasonableness because invariably when you deprive your child of something or say no, the first question they ask is...what?... "Why, Daddy? Why can't I do that?" and you are, whether you like it or not, during the entire time of raising your children, you are frankly a local neighborhood philosopher and theologian. And you must communicate to them some rationale for their behavior. And so I suggest to you an authority that makes it advisable to obey and a wisdom that makes it natural and reasonable to obey.

Thirdly, a love that makes it delightful to obey...a love that makes it delightful to obey. Your children ought to long to obey you because they enjoy so much the intimacy of an unhindered, an uninterrupted love relationship with you. And that love has to be there...that love has to be there. Really you can sum up the whole process of leadership in the home with authority, wisdom and love. And I would hope that my children have obeyed me because it was advisable...I know they have because we have taught them that lesson. I would hope that they have obeyed because it is reasonable and natural for them to want to do what is reasonable. And I also hope and I hope most of all, and I would love to think that they would give testimony to it that they have obeyed mostly because it is delightful to obey because that keeps the love bond so pure and so rich between parents and children.

I would like to think...and I was sharing this with somebody the other day, somebody said, "How is it that your children obey you?" And I talked a little about authority and a little about...you know, we try to be reasonable and explain but I said, "I really think the bottom line is that love really holds our family together. And I believe in my heart...and you can interview my kids individually if you want on this...but I believe in my heart that the primary motivation in them to obey Mom and Dad is that there's a love bond between us all that they don't want to lose." And that's the stuff that makes leadership in the home successful.

Now the point is this. If a man is going to lead in the church, he must have demonstrated in the home that he can exercise authority that makes it advisable to obey, wisdom that makes it reasonable to obey and love that makes it delightful to obey because frankly, folks, that's exactly what we call for in

the church, isn't it? The whole of the ministry, these things teach and exhort. Now how are we going to get you to do that? We have to have enough authority to make it advisable for you to do that, set some fences and call for some proper responses. We have to have enough wisdom to show you the reasonableness of that and enough love to build a bond with you so that you cherish that relationship enough to be delighted to obey it. So that the family and the home becomes the very best place to demonstrate these kinds of characteristics.

I love to see that man whose children are submissive, whose children are believing, whose children are disciplined and controlled, I can see the authority but I can see the naturalness with which they obey and the delight with which they obey their parents. Now there is a man who is fitted to lead the church, and that's exactly what verse 5 says from a negative viewpoint. If a man doesn't know how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of...and it's anarthrous(?) construction here...a church of God. And that phrase "a church of God" is used 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, about nine times in the New Testament and every time it's used it refers to a local assembly...a local assembly. Acts 20:28, 1 Corinthians 1 it's used three times, 1 Corinthians 11 it's used twice, 1 Corinthians 15 it's used once, and each time it means a local assembly. How can he rule a local assembly if he can't rule his own house?

Now notice that it says at the end of verse 5, "How shall he take care of the church?" That's a beautiful word. That word is used in a very familiar parable of our Lord in Luke 10. The parable of the Good Samaritan. And you remember what it says, "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, fell among thieves who stripped him of his raiment, wounded him, departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite when he was at the place came and looked on him and passed by on the other side. Nobody wanted to help the man. But a certain Samaritan who would have had no dealings at all with this man, comes along and had compassion and he went, bound up his wounds, poured in oil and wine, set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn and here's that verb...and took care of him." It's a big verb. I mean, it's a wide one. It starts with compassion, extends to giving time, extends to binding up wounds, to pouring in oil, to sacrificing your..your means of transportation to carry him, to take him to an inn and paying his bill, and then in general just taking care of him. And that's wonderful because that's what it's all about in leading the church. It's taking care of the church.

And what does it mean to take care of the church? Well it encompasses a lot of things, it encompasses stopping what you're doing sometimes and being diverted to a guy lying in the road. It involves pouring oil and wine in his wounds, it involves binding him up, it involves self-sacrifices, you put him on your own animal as you pay his way at the inn and as you generally take care of and meet his needs.

And I'll tell you, there is no better place to see whether a man has a life committed to meeting needs than to take a look at what he does with the people in his household, right? Does he care about them? Is his life committed to them? Does he work hard to meet their needs? If he doesn't, and he doesn't have the leadership manifest, then how could he ever take care of the needs of the church? Beloved, it is incumbent upon the church of Jesus Christ and this church, of course, as well, to begin to build the fence at the top of the hill, not to train ambulance crews at the bottom. It's time for us to have the kind of leadership that would honor the Lord and keep the people from the dangers of by setting a model and a pattern for them to follow.

Now let me tell you something. I've been thinking about this last week. The day will come when I will be gone, the Lord will take me to heaven, if I die before Jesus comes for all of us, and this church is going to go on. Let me just tell you in the future, the most important consideration you'll ever make in the future of this church is who is selected for leadership. What elders, pastors are allowed in leadership. The standard is clear but as that standard becomes violated, you begin to remove the fence and the people are going to start going off the edge wholesale. Typically you may try to get the ambulance crews moving but that's not the problem. So may I say to you, for the present pray for the leadership of this church, and for the future covenant in your heart if you're here...some of you young people will be the leadership of this church, if you're here in the days ahead, don't deviate from the standard of God's Word. Let's bow in prayer.

Lord, having said all that we have said this morning from Your Word, we have preached the message that the Spirit gave us in this section. But one thing is unsaid, and we would add this, that even though I and others are pastors and overseers and elders of the church. We confess in humility that we come short of the perfect standard. And we admit, Lord, that we are only here because of Your grace and mercy, because You have washed us from our iniquities and empowered us with the Spirit. And, Lord, we are grateful to know that thou You can set no less than a perfect standard, You in grace can accept less than a perfect man. But, Father, we know that by Your Spirit You desire the leaders of Your church to be all that they can be while still human through the agency of Your Spirit. Lord, keep us ever and always in that tension between from being grateful that You have kept us pure, grateful that You have guarded our life, grateful that You have called us to this leadership and at the same time fearful of our own unworthiness. Keep us in that very helpful tension between gratitude and humility that we may lead in a way that pleases You for the Savior's sake. Amen.

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