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

**The Required Character for a Pastor: Family Leadership**
Scripture: Titus 1:6
Code: 56-6

We are so blessed week in and week out to be studying together the Word of God and have its truths open to our hearts and minds by the Holy Spirit. What a tremendous, tremendous privilege it is. Every text that we come to as the months and years go by carries with it such great truth, such heart searching truth, such lifechanging truth. And I...I find that the adventure of my own preparation each week is an exhilarating joy.

This week, however, as was last week is a bit hard for me to preach because I'm talking about what I do in talking about the qualifications for one who is a pastor. And I want you to understand that I come to this pulpit humbly and I come to this pulpit not at all advocating myself as the pattern or the model for these things. I come to the pulpit as one who is really myself under the authority of what the Scripture says and I must bring it to bear upon my own life so this is indeed an exercise in my own spiritual life. I have been through this text now for days and days and it has searched out my own heart, as do all of those that particularly pertain to the ministry and those who are qualified. And whatever God has done in my life in ministry, whatever he is doing and shall do in the future is strictly and only due to His grace, which is abundant in me and for which I give Him all the glory.

We're studying Titus chapter 1 and we're looking at verses 5 to 9 which give us the required character for a pastor or an elder. We are examining what kind of man the Lord wants to lead His church. This instruction is explicit, unarguable, it is not negotiable. It is simple and straight forward. It tells us precisely without equivocation that there are certain men who fit as leaders in the Lord's church and there are certain men who do not. It is crucial for the life of the church, the future of the church that it might continue to become more and more like Jesus Christ that the right man are its pastors, elders, overseers, leaders.

In general, the role of leadership is one of example. Obviously precept is there but behind anything we say is what we are. And that is why in this text, starting in verse 5 and running down to verse 9, you don't hear anything about teaching until you come to verse 9. Only as the last category of discussion does the Apostle Paul talk about men who are skilled in holding forth the faithful Word. Up until that point, everything has to do with character. The character of the man is the foundation of his preaching and teaching because the pattern of his life is the platform for his proclamation. We are preachers and we are teachers, we are articulators of truth, but at the same time that is done from the platform of a virtuous life. Leadership primarily is example. We are called to live what we preach and teach. We are to set a pattern for others to follow in our own lives, as well as what we say.

The Apostle Paul reminds us of that in a number of places, as do other New Testament writers. Philippians 3:17, Paul says, "Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. Follow people who follow me because I follow Christ." That's leadership in the church.

In 2 Thessalonians chapter 3 and verse 9, Paul says that we offer ourselves as a model for you that you might follow our example. In 1 Timothy chapter 4 and verse 12, Paul says to Timothy that you are to be an example in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, an example that others can follow. In Hebrews chapter 13 and verse 7, the readers are told to remember those who led them, who spoke the Word and they are to imitate their faith, follow their life pattern. In 1 Peter 5 Peter says that under shepherds, pastors, are to be examples to the flock.

I suppose it's summed up in 1 Corinthians 11:1 where Paul says, "Be ye followers of me as I am of Christ." And so leadership is basically spiritual virtue, spiritual character, spiritual maturity, godliness, holiness, righteousness, integrity of life that sets a pattern for others to follow.

When Paul wants to find a way to illustrate this kind of leadership, when he wants to find some other arena to draw as an analogy for this, interestingly enough he chooses the family. Look at a very important text, 1 Thessalonians chapter 2....1 Thessalonians chapter 2. Paul here is describing to the Thessalonians the nature of his ministry. And he describes it beginning in verse 7 in some very wonderful terms. First Thessalonians 2:7, "We proved to be gentle among you as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children, having thus a fond affection for you we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives because you had become very dear to us, for you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. You're witnesses and so is God how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers, just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own Kingdom and glory."

Verse 7 mentions a mother and verse 11 mentions a father. And all around those two are various characteristics of a mother and a father, the gentleness, the nursing mother, the tender care, the fond affection, the giving of our lives to the very dear way in which we treated you, the labor, the hardship, the work, the upright blameless example, the exhortation, encouragement and imploring of you, all speak of parently activity. We lived with you. We nurtured you. We loved you. We cared for you. We set a pattern for you. We sacrificed for you. We worked for you. We witnessed to you. We exhorted, encouraged, implored you. We wanted you to be worthy and to walk in a worthy way. There you have the image of the consummate leader in the church. He's not like a CEO in a company, not at all. He is like a father in a family. He is like a mother in a family. He is a combination of both of those in a spiritual parent. He is tender and loving and compassionate. He

has a compulsive love which gives its life for the nurturing of others no matter how great the toil to do so. He is strong, he is persuasive, he is motivating, courageous. He sets the pace for others. He sets the model by example. And this is a parenting kind of picture. He lives a life to be imitated.

The spiritual leader in the church is not primarily a producer as industry calls them, somebody who works hard. He is not primarily a manager, that is somebody who gets people to work. He is a leader, that is someone who lives a life that others want to copy. That's what leadership is. The producer is somebody who can do a job. The manager is somebody who can mobilize people to accomplish an end. The leader is someone that others want to be like. That's what spiritual leadership is. We're not just producers, I'm not just in the church to produce sermons. We're not just managers. I'm not here to organize and structure and mobilize the church to some accomplished goal. All pastors and elders are here to become patterns that you desire to follow, people you want to become like because they pattern for you the very things they teach from the Word of God. And there's no better way to see that then in the analogy of parenting. And that's why Paul chooses it there in 1 Thessalonians.

Paul many times refers to those that are Christians and saints in his life as his children. John calls them his children in the faith. Peter calls the believers children. Why? Because they all understand that spiritual leadership is a kind of parenting role where you live before people, you set an example before them as well as teaching, instructing them. They go together.

When you have the responsibility to lead people to Christ and to lead them to sanctification and holiness and to lead them to service for the Lord Jesus Christ, you are fathering them, you are nurturing them, you are parenting them, moving them along. And your life must back up what you say if you're to have the power of integrity and credibility in that effort.

Now I believe that's really a very important concept to have in mind as you come to the text of Titus chapter 1. Let's go there...Titus chapter 1. Titus says, "For this reason...verse 5...I left you in Crete that you might set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, namely if any man be above reproach, a onewoman man...and now for this morning we look at this statement...having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion."

Now if you are to be a leader of the Lord's church, if you are to be a father to the family of God as we read about in 1 Thessalonians chapter 2, what better way to qualify yourself then by proving your spiritual leadership in your own family. If you want to know whether a man lives an exemplary life, if you want to know whether he can lead someone to faith in Christ by the power of his own virtue, if you want to know whether he can teach the truth, if you want to know whether he can model it, whether he is consistent, whether he can lead people to salvation, lead them to holiness, lead them to serve God, then look at the most intimate relationships in his life and see if he can do it there. See if he has integrity there. See if the credibility is there. Does a man have integrity and virtue? Does a

man have true godliness and righteousness in all his ways?  Are the principles that he wants to teach lived out in the most intimate way in his own life?  Is he able to lead someone to Christ by the power of his testimony and consistency?  Is he trustworthy?  Is he godly?  Is he virtuous?

You want to know the answer to that?  Look at his family and you will find the people who know him best...who know him most intimately, who see him most closely, who understand every part of him.  If you want to find the answer to what kind of man he is, ask the people who know him best.

There are many fathers who work hard.  And some fathers who manage their households well, keep everything controlled.  But do not lead their children to Christ and do not lead their children to godliness and do not lead their children to serving the Lord.  The men who do are candidates for being pastor or elder.  That's what he's saying here.  Since spiritual leadership is a kind of parenting where you don't just talk it, you live it, and where you must be able to lead people by your life as well as your precepts to certain level of understanding of the truth which leads to salvation and holiness and service, you need to look at some proving ground where you can see that happening and Paul's simply saying here the proving ground is in the home...it's in the home.

Now this is...this is a somewhat provocative concept, I understand.  And you may be having all kinds of thoughts, not all of which I'll attempt to answer anymore than this text does.  But the simple statement here is the man who is to be considered for leadership in the church is a man who has proven his spiritual leadership in the most intimate place, that's his own family.

Now remember, Paul is arming Titus here as at the end of verse 5 he said, "I already directed you about this," he's simply writing down what they've already discussed, not so much for Titus' benefit but for the benefit of the churches in which Titus will be having to do his work.  And it isn't an easy work.  He's on that island called Crete and he's going from place to place to straighten up what is broken, or bent or crooked and to ordain elders in every city where there was a church.  And just going in and saying, "Look, I'm going to pick some elders out here and have you people affirm them," was not an easy task and the church might sort of quibble about who would be selected.  So to arm Titus effectively, the Lord inspires Paul to write down the very specific qualifications.

Now these qualifications starting in verse 6 down to verse 9 can be divided into four categories.  The first was sexual morality.  The second, we're looking at today, is family leadership.  The third in verses 7 and 8 is general character.  And the fourth an final one in verse 9 is teaching skill.  If someone is to be an elder or a pastor, they must qualify in all four categories...sexual morality, family leadership, general character and teaching skill.  And when a man does, of course, in general he will be a man as verse 6 says and verse 7 who is above reproach.  Fourfold package, if you will, and if you are not qualified in one of the four, you do not qualify.

Now what he's saying today is we're looking at the matter of family leadership and he is saying the instruction is simple, Titus, a pastor or elder, overseer in the church must be a man who has demonstrated his spiritual leadership ability and his integrity by leading his family to the truth he holds most precious which is the very same thing he must do in the church. The family then becomes the proving ground for his unique kind of leadership. Can he lead by precept? Can he lead by principle? And can he support it by the virtue of a righteous life? Look at his children. His leadership in the family will be the most obvious place to find the answer.

Now let me say this. A few footnotes. One, it may be that you as a father have made every effort, every good and righteous effort possible to lead your children to faith in Christ and you have not seen the fruit that you would desire. You are not responsible for your child's rejection before God but neither would you be qualified to be an elder or a pastor in the church. Secondly, there is nothing in the Scripture that bars a single man from being an elder. Paul at the writing of this was probably single, as best we can tell. There's nothing in Scripture that bars a single man from leadership, from being an elder in the church. Furthermore, there is nothing in the Scripture that bars a childless man from being an elder in the church. But where you don't have marriage, or you don't have children, you have to find other experiences than those in the home to ascertain the man's spiritual leadership. And if indeed he has been faithful as a spiritual leader in other arenas, that will be available to assess. So I want you to understand that I don't think this is a prohibition against single people or against childless people being elders or pastors, not at all. It's just that there are going to have to be other areas in which you look to see the impact and the virtue of that life.

And also, when you see this in verse 6 as flowing right behind the statement "if a man be above reproach," and right before the statement, verse 7, "the overseer must be above reproach," you're really talking here primarily about an above reproach man, it's almost like a negative rather than a positive. We are wanting to emphasize the positive impact of his Christianity, but there's also the point that he must have children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion because they would become a reproach on him. And obviously, if he's not married and doesn't have any, they couldn't. So it's important for us to note those things.

but the general thrust is this. The family is the proving ground where a man demonstrates his spiritual leadership. And if he has children who believe who are not involved in dissipation and rebellion, they will never bring scandal upon his good name and the integrity of his spiritual leadership. When a man stands in a pulpit and says, "This is how to live...this is how to conduct yourself...this is God's high standard...this is what God expects of you...this is how you're to raise your children...this is how you pass godliness from one generation to the next," and you look at his life and you say, "Wait a minute, you've got wild and uncontrolled children who live in rebellion and reject the gospel, why are you the guy who is telling us how to do this?" You can see it brings reproach upon his life. It questions the integrity of his message. It sucks the credibility out of it and thus the impact. It is a unique thing that preachers and elders do. It is a unique thing that requires a very

unique grace from God to qualify them to do it. But please remember, just because someone is not married or doesn't have a child doesn't mean they're disqualified, it just means the demonstration of their spiritual leadership has to be somewhere else and we need not worry that one of their children would bring reproach upon them.

Paul is saying you want to make sure you select men who have a good reputation, as he says elsewhere, outside the church as well as inside the church, who will never be discredited by some unbelieving wayward child, one who claims to believe but is unruly and sinful. That kind of child would be a reproach, shattering the model of godly virtue that he is to hold up before the people on the inside of the church and the outside of the church.

So the standard is both positive. He is to reflect the power of godly living and he is also to be protected from embarrassing scandal by wayward children. Both are essential perspectives for his candidacy to be an elder.

Now some people want to make this an issue of sovereign election. Whenever you get in to this discussion, there's a lot of discussion about this statement, by the way, a lot of it. And some people want to say, "Well it certainly can't mean you have to have converted children because that's all up to God's election, that's all God's sovereignty. And if He doesn't choose to elect your children, then you're in real trouble." Well let me answer that by saying this. That is an unbiblical and fatalistic approach and is not worthy of a proper consideration of the impact of a godly life or the responsibility for evangelism. Salvation comes to people through the faithful witness and godly example of other people. Is that not true? Salvation comes to people through the faithful witness and godly example of other believers. All through Scripture we are continually taught that a godly life leads people to salvation. Election is the issue with God and the issue by which we give Him glory but it is not the consideration to be in our minds in the process of spiritual living and witness. All through Scripture we are taught that a godly life leads people to salvation.

Let me show you by way of reminder. Matthew 5:16, I'll give you a number of texts you might want to write them down, just listen as I read them. Matthew 5:16, "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and as a result glorify your Father who is in heaven." In other words, you can live a kind of life that leads people to glorifying God. In Acts chapter 2 we find that this is indeed what happened in the early church. It says they were continually devoting themselves to the Apostles' teaching, Acts 2:42, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, to prayer. They had all things in common, verse 44. Verse 46, they were worshiping, they were taking their meals together, breaking bread, they had gladness, sincerity of heart, verse 47, they were praising God. Here are some powerful transformed lives. They had favor with all the people. The result, the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. Why were they being saved? They were being saved because of the power of these transformed lives...the impact of godly example.

In Romans chapter 11, the Apostle Paul writes in verse 14, he says, "My desire in preaching to the Gentiles is to somehow move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them." Paul is saying if I can minister effectively among the Gentiles, if my life and ministry is effective there, it will create a jealousy that will save some Jews. In other words, what I do has a direct impact on the salvation of others.

First Corinthians 9:22, Paul says, "To the weak I became weak that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men that I might...may by all means save some. I do everything for the sake of the gospel." In other words, he says the way I deal with people is to lead them to salvation by my life. He said I become a slave to all that I might win the more, verse 19. I become a Jew to the Jews, I become as without law to those who are without law, I become whatever I need to become to live a life pattern and to reach people that I might save them.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 10 verse 31, Paul says, "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God. Don't give an offense to a Jew or to a Greek or to the church." He says, "Just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of many that they may be saved." I do what I need to do not to offend anybody because how I live my life leads people to salvation...you see that?

Look at Philippians chapter 2, here it is again, it's the same great concept. He says in verse 15, Philippians 2, "You're to prove yourself to be blameless, innocent children of God, above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation among whom you appear as lights in the world." Here we are living in a world of sin and iniquity, we are to be blameless, innocent children of God, above reproach, in the middle of this crooked perverse generation. We are to be lights in the middle of the darkness, holding fast the Word of life. Why? So that in the day of Christ...that's in the future...I may have cause to rejoice because I didn't run in vain or toil in vain. What does he mean? In the day of Christ I will see the impact of your life was to lead others to Christ, that's his point. In the day of Christ I will rejoice when we're all gathered to Christ and I will see the power of your living, your example.

In 1 Timothy chapter 4 verse 12, Paul says, "Don't let anyone look down on your youthfulness, in speech, conduct, love, faith, purity, show yourself an example of those who believe." You ought to be a living illustration of what Christianity is. That's what a Christian leader should be, a living illustration of what Christianity is. Then in verse 13 he talks about the preaching and the teaching.

Go down to verse 16, "Pay close attention to yourself and your teaching, persevere in both of those things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and those who hear you." How you live along with what you say brings salvation to people.

Look at 1 Peter chapter 2...1 Peter chapter 2 verse 11, "I urge you as aliens and strangers, abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul, keep your behavior excellent among the pagans so that in the thing in which they slander you as evil doers they may on account of your good deeds as they observe them glorify God in the day of visitation." You know what the day of visitation is? The day of judgment. He says, "Wouldn't it be wonderful if in the day of judgment the pagans who watched your life glorified God?" In other words, they weren't being judged, they were among the redeemed. They were glorifying God in His judgment because it wasn't coming on them. They were praising God for delivering them. And what was the impact that caused them to believe? It was the power of your good deeds as you observed...as they observed them in your life. So stay away from fleshly lusts, keep your behavior excellent because it can be on account of your good deeds that people will glorify God in the day of judgment rather than fearing Him.

Look at 1 Peter 3:1. "You wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the Word, uncoverted, they may be one without a word by the behavior of their wives as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior." The power of a virtuous life, the power of a godly life is laid out for us all through Scripture...all through Scripture.

You can't just...you can't just go off on the concept of election and say, "Well if they're elect they'll get saved, if they're not elect they won't get saved." The fact of the matter is God saves people through the means of godliness in the lives of others. And if I in my home am committed to living a godly life and a virtuous life and the proclaiming saving gospel truth that is lived out in integrity, there is every reason to believe God in His grace will use that to redeem my children. It may not always happen, but for a man who stands in the pulpit to be the model and who will not be scandalized by some activity on the part of his children, it is necessary. And God in His grace makes it possible.

Let me give you a couple of specific illustrations for the power of Christian parenting to lead children to salvation. Look at 1 Corinthians chapter 7.

First Corinthians chapter 7, very interesting, there's a lot of issues in this chapter about marriage, none is more interesting than the one in verses 14 to 16 where you're talking about a marriage of an unbeliever to a believer. First of all he says, you know, don't divorce them. If you're married to an unbeliever, don't divorce them, verses 12 and 13 talk about that. Don't send her away or send him away thing means don't divorce. Why? Well, verse 14, "The unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband. For otherwise your children are unclean but now they are holy."

Isn't that interesting? What he's saying there is where you have one partner that is converted, another partner unconverted, the unconverted partner can be sanctified and the result will be holy children. Now some would say that that sanctification is a temporal blessing kind of thing and it may well include that. But follow in to verses 15 and 16, "Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave, the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases but God has called us to peace." In other words, if you have an unbelieving partner and they want to leave the marriage, they want out of the marriage, let them go, you're not in bondage. Verse 16, "For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband, or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?" That tends to interpret for me verse 14 so that it is possible that an unsaved partner can become saved by living with a believer, and that's what he's saying. If you have a mixed marriage, stay there, it may be that God will lead you to bring that person to salvation with the result that you both having come to Christ your children will be made holy. Where you have godly parents, there's every reason to believe you have the opportunity, the wonderful opportunity to raise up godly children. He says you don't know that that's going to happen, verse 16, it doesn't always happen in a mixed marriage, but it can happen. And when it does happen it tends to make the children not unclean but holy. It should really be the norm. It should be the pattern in a Christian marriage that you have holy children if that Christianity is real and if those believing ones are faithful to live out what they say they believe.

An illustration of this further would be 1 Timothy chapter 2. First Timothy chapter 2 looks at this whole idea of the godly life in the home. First Timothy 2:15, this is a discussion about women and the role they play in the church, the life of the church. He starts out in verse 9 and 10 by talking about how they dress and what they look like and they are certainly to dress modestly, properly, discreetly, not calling attention to themselves but calling attention to their godliness. And then in verse 11, not just how they dress but how they behave in the church. They're to receive instruction with submissiveness, to be quiet, not to teach and take authority. And the reason for this is creative. God made Adam first and he was to be the head and Eve was to follow along. And it was illustrated how important it was that she follow her husband by the Fall. Eve was deceived and fell in to transgression, led the whole human race in to transgression. Why? Because she came out from under the leadership of Adam and acted independently. She acted on her own, the serpent was there, she didn't go back and check with Adam...Adam, this snake is talking to me, he's telling me bad stuff, what do I do?...she didn't lean on the strength of her husband, she didn't follow his headship. She acted independently, led the race into sin, she produced then a cursed society. She raised up a cursed seed because of her sin. Adam, of course, sinned in falling in line with her, but she led the transgression. And so there's a certain stigma on women that they led the race into sin. Eve was first to go. She led the race into that iniquity.

Verse 15 then comes back and says this, "Women shall be preserved from this stigma, delivered from this stigma, relieved from this stigma through the bearing of children." What is that saying? This, women who once raised a generation of cursed children because of a woman's sin can now raise a generation of godly blessed children because of a woman's righteousness, that's the point. So the

woman is preserved from the stigma, delivered from it through bearing children if...follow this...if these women continue in faith and love and purity with selfrestraint. What does that mean? It simply means if a woman maintains her godliness, her faith in the Lord, her love for God, her holiness and purity of life, manifested in selfrestraint and self control, therefore she walks in a godly way, she will bring forth children who will bless rather than children who will curse. There is the promise to a woman that a godly woman can raise a generation of godly children. Godly parenting is a norm for Christians.

This certainly is illustrated personally in the life of Timothy. Look at 2 Timothy 3:15. Paul says to Timothy, "From childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." From the time you were a little child you were taught the Scripture which leads to salvation.

Go back to chapter 1 verse 5. "I am reminded...I am mindful of the sincere faith within you which first dwelt in your grandmother, Lois, and your mother, Eunice, and I'm sure it's in you as well." There you have it. Grandmother Lois was a godly woman, she raised a godly daughter. Godly Eunice was a godly woman, she raised a godly son, Timothy. This is the pattern. Godliness passed from one generation to the next.

It's a wonderful and magnificent pattern. God has designed that the primary unit of human society for which...from which, I should say, righteousness is passed generation to generation to generation is the family...the family.

Now all of that simply to say this, to simply pass this whole thing off as an election issue is not legitimate, it is not biblical, it is fatalistic. The Scripture says people are converted as a result of how we live and what we preach. And a godly life proclaiming truth, living with integrity is going to have a tremendous impact on the conversion of other people and you're going to see it in the family, in the home.

By the way, as another footnote, it is somewhat of a curiosity that there is no mention of the wife here. It says he must have children who believe but it doesn't say anything about his wife. I think it is fair to say that the assumption is that she is also a believer, it's a moot point because it would be assumed. In 1 Corinthians chapter 9 the Apostle Paul talking about his own apostleship and his own leadership and the rest of the apostles and all the brothers of the Lord and Peter and all of that says this, "Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife?" And there is an emphatic statement. Anyone in Christian ministry has a right to have a believing wife, he is simply saying we have a right to be married, but he makes it very clear that she's a believing wife. I think that was an assumed reality.

Another thing that leads to that conclusion or that assumed reality would be 2 Corinthians chapter 6 verse 14, "Do not be bound together with unbelievers, what partnership have righteousness and

lawlessness? What fellowship has light with darkness? What harmony has Christ with Belial? What has a believer in common with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols?" The point being, if you are in that kind of marriage where there's a believer and an unbeliever, there is not in existence the kind of harmony that can create the spiritual power and energy of a godly family. It isn't there. It isn't there.

And so, we assume that the wife was a believer to which the man was totally devoted in faithfulness and the children also followed along in the faith. A truly godly life is the most powerful tool God has in saving sinners...the power of a godly life that speaks the truth. How can we lead people to conversion, how can we lead people to holiness unless we can show them the power of it in a life. And what are we to do in the church? We're to teach you how to raise a godly generation. How can we teach you how to raise a godly generation if we can't do it?

So a pastor, an elder, must be this kind of man...above reproach...back to Titus 1...a onewoman man and having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. Let's look at that text now more specifically. Having children who believe...that is literally what the Greek says, teckna ekgon pista(?), having children who believe. Having is present tense, children has no regard for age at all, in fact it's the same word used back in verse 4 to speak of Titus, my true child, who was a grown man. It simply means sons and daughters, offspring. And generally speaking the tone of this text assumes them to be adult. You say, "Why do you say that?" I'll show you in a moment. But primarily it's associated with not accused of dissipation or rebellion. That hardly refers to little children. There aren't too many dissipated, debauched little kids. That is a term that would more accurately be reflective of an adult life.

Further, elders by definition were older men who tended to have older children. Some of them did have young children and that, I think, referred to in 1 Timothy as I'll mention in a moment. But the word "children" here has no regard for age. Whatever age they are, if they wanted to talk about little children he could have used teknion. If he wanted to talk about babies he could have used brephos, that means infants. But he just uses a general word for sons and daughters.

Now we know that elders could have had young children, he could have had older children, probably the norm was older children since by definition they were older men. But many of them surely did have young children as well. It's not an issue of his age, it's an issue that his children believe and they're not dissipating and they're not in rebellion whatever age they are in life.

Now let's take that word "children who believe...who believe." Now if you have an Authorized or King James it may say "faithful." This has been much debated over and over through the years. It's a very debated issue. In order to try to help bring some clarity to that debate I'm going to beg the issue a little bit this morning, so indulge me.

Some people say it means faithful children. And all faithful children means is they're just obedient to their parents, okay? They don't have to be Christians. This is a big point people make, they don't have to be Christians, they just have to be obedient to their parents. Well that would assume then that they were little children, wouldn't it? Because do adult children have to be obedient to their parents? No. And I don't think this text could be related to little children since it says they're not to be accused of dissipation or rebellion. And those terms are very graphic descriptions of wild unruly sorted lascivious living which would be much more characteristic of older children than little kids. I think here then it's safe to say that he's talking here about faithful adult children, for the most part, who are not going to scandalize the ministry by their unruly wild living.

Now others are willing to say it does mean as it's translated properly here in the New American Standard, it means children who believe. But that's the battleground. Some say no, it just means faithful obedient children, they don't have to be converted. Others say they do have to be converted.

You say, "Well now wait a minute. What if your children don't fit in to this category cause they're not old enough to believe? They're not at that age yet, they're still little children. Elders could have small children, right?" I think 1 Timothy 3 covers that, Paul giving requirements there for one who is an elder in verse 4, 1 Timothy 3, says he must be one who manages his own household well, keeps his children under control with all dignity. That clearly must refer to younger children because you don't keep your adult children under control, you're not in the same role with them that you maybe once were. And so I think really you have the emphasis of 1 Timothy 3 on the controlling of the household, the controlling of the children with all dignity, and I'll say more about that in a moment. And in Titus you tend to see the older child who now believes and whose life follows that belief, not being accused of anything that would scandalize the ministry.

Having said all of that, the word itself, pista, very important word, you need to understand, simply means believe...believe. The opposite of it, apistos means to not believe, disbelief, unbelief. So it is best to see this as believing, just in the simplicity of the word. You say, "Well can't it be translated faithful in the sense of loyal or trustworthy?" Yes, and let me explain that to you. It has what commentators will call an active and a passive sense. The active idea is one who believes. The passive idea is one who is to be believed, or to put it another way, one who trusts or one who is to be trusted. Some people say, "Well it just means somebody who can be trusted, somebody who can be believed, somebody who is loyal to his father who is an obedient child." The problem with that is never is this term faithful used to apply to anyone other than a believer. It can emphasize the loyal side of it. It can emphasize the trustworthy side of it. It can emphasize the passive side, to be believed, but never without the active side, it's two sides of the same coin. In other words, if it said having children who are faithful, we would immediately ask the question...faithful to what? Well the answer would have to be faithful to what their father taught them, and the most precious and priority thing he ever would have taught them would have been...what?...the gospel, the truth.

Although the word "faithful" is used several times in the New Testament of inanimate objects like faithful sayings five time sin the epistles, like the faithful word...it is used most always of individuals, people. It is used of the faithful creator God who is faithful to what He knows to be true and the faithful high priest Jesus Christ who is faithful to what He knows to be true. You have to be faithful to something. But most of the time it is used of individuals and it describes someone who is trustworthy and loyal to what they believe to what is true.

To see it in contrast compare it with the negative, apistos, you put the little "a" at the front it negates the word. John 20:27 says this, "Be not apistos but pistos." In other words, be not unbelieving but believing. There's the opposite, the opposite of belief is unbelief. And it could be the opposite of faithfulness as unfaithfulness which would mean rejection of the truth. Second Corinthians 6:15 says, "What part has pisto with apisteo, or what part has a believer with an unbeliever. So the word in its negative form always means unbelief.

I would conclude the word in its positive form can mean trustworthy or faithful but never disconnected from believing. He is faithful to what he believes. That's the idea.

For example, let me illustrate that. Ephesians 1:1, "Paul an Apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God to the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus." The only way to be faithful is to be in Christ Jesus. They're faithful saints who are in Christ Jesus. The active and passive unite there. Colossians 1:2, you have the same thing. He's addressing the people to the saints, the holy ones, and faithful brethren in Christ. You always see faithful associated with believers, faithful believers.

Look at 1 Timothy, let's just look in the pastorals and see how faithful is used. First Timothy 1:12, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has strengthened me because He considered me faithful, putting me into service." What does he mean faithful? He means loyal to what he believed, loyal to the truth. You can't divorce faithfulness from belief. Chapter 3 of 1 Timothy verse 11, "Women, women who are to serve in the church, are to be dignified, not malicious gossips, temperate...there it is...faithful in all things." What does that mean? Simply obedient? No. Believers who are living obediently. Faithful to what they know to be true.

Look at chapter 4 verse 3, "Beware of these men...these people who teach that you're to avoid marriage and they advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who are faithful, who believe and know the truth." The words are so interchangeable that the translators go back and forth but the faithful always believe and the believing are always to be faithful.

Down in verse 10, "It is for this we labor and strive because we fixed our hope on the living God who was the Savior of all men especially of believers, or the faithful." Verse 12, he says you are to be an example in all these areas of those who are faithful, those who believe, in verse 12. Down in chapter 5 verse 16 the word appears again, "If any man...any woman who is a believer, or any woman who is faithful has dependent widows," etc., etc. Down in chapter 6 verse 2, again, "Let those who have believers as their masters not be disrespectful to them because they are brethren, but let them serve them all the more because those who partake of the benefit are faithful and beloved....believers and beloved." So you see, once in a while it's believers, once in a while it's faithful, they go back and forth but always the faithful are believers and the believers are faithful. They're interchangeable.

To take the word "faithful", pull it out of the believing context, isolate it as if it only meant submissive to the father's leadership without believing what the father taught would be to distort the word. If you look at the Scripture, every Scripture in the New Testament I looked at, I got them all where the word is used, it always refers to believers, unless it's referring to an inanimate object or God or Christ. For example, the faithful servant of Matthew 24 and Luke 12 is a believer. The good and faithful servant of Matthew 25 and Luke 19 is a believer. The faithful person of Luke 16 is a believer. The faithful mother of Timothy, Acts 16:1, is a believer. The faithful stewards of 1 Corinthians 4 are believers. The faithful Timothy of 1 Corinthians 4:17 is a believer. The faithful ministers of Colossians 1:7 and 4:7 are believers. The faithful Onesimus of Colossians 4:9 is a believer. The faithful Moses of Hebrews 3:5 was a believer. The faithful Silvanus was a believer, 1 Peter 5:12. And the faithful martyrs, including Antipas of Revelation 2, were believers. Always they're called faithful because they are believers. It is never used in the New Testament of somebody who is not a believer. So the word then describes both active and passive sides.

So what is Paul saying? He's saying not only is this man to have children who believe, but children who also are...what?...faithful to what they believe. That's what's implied in the rest of the statement, not accused of dissipation or rebellion, they believe it and they live it...they believe it and they live it.

So many people want to leave this matter of salvation out and say he doesn't have to have saved children as long as they just submit. Well what are you going to do right here when you get to this point? How can they be called faithful if they don't believe what they must be faithful to? And if they're adult children here, they certainly wouldn't be obeying their father, faithful would mean nothing.

In 1 Timothy it says, "Keeping his children under control with all dignity." I believe that looks at them when they're young and when he has young children they are obedient, they're under control. With all dignity...what does that mean? It means the father maintains his class and his humility and his respect and his admiration and his stateliness and his gentleness. In other words, it's not an overbearing control, a domineering control, an abusive control, but he controls them with respect and admiration so that they look to him and they admire him and they want to be like him and they aspire

to be what he is and they love him. And they obey out of delight and joy and respect. And verse 5 of 1 Timothy 3 said if he can't control his family in that way, how is he going to manage the church? So I believe that when they are little they follow their father's example.

You say, "Are you saying if your children aren't old enough to be saved you can't be an elder?" No. When they're young, they're under control and they believe whatever their little hearts can believe and they affirm whatever they can understand and they live by those principles being taught to them by the parents. And some day that blooms in to saving faith. The church ought to be able to look at that man's life and see that process taking place, see those little children affirming, believing as much as their simple hearts can believe, we could say believing with a simple faith progressing toward a saving faith. But when it comes to the point that they're old enough to believe, they are to be faithful to the truth they have been taught.

As I have said then, the home is God's basic unit of society for passing righteousness from one generation to the next and it therefore becomes the proving ground for spiritual leaders. And we are to have children who are faithful to what is most precious to us.

Now not just believers, let me just tap this point one more time by looking at those words, dissipation and rebellion. But faithful believers, I think they're both there...not accused of dissipation, or rebellion. Dissipation is asotia. It means just what it says. It's used in Ephesians 5:18 associated with drunkenness and wild revelry and pagan festivals. It means wild, wasteful. Literally without saving, saving nothing, just throwing yourself away, indulgent. And the second term is rebellion, out of control, wild, unruly. His children are to be believers who are faithful, who live obediently, under control when they're small, following their fathers faith until it emerges into their own faith and at that point they don't live a wild and rebellious outofcontrol unruly wasteful life, but they live a faithful Christian life.

A pastor who has children who are wild, selfindulgent, disobedient and rebellious, even if they claim to be Christians, is not suited to be an elder or a pastor. What a standard this is. The man who is selected to be an elder or a pastor has exhibited the leadership and life integrity to lead people to salvation and sanctification and service to God because he has done it or is doing it in the proving ground of his own family. He is known as one who has obedient, controlled children who believe as they are able the truth of the Christian gospel and live according to its principle and their simple faith when they're young is emerging into a saving faith at some point. Those children become the proof of his spiritual leadership.

Even the little ones believe. I look back on our little ones as they were growing up and continue to affirm their faith in Christ, affirm their love for Christ. Even though it wasn't a saving faith, it was a simple affirmation of the things precious to father and mother and it became a saving faith. This is

the proving ground.  This is where the man is tested.  He's not a better man.  He's not a more virtuous man.  He's not a more godly man.  But he is a man who uniquely suits the ministry.  Other men may be godly men, faithful men, loyal men and perhaps have children that are wayward, that does not hinder his relationship to the Lord himself because he's not ultimately responsible for what his children choose to do, but it does not either qualify him for this unique role of leadership.  You might put it this way, we who do this need a special abundant portionment of God's grace, don't we, because of the uniqueness of our task.  And whatever has happened in any of our lives who lead the church, whatever has happened in our lives to qualify us in any measure is purely and simply and only because of the grace of God...the grace of God.

Thus does the Apostle arm Titus with both a moral qualification for leadership and a leadership qualification. They are absolutely foundational to the ministry.  And where they don't exist, the church will remain at a low level because the pattern isn't there to lift the church.  We need to pray for our leaders, pray for all of us, all those who lead the church anyplace, any time, that they might be these kind of men who know this kind of grace that the Lord's church may be what would please Him most.

Father, we thank You again this morning that this word is clear.  It is penetrating, it is provocative, it is not easy to receive. It is hard to hear because it is so demanding and it somehow makes us feel like some men are better than others, elevated above others.  Lord, let it not be so.  May we remember that he who is suited to leadership is the one who is most humble. And even Jesus came not to be ministered unto but to minister and give His life.  But may we also understand that out of the humility of such a life there are unique qualifications that must be met and when met can set a man in a place of leadership where he can live and teach as a pattern that others can follow, not a perfect one for none is that, but at least a reflection, at least some kind of representation of that kind of godliness that You want passed from generation to generation through all the families in Your church.  Thank You, Lord, in this church for leaders who have been blessed and graced with such families as can be followed.  Keep them that way, keep them faithful, keep the children faithful that they might never be a rebuke to the one who serves in Your name.  Amen.

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