

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday January 4, 2023 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

Honoring 1 TIMOTHY GOD

HONORING GOD
“Who’s in Charge of the Church?”
1 Timothy 3:1-7, Various



Getting to Know Timothy Facts:

- (1) **The name Timothy means “one who honors God”** – Hence the name of our study “Honoring God.” Timothy received his name, which means “one who honors God,” from his mother (Eunice) and grandmother (Lois), devout Jews who became believers in the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 1:5) and taught Timothy the Old Testament Scriptures from his childhood (2 Tim. 3:15). His father was a Greek (Acts 16:1) who may have died before Timothy met Paul
- (2) **Timothy was from the town of Lystra** - Timothy was from Lystra (Acts 16:1-3), a city in the Roman province of Galatia (part of modern day Turkey).
- (3) **Timothy came to know Jesus through Paul during his first mission journey** - Paul led Timothy to Christ (1 Timothy 1:2; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 2 Timothy 1:2), undoubtedly during his ministry in Lystra on his first missionary journey (Acts 14:6-23).
- (4) **Paul recruited Timothy to join his ministry team during Paul’s second missionary journey** - When Paul revisited Lystra on his second missionary journey, Paul chose Timothy to accompany him (Acts 16:1-3).
- (5) **Timothy was likely a teenager when he first joined Paul’s ministry team** - Although Timothy was very young (probably in his late teens or early twenties, since about 15 years later Paul referred to him as a young man, 1 Timothy 4:12), he had a reputation for godliness (Acts 16:2).
- (6) **Timothy was with Paul throughout the rest of Paul’s life and ministry** - Timothy was to be Paul’s disciple, friend, and co-laborer for the rest of the apostle’s life, ministering with him in Berea (Acts 17:14), Athens (Acts 17:15), Corinth (Acts 18:5, 2 Corinthians 1:19), and accompanying him on his trip to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4). He was with Paul in his first Roman imprisonment and went to Philippi (Philippians 2:19-23) after Paul’s release. In addition, Paul frequently mentions Timothy in his epistle (Romans 16:21; 2 Corinthians 1:1, Philippians 1:1, Colossians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; Philemon 1).
- (7) **Timothy became the pastor of the church at Ephesus** - Paul often sent Timothy to churches as his representative (1 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Corinthians 16:10; Philippians 2:19; 1 Thessalonians 3:2), and 1 Timothy finds him on another assignment, serving as pastor of the church at Ephesus (1 Thessalonians 1:3).

“¹This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop (“episkopos,” overseer, pastor), he desires a good work. ²A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; ³not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; ⁴one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence ⁵(for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); ⁶not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. ⁷Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.” -1 Timothy 3:1-7 (NKJV)

“Christianity Today” recently asked the question, “What is wrong with the church today.” I think may be asking that question from a lot of different perspectives. ***In your opinion what is wrong with the church today? Or is there anything wrong with church today?***

Here are the top 4 major responses to that question in Christianity Today, “What is wrong with the church today?”

Top 4 Responses to the Question, “What is Wrong with the Church Today?”:
(according to Christianity Today)

- (1) The church today is compromised**
- (2) The modern church is more about entertainment**
- (3) The contemporary church is more about personalities than about Jesus**
- (4) Today’s preachers just say what people want to hear**

Notice in these responses to what is wrong the church that at least 2 of these have to do with church leaders, who is leading the church, those seemingly in charge. The speak of “personalities” (which probably implies those who in charge, charismatic leaders/preachers, personalities... churches often take on the “personality” of the preacher), and “preachers.” Now we might recognize in those responses the concern about not compromising the Word of God, and the need to be focused on the main thing (God’s Word, and Jesus Christ). I think even in these this may reflect on the leadership in the church today.

Bible teacher, **Alex Strauch**, who are written extensively on church leadership, and especially on the role of pastor, elders and deacons says, **“The leadership vacuum is a dangerous trend in today’s churches.”**

- ***Do you agree or disagree with this statement?***
- ***What do you think is meant by “a leadership vacuum” in the church? Is it simply that there is a shortage of those going into the ministry and a shortage of pastors today because people don’t want the job? Or is it a vacuum because of poor/ineffective pastors/preachers/church leaders who are leading in the wrong way or an unbiblical/unscriptural way?***
- ***What do you believe may be behind the leadership vacuum we have today? Or why do you believe we have a leadership vacuum?***
- ***What do you believe might help***

These are good questions that I believe are important for the church and Christians to address... folks this is a reality for the church today, and an important topic for us to consider. I reading two books right now that are very interesting and yet I find them alarming books: *(I’m reading these book because I care about what kind of pastor I am, and I want to be aware, and self-critical and evaluating of myself, but also because I love the church and I think like all*

of us we see problems... even with pastors, ministers, leaders in the church and we want to know what wrong)

- (1) **“When Narcissism Comes to Church: Healing Your Community From Emotional and Spiritual Abuse” by Chuck DeGroat** - We've seen the news stories. Maybe we ourselves have been hurt by a narcissistic church leader. But what *is* narcissism, really? And how does it infiltrate the church? Chuck DeGroat has been counseling pastors with narcissistic personality disorder, as well as those wounded by narcissistic leaders and systems, for over twenty years. He knows firsthand the devastation narcissism leaves in its wake and how insidious and painful it is. In *When Narcissism Comes to Church*, DeGroat takes a close look at narcissism, not only in ministry leaders but also in church systems. For far too long the evangelical church in America has nurtured and supported narcissism in our leadership. The addiction to platforms, influence, new ideas, as well as unbiblical definitions of leadership, authority, and power has sustained a structure that dehumanizes our leaders and exploits God's people. *When Narcissism Comes to Church* is an important book in a season when we must ask deeper questions of the very structure, metrics, motivations, and means to the work we set out to do in the name of Christ.
- (2) **“Bully Pulpit: Confronting the Problem of Spiritual Abuse in the Church” by Michael J. Kruger** – Michael Kruger asks the question, “Are churches looking for the wrong kind of leaders?” The last decade has witnessed a rising number of churches wrecked by spiritual abuse--harsh, heavy-handed, domineering behavior from those in a position of spiritual authority. And high-profile cases are only a small portion of this widespread problem. Behind the scenes are many more cases of spiritual abuse that we will never hear about. Victims suffer in silence, not knowing where to turn. Of course, most pastors and leaders are godly, wonderful people who don't abuse their sheep. They shepherd their flocks gently and patiently. But we can't ignore the growing number who do not. We have tolerated and even celebrated the kind of leaders Jesus warned us against. We need gentle shepherds now more than ever, and in *Bully Pulpit*, seminary president and biblical scholar Michael J. Kruger offers a unique perspective for both church leaders and church members on the problem of spiritual abuse, how to spot it, and how to handle it in the church.

Can I just give you these from the book “Bully Pulpit: Confronting the Problem of Spiritual Abuse in the Church” by Michael J. Kruger on why he believe we have a problem in the church today with our leadership... call it a “leadership vacuum,” or “narcissistic leaders,” or “bullies in leadership in our churches... these are some of the factors Kruger says he believes have lead to the leadership problem we have in the church today ...

5 Factors That Have Lead to the Leadership Void in the Church:

- (1) **A celebrity pastor culture that attracts and rewards narcissistic personalities**
- (2) **A model of pastoral ministry that values gifts or doctrine over character**
- (3) **A lack of substantive, meaningful accountability from the church itself and church leadership (elders, deacons, boards overseeing the pastor)**

- (4) A profound misunderstanding of how Jesus wants leaders to **wield** (*use, apply, exercise*) their **authority**
- (5) A posture of **defensiveness** that would rather litigate (*contest, argue, defend ourselves*) criticism than heed the prophetic (*teaching, instructional, visionary, predictive*) warnings coming our way

I believe that these very things are some of the things that Paul is going to address with Timothy in our passage.

Some Questions of Discussion:

1. *What are some practical differences between “church politics” and biblical church government?*
2. *To what extent do business management principles apply to the local church? Where are there differences?*
3. *Some churches are heavy on organization and light on organism. Others are the reverse. Where are we?*
4. *As Americans who love democracy and freedom, we tend to resist submission to authority. Where does democracy conflict or coincide with biblical church government?*

“Who’s in charge of the church?” Most American Christians would answer, “The pastor is.” And many American pastors are burning out or dropping out because they’re overwhelmed with the responsibility of running the church (in many cases, the church is running them!). They feel like a chipmunk running inside the spinning cage-wheel, getting nowhere except exhausted. As a church grows, the pastor’s role often changes imperceptibly into a business manager rather than a pastor-teacher. To prevent these problems, we need to answer from the Bible, “Who is in charge of the church?”

Furthermore, most American churches are run like American government. Democracy is assumed. Members have a vote and they use that vote to exercise control. If they don’t like the way the pastor or the church board is doing things, they organize a movement to vote them out of office. That’s the American way! But it’s not necessarily the biblical way. We need to answer clearly from the Bible, “Who is in charge of the church?” so that we don’t just do things the American way.

In 1 Timothy 3:1-13, Paul enumerates for Timothy the qualifications of those who serve as overseers (or elders) and deacons in the local church. Before we examine these qualifications (in future messages), I want to take this message to explain some basics about church government. Even though we are affiliated with the Conservative Baptist Association, we have people here from a number of different church backgrounds. Many churches are governed on patterns stemming more from tradition and culture than from biblical principles. So among us we probably have different ideas about church government,

including the role and function of the pastor, the elders, and deacons. I want to develop the idea that ...

Christ exercises headship over His church through spiritually mature elders who shepherd His flock.

WHO'S IN CHARGE OF THE CHURCH?

It's an important question. I believe that it is an important question for both church members (the laity) and for church leaders. Who is in charge? For Timothy... young Timothy, trying to pastor a particularly troubled church, at such a young age, and with such varied problems and issues going in this strategic city (Ephesus), and such a critical time in the life of the New Testament church really in it's infancy stage, and the spread of life-changing gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and it's advancement... this question is not only crucial, it's critical! Who is in charge? If we get this wrong it's ramification are devastating to both the church and Christians, it is critical for the advancement of the gospel. I think this couldn't be more important and apparent for the church today. It may indeed be a crucial issue as to what is wrong with the church today. (2 book I'm currently reading, "When Narcissism Comes to Church: Healing Your Community From Emotional and Spiritual Abuse)," "Bully Pulpit: Confronting the Problem of Spiritual Abuse in the Church")

I believe that Paul is giving Timothy (and by way God's Words, us) some help with this one... with the question of church leadership, what it ought to look like, whose in charge of the church. He is going to give us 3 important truth concerning church leadership.

3 Important Truths Concerning Church Leadership:

1. **The basic principle of church government is that Jesus Christ is the Head of His church**
2. **Christ exercises His headship through spiritually mature leaders**
3. **The pastor's (elders') task is to lead by shepherding God's flock**

Let's unpack these...

THE BASIC PRINCIPLE OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT IS THAT JESUS CHRIST IS THE HEAD OF HIS CHURCH

Who is in charge of the church? Jesus Christ is! It is His church;

- He bought it with His blood.
- He died for it, gave His life for it Himself.
- He loves it sacrificially
- The local church does not belong to the pastor, to the elders, to deacons to strong personalities and the agenda driven... or to the congregation
- It belongs to Jesus Christ who alone is the Head
- Ephesians 1:22-23, "And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."
- No one dare proclaim, "This is my church!"

- It doesn't belong to any of us. It belongs to Christ the Lord.

Never in the New Testament are the leaders of the local church referred to as "head" of the church. Neither is the church viewed as a democratic organization, where the members are free to vote their own minds on issues.

★ The key question in church government is not, "What is the mind of the members?" but, "What is the mind of Christ?"

The church is a living organism, with Jesus Christ as the living Head. The church is not to be organized as a corporation, with the pastor and/or deacons, some elder board or church council as the directors and the congregation as shareholders!

Webster defines an "organization" as "an administrative and functional structure."

Webster defines an "organism" as "an individual constituted to carry on the activities of life by means of organs separate in function but mutually dependent."

The church is the latter... an "organism" (not an organization). While an organism is organized, it is more: it is living, responsive to the living Head. The church is a living organism in which every member is to be submissive and responsive to the Head and in mutual dependence and interaction with the other members so that the will of the Head may be carried out in a harmonious corporate manner.

So the main function of church government is to allow Christ to exercise His headship over His church. Having that view of church government results in an entirely different way of conducting church business. If you view the church as a democratic organization where every member has a right to vote, you're into church politics.

That is the mentality of many pastor... I know because I have sat in meetings with many and heard it... and I have even been advised, "You've got to build your power base as a new pastor in a church." I don't agree... I'm not into building "power bases." The only power we ought to desire in the church is the power of the one who is head of the church... Jesus Christ, Himself. The only power we should desire is His.

If you don't operate that way, you're simply trying to manage and manipulate a bunch of self-willed people expressing their wishes through majority rule. But if the members are living daily in submission to the living Head and seeking to obey His Word, then when they come together to take care of business, they are denying self and reverently seeking what the Lord is saying to His church corporately. That's an entirely different thing than church politics! To implement this principle, Scripture teaches that. So, number one, the basic principle of church governance is that Jesus Christ (alone) is the Head of the church.

CHRIST EXERCISES HIS HEADSHIP THROUGH SPIRITUALLY MATURE LEADERS IN HIS CHURCH

There are two main terms used interchangeably in the New Testament to describe pastors/church leaders

Some Biblical Terms for Pastors/Church Leaders: (1 Peter 5:1-4, 1 Timothy 3:1-2, Titus 1:5-7, Acts 20:17-28)

- (1) **“Elders”** - **“Elders”** (Greek, *presbyteros*; see also 1 Pet. 5:1-4) looks at the man himself. It refers to a man of maturity, not necessarily in years, but in spiritual discernment. While the Bible doesn’t put any age requirement on the office, I would say that an elder under 30 should be an exception (Jesus began His ministry around that age). Once in a while you see a Spurgeon come along, who began pastoring at 17 and was a godly example and a superb Bible expositor from the start. But that is rare. I started at about 20.
- (2) **“Overseers”** - **“Overseers”** (Greek, *episkopos*; 1 Tim. 3:1-2) looks at the nature of the work. It refers to men who superintend, watch over, or guard the local church. This term points to a man who is spiritually mature enough to discern spiritual dangers and to guard and guide the flock into spiritual growth.
- (3) **“Pastor”**- A third word, **“pastor”** (= “shepherd”), is used in noun form only once for church leaders (Eph. 4:11), where Paul says that God has gifted some as pastors and teachers, the two concepts being tied together. The verb is used of church leaders in several places (John 21:16; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2). In 1 Peter 2:24, Jesus is called the Shepherd (Pastor) and Guardian (Overseer) of our souls. Thus human pastors and overseers work under and are accountable to the Lord Jesus, the **“Chief Shepherd”** (1 Pet. 5:4). The word “pastor” looks at **the work from the analogy of a shepherd and his sheep.**
- (4) **“Prohistemi”** - A fourth word (Greek, *prohistemi*, from a compound, “to stand before or first”) means to lead or have charge over (1 Thess. 5:12; **1 Tim. 3:4, 5, 12; 5:17**; Rom. 12:8).
- (5) **“Hegeomai”** - A fifth word (Greek, *hegeomai*, we get our “hegemony” from it) **means to lead or rule** (Heb. 13:7, 17, 24; Luke 22:26). While it involves authority (Heb. 13:17), it also requires servanthood (Luke 22:26).

The point of these various terms is that there is to be a designated body of leaders in the local church.

Thus pastors/elders should be spiritually mature, subject to Christ as Head of His church. How are the elders selected? They should be called of God...

Thus the basic principle of church government is that Christ is the Head of His church. He exercises His headship through spiritually mature elders. What are those elders supposed to do?

THE PASTOR'S (ELDER'S) TASK IS TO LEAD BY SHEPHERDING GOD'S FLOCK

The various terms used for church leadership as well as several of the key passages reveal several broad areas in which pastors are to serve. Our passage in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 gives evidence of these...

"¹This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop ("episkopos," overseer, pastor), he desires a good work. ²A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; ³not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; ⁴one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence ⁵(for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); ⁶not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. ⁷Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil." -1 Timothy 3:1-7 (NKJV)

4 Areas of a Pastor's Ministry/Service:

1. Pastor's should provide leadership by example and servanthood - (See 1 Thess. 5:12; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:1-5.) Pastors have charge over the flock and are accountable to the Lord. But they are not to lord it over those allotted to their charge, but to be examples to the flock. Notice Peter's words in 1 Peter 5:1-5... *"¹The elders (pastors) who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: ²Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; ³nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; ⁴and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away."*

Peter reflects the leadership style set forth and modeled by the Lord Jesus, who humbly washed the disciples feet and instructed them, even on that night, that the leader among them should be as the servant (Luke 22:24-27).

Leaders know from the Word and from experience what healthy spiritual maturity is so that they can guide others in the ways of the Lord...

- Thus as pastor walks humbly with God in their own homes (1 Tim. 3:4-5)
- They lead the church into maturity by their own example
- There are times, of course, when those who lead by servanthood and example must exercise authority

Paul tells Titus (1:9) that an elder must *"be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict."* There are times when certain practices among God's people must be prohibited and wrong doctrines must be confronted. There are times when

church discipline must be carried out. None of these things are easy or pleasant. But servant leadership is not soft leadership. An elder must never be self-willed and use authority for personal power. But he must be strong in leading God's people in truth, which means confronting error.

2. **Pastor's should shepherd God's flock** - (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2.) The word "shepherd" is the same as "pastor." The work of pastoring is very important. Its example finds its place in Jesus Christ, Himself, our Chief Shepherd. The ministry of pastoring involves doing what a shepherd does for his sheep:
 - He knows them (John 10:14)
 - He leads them (John 10:3-4)
 - He feeds them and guides them into the rich pastures of God's Word (John 10:9; 1 Thess. 5:12; Titus 1:9; Heb. 13:7)
 - He guards them from wolves (John 10:12; Acts 20:29-30)
 - He seeks the lost and straying sheep and helps heal their wounds by getting them restored to the Lord (John 10:16; Ezek. 34:4-5)
 - He sometimes in gracious and compassionate ways corrects the erring or rebellious drawing them back in (2 Tim. 4:2)
 - He equips the flock for maturity so that they can serve the Lord as He has gifted them (Eph. 4:11-16).
3. **Pastor's should concentrate on preaching and teaching** - (1 Tim. 5:17-18.) We will cover this in more detail when we get to these verses. But you will notice that Paul distinguishes some elders who labor in word and teaching. Verse 18 makes it clear that such men should be supported financially in their work. It takes both giftedness and hard work (which means time) to do an adequate job of preaching God's truth. Those who are so gifted should devote themselves to that ministry. In the early church, the apostles were being pressured by the practical needs of the congregation to get involved in administrative matters. But they told the church to select qualified men who could take care of these matters and added, "But we will devote ourselves to prayer, and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4). **Sadly, too many pastors in our day allow themselves to get diverted from prayer and the ministry of the Word. The entire church suffers if pastors do not devote themselves to this crucial work.**
4. **Pastor's should be concerned about and support administration and oversight** - (1 Tim. 5:17.) The deacons and other leaders gifted in these areas, as we will see, can aid the pastors in this important task, just as the first deacons in the Jerusalem church relieved the apostles from ministering to the needy. But the elders should lead by overseeing and by equipping those under their oversight for various ministries in the church. Remember, an organism is not the same as an organization, but an organism is highly organized. This means that we can't just adopt business management principles straight into the church. But we do need proper organization, delegation, equipping, and oversight for the local body of Christ to function effectively.

CONCLUSION

3 Concluding Thoughts to Consider:

1. **As we consider the qualities of leaders in the church, we should be challenged to cultivate our own character as believers** - When God sought a new king for Israel, he looked for a man after his own heart (1 Sam 13:14). God is not looking for degrees, skills, and accolades. He looks for people with right hearts towards Him. His eyes roam the earth seeking those whose hearts are right towards him so he can use them for his glory (2 Chr 16:9). Certainly, this reminds us to give attention to our character. It has been said in business, “Find someone with character, and then, teach them the skills.” And no doubt, this is God’s method. He finds those with character and gives them grace to do his work. Are you giving attention to your heart—your character? From it flows all things (Prov 4:23).
2. **As we consider the qualities of leaders in the church, we should be challenged to pray for them** - In reading their qualities, it is important to notice that the devil is mentioned twice in verses 6 and 7. Pastors and spiritual leaders are strategic targets of the devil. We must constantly pray for their families, their ministries, and their protection. The enemy wants to destroy them because when they fall, many others fall. Are you praying for your spiritual leaders?
3. **As we consider the qualities of leaders in the church, we should be challenged to pursue ministry** - We should consider opportunities for leadership in the church as a potential ministry certainly. Paul said that anyone who aspires to be an overseer desires a good work. It is a noble ministry to serve and care for God’s people. It is the very ministry of Christ, for Scripture calls him the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls (1 Peter 2:25). There are no greater foot-steps to follow in. Pastoring a church is hard and the standards are high, but it is fruitful and worth it. Many who serve in ministry will be unpaid. Like Daniel, David, and Joseph, they minister to God’s people while maintaining a secular job. However, these love God, his Word, and his people and, therefore, seek to serve them. Certainly, many Christians should pray about and develop ministry skills to serve God and the church... and others in this manner. And in general, all believers should covet and seek opportunities to serve God and his people. Christ taught that the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few (Matt 9:37). God calls for all believers to partner with him in building his kingdom. In fact, he calls us his co-workers (1 Cor 3:9). Serving God and people is a noble task that pleases God. We should desire and pursue ministry opportunities to serve and honor God.

Application Question: Which qualities of elders stood out most to you and why? If you could only choose one, which would be your weakest area? How can you pursue growth in that area?