

# Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday March 22, 2023 – First Baptist Church Buda  
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

## Honoring 1 TIMOTHY GOD

HONORING GOD  
“Church Leadership – Keeping It Godly”  
*1 Timothy 5:17-25*



### Key Reminders for 1 Timothy:

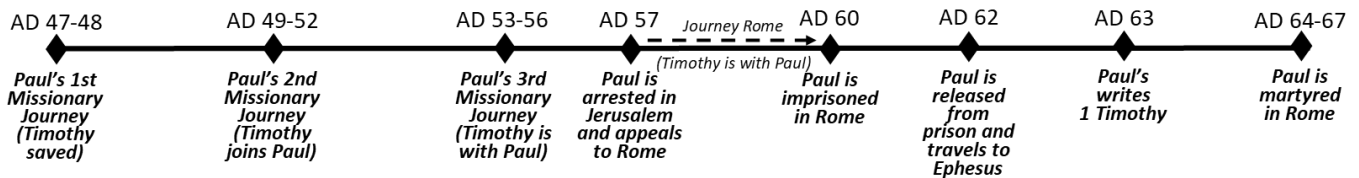
(1) **1 Timothy is a personal letter** – It is unlike most of Paul’s other letters that appear in the New Testament. Remember that most of Paul’s letters were written to churches and/or groups of churches, like Ephesians, Colossians, Galatians (a circular letter), etc. 1 Timothy was not a letter written to a group of Christians (churches). It is written to an individual and should be read and studied with that in mind. It’s personal in nature, rather than corporate. That doesn’t mean it’s not for the church today or applicable for

the church and Christians. It is! It just means that in studying and understanding the letter for context purposes this must be kept in mind. It does have a bearing on interpretation of Paul's letter.

- (2) **1 Timothy is written by Paul to Timothy, his apprentice in ministry** – As already - else's mail, or better said we are privileged by design to get to read someone else's mail. God want us to for a reason. He wants us to apply the truths Paul spoke to Timothy to our own lives. Remember that the name Timothy means "one who honors God," likewise our lives ought to honor God by how we conduct our lives, how we relate to believers in the church, how we serve and lead in the church, our behaviour, our spirit and attitudes, our words, our victory over the very things that defeat us and may keep us from being all that God has called us to be in Christ. Remember that Timothy was a young teenager from the town of Lystra when Paul first met him on his first missionary journey through Asia Minor. Paul lead Timothy to the Lord, as well as the rest of his family... his mother and grandmother. When Paul returned to the area on his second missionary journey, apparently Timothy has grown in his faith to the point that Paul asked him to join him on his missionary journey. Timothy would remain a ministry companion to Paul for the rest of Paul's life, as a faithful servant and fellow ministry.
- (3) **1 Timothy is known as a "Pastoral Epistle" (or letter)** – That makes this personal letter instructional especially for a pastor. There are three "Pastoral Epistles" in all in the New Testament; 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus, all written by Paul. They are "pastoral" in nature. In its simplest form, "pastoral" means pertaining to the pastor and or his responsibilities. The most common definitions of "pastoral" would be 1. Pastoral - of or pertaining to shepherds; hence, relating to rural life and scenes; as in a pastoral life (remember that pastors are often referred to the shepherd of the flock caring for their needs especially spiritual), 2. Pastoral – relating to the care of souls, or to the pastor of a church, as in, pastoral duties or a pastoral letter, 3. Pastoral – used to refer to the part of the work of teachers, preachers (pastors) and priests that involves giving help and advice about personal matters, or giving pastoral care through teaching, sermons, homilies, etc. The Pastoral Epistles are 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus. All three are letters from an old man at the close of his ministry who is concerned for his successors in the pastorate. As such, the letters concern the things that would be crucial for the young pastors to understand—church organization and discipline, including such matters as the appointment of elders and deacons, the opposition of rebellious members or false teachers, and the maintenance of doctrinal purity.
- (4) **1 Timothy was written to address problems in the church at Ephesus and encourage their pastor, Timothy** – Timothy would eventually become the pastor of the church at Ephesus, likely around AD 62, following Paul's release from prison. Paul's release allowed him the opportunity to travel to Ephesus and eventually place Timothy in ministry at that church. 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)... a troubled church with problems (Revelation 2:4, "... *you have left*

*your first love.*”). Timothy find’s himself... perhaps at a young age, pastoring a very strategic, yet troubled church with a lot of problems.

**(5) 1 Timothy was likely written about AD 63** - The Bible’s silence on the ultimate fate of Paul has generated a great deal of debate in modern times. The book of Acts ends with Paul sitting in a Roman prison awaiting his hearing before the Roman emperor, a privilege of appeal that all Roman citizens like Paul possessed. However, the writing of the Pastoral Epistles clearly dates to a time after the events of Acts. So where was Paul when he wrote 1 Timothy? Paul had expected the Romans to release him from prison, something that likely happened near the end of AD 62 (Philippians 2:24). As previously stated, his release allowed him the opportunity to travel to Ephesus and eventually place Timothy in ministry at that church. Paul then went on to preach in Macedonia, where he heard reports of Timothy’s work at Ephesus that prompted him to write 1 Timothy, probably in AD 63.



*<sup>17</sup> Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. <sup>18</sup> For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer is worthy of his wages." <sup>19</sup> Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. <sup>20</sup> Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear. <sup>21</sup> I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality. <sup>22</sup> Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure. <sup>23</sup> No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities. <sup>24</sup> Some men's sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later. <sup>25</sup> Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden." -1 Timothy 5:17-25 (NKJV)*

When asked what is wrong with the church today, you are apt to get many and varied different responses. Everyone seems to feel that the church today is sick and ailing generally speaking in many segments of our nations, but why? There are many articles and books, podcast, and sermons on what is wrong with the church today. We are not short on opinions, but definitely weak on answers. We all seem to notice it, but perhaps the problems facing the church are as nuanced as the complex world it finds itself in... Here is an article recently appearing in "The Christian Post" that may share one take on at least part of the problem...

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## CHRISTIAN POST

*”The modern evangelical church is sick. Here's where it fell apart”*

*by Darvin Wallis*

It was a simple sign on a slow Monday morning. I was walking into the megachurch I was working at, fumbling with my coffee, spilling it on my skinny jeans. There in the doorway was the sign that began to reshape how I viewed the church. The sign was a promotion for a church leadership conference. It is a slight miracle I even saw the sign. As a pastor I have attended so many conferences through the years that I barely even notice them. Like all these conference signs, this one was plastered in rows of pictures of celebrity speakers. One picture made me pause. What stopped me was not just that someone who was not a Christian was a keynote speaker, it was that this person had been fighting a public battle against Christian values.<sup>[1]</sup> I stood there staring at the sign for an awkward amount of time. In my meetings that day I brought up the sign, only to find no one shared my apprehension. In fact, one coworker chastised me for being concerned. On my way out of work that day, I stopped in front of the sign again. My view of Christian leadership has never been the same since. There are only about 1,500 megachurches in the United States today.<sup>[2]</sup> Meaning, there are only about 1,500 pastors of megachurches. Yet, somehow, it seems that every week we hear of a new Christian celebrity pastor failing. The rate of failure is stunning. The number of moral failures as a percentage of megachurch pastors should be statistically impossible. Personally, through my years in ministry, I have worked under three of these lead pastors. All three have had moral failings. This year, only two months into 2021, the news has already been filled with high-profile Evangelical leaders guilty of fraud, affairs, abuse, and even rape. Many people assessing the situation point to the pressure placed on pastors, and the fact that we are all personally flawed. But, this assessment merely leads us to change nothing as we throw up our hands in helplessness. Meanwhile, instead of focusing on each isolated event, we need to realize that this shocking failure rate points to issues that go way past any particular individual pressures. There is something structurally sick about the modern Evangelical church. Evangelicalism is having a crisis in leadership, and the whole world is watching. But why? Why are so many of these pastors failing? Strangely, I have come to see that simple sign as a perfect summary of why Christian leaders are morally failing out of ministry at a continuous rate. Let me explain.

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**How would you answer that question of what is wrong with the church today? Share your thoughts and let's list some of our perception of what may be ailing the church today**

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|-----------|------------|
| (1) _____ | (6) _____  |
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| (5) _____ | (10) _____ |

A recent study put out by our own Lifeway Research caught my attention. The headline of the published study said this, “Americans Aren’t Sure They Can Trust Pastors.” *Do you think that is true? And if so, why do you think Americans aren’t sure they can trust pastors and religious leaders today?*

The study provided these results in their findings:

- Almost 7 in 10 U.S. adults (69%) say religious leaders act unethically at least some of the time.
- 10% of U.S. adults said religious leaders act unethically most of the time.
- 53% of U.S. adults believe that religious leaders rarely face serious consequences when they act unethically. In other words, they don’t believe that the church rightly handle pastors who act unethically, or who fail.
- 49% of U.S. adults say religious leaders rarely personally admit mistakes and take responsibility for their actions.
- Generationally, young adults (18 to 29) are less likely to trust religious leaders and more likely to see them uncaring and irresponsible.
- The religiously unaffiliated have the lowest view of pastors and other religious leaders.
- More than 2 in 5 (43%) say religious leaders care about people like them only a little or not at all, compared to 19% of Christians.

I know these are based on perception perhaps more than they are actual facts, but what about the facts. These statistics may be even more alarming... Leadership Magazine, another Christian publication put out by the same writers of Christianity Today give us these statistics:

- Moral failure among pastors is happening with shocking frequency in the American church.
- A *Leadership* survey (Winter, 1988, pp. 12-13) revealed that 1 out of 8 pastors have committed adultery since they’ve been in local church ministry.
- Almost 1 out of 4 pastors admitted to doing something they feel was sexually inappropriate.
- 1 out of 5 acknowledged fantasizing at least weekly about sex with someone other than their spouse.
- If you widen the question to monthly, the number grows to over 1 out of 3.

When a church leader falls into sin, it always wreaks havoc to the cause of Christ. The more visible and well-known the leader, the greater the harm. Some in the church justify their own sin by thinking, “If that strong leader fell, then who am I to resist?” Divisions arise in the church between those who advocate tolerance and love toward the fallen leader and those

labeled as unloving because they call for his removal from public ministry. The world mocks the whole thing and shrugs off the gospel.

So it's crucial for the church to put godly men into leadership and to make sure that they remain that way. How can we do that? How can we do everything possible to insure that our church leaders are godly men? And, if and when a church leader does fall into sin, how do we deal with it properly?

These are the questions Paul answers in 1 Timothy 5:17-25 in dealing with responsible and accountable leadership. Some of the elders in Ephesus had fallen into false teaching and ungodly conduct, which always goes with false doctrine. Paul doesn't give a comprehensive answer, but he brings up two crucial safeguards to help keep church leadership godly:

## **2 Crucial Safeguards for Church Leadership:**

**(1) The proper exercise of church discipline toward sinning church leaders = 1 Timothy 5:17-21**

**(2) The careful selection of church leaders = 1 Timothy 5:22-25**

*To keep church leadership godly, elders must be disciplined properly and selected carefully.*

Since some in Ephesus had already fallen, and, perhaps, rumors and accusations were circulating about others, Paul deals first with the remedial process of discipline before going on to talk about the preventative steps to take in selection, so that the church will put only godly men into office.

## **TO KEEP CHURCH LEADERSHIP GODLY, ELDERS MUST BE DISCIPLINED PROPERLY (1 Timothy 5:17-21)**

*<sup>17</sup> Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. <sup>18</sup> For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer is worthy of his wages." <sup>19</sup> Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. <sup>20</sup> Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear. <sup>21</sup> I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality." – 1 Timothy 5:17-21*

Notice the first two verses here (vv.17-18) do address the subject of supporting pastor and clergy (hired church leadership). These verses are often quoted to support paying ministers, taking care of their needs (financially). After that, this section (vv.19-21) is like strong medicine... you don't want to have to use it, but it's good to have on hand in case you get sick. I hope we never have to apply these verses in our church, but we had better know that it's in our "medicine cabinet" in case we ever need it. Verses 19-21 address three aspects of proper discipline of church leaders. Let's look at these individually.

### **3 Aspects of Proper Discipline of Church Leaders: (According to 1 Timothy 5:19-21)**

- (1) Proper discipline of church leaders requires factual evidence (v.19) – “<sup>19</sup> Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses.”**

Paul is citing the law of Moses here. Deuteronomy 19:15 states, “A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed.” **It’s a simple principle: a case must be tried on the basis of factual evidence, not hearsay or rumors.**

Paul specifically applies it to church leaders here because they’re more liable to false accusations and slander than others, especially men who preach God’s truth. Satan is always trying to discredit the authority of God’s Word. One method he often uses is to attack the credibility of the man who teaches the Word. If people doubt his integrity, they can easily shrug off his exhortations to godliness. So Satan often stirs up people who have been offended by the preaching of God’s truth or who are upset because a church leader has had to confront them privately about their sin. They spread half-truths and outright lies to discredit the man and his message.

What do you do if someone comes to you with something damaging against me, one of the other elders, or some Christian leader? It’s important to the testimony of Christ that we handle such situations in a godly way. If the person is spreading rumors or gossip, he needs to be corrected. If he has a legitimate problem, it needs to be processed according to Scripture.

I’ve found these five questions (Bill Gothard) to be useful...

#### **5 Questions to Ask: (Before even entertaining an accusation against a church leader)**

1. “**What is your reason for telling me?**” - Widening the circle of gossip only compounds the problem. Why do I need to know this? If the person says, “I just wanted you to know so you could pray,” then you should caution him not to say anything more to anyone before he checks out the facts and takes biblical steps to deal with it (Matt. 18:15-17; Gal. 6:1). Gossip flatters our pride by giving us “inside” information. But we must resist both the temptation to listen to it and to encourage someone else to give it unless we’re part of the solution.
2. “**Where did you get your information?**” - Refusal to identify the source is a sure sign of gossip. Is there more than one independent witness? If not, the accusation should not be received and the accuser should be shown this Scripture and warned about spreading the charges any further. “<sup>19</sup> Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses.”

3. **“Have you gone to those directly involved?”** - If the person has not gone to those involved, he is probably more interested in spreading gossip than in helping to restore the one or ones who have sinned.
4. **“Have you personally checked out all the facts?”** - It’s easy for “facts” to get distorted as they travel from one person to another or when they’re given by a person with negative motives.
5. **“Can I quote you if I check this out?”** - A person spreading gossip won’t want to be quoted by name. They don’t want to get involved in the messy business of helping confront and restore a person in sin. They’re just spreading an evil report.

Thus the first need in disciplining a church leader, pastor, minister, elder is to get factual information. If the charges are true, then there is a second need:

**(2) Proper discipline of church leaders requires public rebuke (v.20) – <sup>20</sup> *Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.*”**

The proper translation here is, *“Those who are sinning,”* meaning, those guilty of the charges who do not repent. Sinning means some clear violation of God’s Word, not just something someone doesn’t like or agree with.

I once was called in by another church to arbitrate a conflict where a deacon had sent a letter to the entire congregation charging the pastor with not feeding the flock and not visiting the members enough. The pastor hadn’t sinned and the deacon hadn’t talked directly to the pastor about the situation, so the deacon was in sin.

- If it is a public sin, such as false teaching on some major issue or a sin that is in public view, then a public rebuke may be called for as a first step (as Paul did with Peter, Gal. 2:11 ff.)
- If a leader has gone public by writing a book promoting serious error, then it requires public rebuke, either in print or verbally, to warn God’s people (Titus 1:9).
- Paul often named individuals (1 Tim. 1:20) and specified the nature of the false teaching (2 Tim. 2:17-18; Titus 1:10-16).
- But normally the steps of private rebuke (Matt. 18:15-17) need to be followed before any public rebuke is made.

<sup>15</sup> *“Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. <sup>16</sup> But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ <sup>17</sup> And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.” -Matthew 18:15-17*



- The goal is never to blast the man, but to restore him.
- If he repents after private rebuke, it may be necessary for a public confession to the church.
- Depending on the seriousness of the sin, the man may need to step down from his office until he rebuilds a godly reputation.
- **While moral failure need not disqualify a man from public ministry for the rest of his life, he can't possibly restore the necessary qualifications of being above reproach, a one-woman man, and having a good reputation with outsiders in a few months** (1 Tim. 3:2-7). It may take time!

Public exposure of sin, especially in a church leader, is just the opposite of our human tendency.

## PERSONAL

### Here is our human tendency and inclination:

- **If a church leader sins, we're inclined to cover it quickly and keep it under wraps, or perhaps gossip about it – *What is wrong with this approach?* (ex. Silo Baptist Church)**
- **We have a tendency to think if we expose it, it seems like it would damage the reputation of Christ or the church, so we hide it - And so we “hush-hush” the matter. *What is wrong with this approach?* (ex. Silo Baptist Church)**
- **Often pastors who sin morally are just quietly moved to new places of ministry, or leave and find another place to serve in ministry and are likely to repeat the offence – *What is wrong with this approach?* (ex. Silo Baptist Church)** This is neither good for the minister, the violated individual(s), nor the church.

Thankfully, I've also received several letters from churches or Christian organizations exposing the sin of a leader who fell, asking prayer for his restoration. If we don't deal with the matter God's way, Satan will deal with it his way. It will lead to gossip, slander, divisions, and greater sin in the body. God's way is to deal with the matter publicly.

There are three values of rebuke before the church...

### Three Affirming Values of Rebuke Before the Church: (For all involved)

*Let me say before I give you these, this is never easy and it is hard for a church to go through. It is unpleasant to have to deal with difficult issues, but it is always better to be honest, transparent and disarm the enemy by taking the tools of gossip, innuendo, secrecy, deceit, dishonesty, etc. out of his hands. And healing and restoration cannot begin until there is honesty/transparentcy, brokenness and true and genuine repentance and confession.*

1. **Public rebuke clears the name of God and His church from association with and toleration of evil** - If a church leader sins and the matter is covered up, there are still going to be leaks. When the leaks spread, people begin thinking that the church tolerates evil. That erodes trust in the message we proclaim and in the holy God we serve. Thus God's method, even in the case of His choicest servants, is to uncover the sin before everyone. As the Lord said to David after his sin with Bathsheba, "Indeed, you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and under the sun" (2 Sam. 12:12). God wants evil exposed so that the world may know that He is apart from all sin and does not tolerate it.
2. **Public rebuke causes others to be fearful of sinning** - (See 1 Timothy 5:20) Fear is not necessarily a bad motivator, if it keeps us from sin. Public discipline, especially of a church leader, makes people see the gravity of sin. It causes a healthy fear of God. If people know that church discipline will be administered impartially (5:21), they will be fearful of becoming the object of such rebuke and will avoid sin.
3. **Public rebuke causes the sinner himself to be fearful of sinning again** - (See 1 Timothy 5:20, "also") No one would want to go through something like that again. If the church is consistent in carrying out discipline, it will act as a deterrent to sin.

Thus, proper discipline of church leaders requires factual evidence and, in some cases, public rebuke. Paul adds a third need for proper discipline:

- (3) **Proper discipline of church leaders requires impartiality (5:21)** – *"<sup>21</sup> I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality."*

Church discipline will be effective only if it is applied impartially. If a man of influence is shown leniency, while a less powerful man is treated harshly, much harm will be done to the church.

Paul here invokes a solemn charge to Timothy: "in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, ..." "God and Christ Jesus" are contained under the same article in the Greek, which points to the deity of Christ. God is the ultimate judge, who has committed all judgment unto the Son (John 5:22, 27). Church discipline is carried out in the presence of the Lord (Matt. 18:15-20). The elect angels are probably included to bring up the awesome picture of God on His holy throne, surrounded by the angels, or because when Christ returns in judgment, He will use the angels as reapers.

Why does Paul lay this heavy charge on Timothy? I think he did it because Timothy, by nature and personality, was a timid soul who loathed confrontation. Thus he would have a tendency to back off from confronting a powerful elder who was in error. But to do so would be to be partial in administering discipline, which undermines the whole process.

Thus Paul is saying, in effect, “Timothy, fear God more than any powerful man. Maintain these principles without bias or partiality.”

Thus to keep church leadership godly, elders must be disciplined properly. That is the remedial step which the church is required to take. But there is also a preventative step which the church must take so that church leaders will not fall into sin:

### **TO KEEP CHURCH LEADERSHIP GODLY, ELDERS MUST BE SELECTED CAREFULLY (1 Timothy 5:22-25)**

*“<sup>22</sup> Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people’s sins; keep yourself pure.<sup>23</sup> No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach’s sake and your frequent infirmities.<sup>24</sup> Some men’s sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later.<sup>25</sup> Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden.” -1 Timothy 5:22-25*

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. If we want to avoid having leaders fall into sin, then we must use caution and discernment, (5:22) and careful observation (5:24-25) in the process of selecting them for office. Sandwiched in is a brief digression about Timothy’s health (5:23).

Paul give us (and Timothy) to important words of encouragement when choosing/selecting leaders in the church. This applies to pastors, ministers, elders and all other in church leadership.

### **2 Important Encouragements When Choosing Church Leaders:**

#### **(1) The need for caution and God’s timing in selecting church leaders (1 Timothy 5:22)**

- *“<sup>22</sup> Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people’s sins; keep yourself pure.”*

Some interpret the laying on of hands to refer to the restoration of a repentant elder. But in light of the usage in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6) I take it to refer to a public commissioning of elders to their office. Since some elders had fallen into sin, Timothy may be inclined to hastily appoint others to replace them (without caution). We often get in too big a hurry in selecting leaders, and we unwarily put into place those who are not ready or unqualified to serve (at that time. We may be setting them up for failure and much heart ache and pressure that is unnecessary. I’ve seen it and you have too.

If Timothy did hastily appoint replacement and those men were not well qualified and fell into sin, Timothy would have a part in their sin. So Paul warns him to keep himself pure.

The mentioning of keeping himself pure brings to Paul's mind the other danger of the false teachers, namely, their bent toward asceticism (4:3). He does not want Timothy mistakenly to think that he should abstain from all wine, especially in light of his frequent health problems. So he digresses to give his son in the faith some fatherly advice, namely, to drink a little wine for medicinal reasons. Paul goes on to urge ...

**(2) The need for careful observation and discernment in selecting church leaders (1 Timothy 5:24-25)** – *“<sup>23</sup>No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities.<sup>24</sup> Some men's sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later.<sup>25</sup> Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden.”*

The manner in which Timothy can avoid appointing unqualified elders is to take his time (5:22) and observe the lives of these men carefully.

### **Careful observation will reveal two classes of men:**

- 1. Those unfit for office (1 Timothy 5:24)** - *“<sup>24</sup>Some men's sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later.* There are two categories here:... those obviously unfit—their sins march on ahead of them for everyone to see; those not so obviously unfit—their sins follow after them, but eventually come to light. At first glance, they may seem qualified, but time will show their track record, that they are not godly men.
- 2. Those fit for office (1 Timothy 5:25)** - *“<sup>25</sup>Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden.* Again, there are the same two categories... Those obviously fit for office—their good deeds are evident; those fit for office, but not so obviously. The last half of the sentence is a bit confusing, but I take it to be parallel to verse 24, so the sense is, “Those good deeds of other men are not so evident at first, but they can't be hidden in the long run.”

So Paul is saying that people aren't always what they appear to be on the surface. **Men should not be selected for leadership in the church on a superficial or hasty basis.** They don't always turn out to be what they seem to be at first. Carefully observe their way of life, especially in their home (3:2, 4, 5). Also, how is their public reputation (3:7)? Don't put a man into church leadership unless he has a proven record of godly character and good deeds.

## **CONCLUSION**

Some things... warning if you will need to be remembered in closing.

### **3 Closing Considerations:**

- (1) Dealing with (confronting) erring church leaders is never easy** – It is much easier to sweep it under the rug, pretend it isn't happening, or just quietly dismiss it than to have to deal with it especially in the way Paul is describing to Timothy... publicly. Remember

just because something is hard and difficult doesn't mean it isn't necessary and worth the investment of time, energy and effort.

- (2) **It is harmful to both the church and the individuals involved not to deal with it** – As already stated, if we don't deal with it the fall out can be even more devastating than the actual offense or wrongdoing. Ministers/Pastor or Church leaders can't be restored if they are never held accountable. Those involved may fall away, become disillusioned, even drop out because a situation isn't properly handled. And the reputation of the church and Christianity is deeply marred in the eyes of the world and onlookers.
- (3) **It must be done biblically and with the right heart attitude** – These are key. We must recognize that there is a biblically right way to handle this as Paul instructed Timothy in our passage. It must always be done redemptively and with the restoration of all involved. It is never to be done in anger, malice, or divisively.

We always are in danger of drifting with our worldly culture rather than confronting it with God's truth. The theme of our culture is tolerance of anything except someone who is not tolerant. It has affected the American church. A recent *Christianity Today* news article told of two well-known Christian authors who are under attack from what the article described as "self-appointed heresy hunters." Yet as the article quoted from one of the authors, it is clear that she has fallen into seriously false and non-Christian teaching, which she excuses as a failure on her part to communicate. But the tone of the article was that these "heresy hunters" are hounding these poor victims.

The Bible is clear that elders are not only to exhort in sound doctrine, but also to refute those who contradict (Titus 1:9). But the mood of our day is that we can't criticize or judge anyone, no matter how far out of line they are, because that implies that we're right and they're wrong, and that doesn't fit with the supreme virtue of tolerance.

During the time of the Reformation, many Catholic priests had mistresses and illegitimate children. Many of them were greedily misusing church funds to live in luxury. One major distinctive of the Reformed churches was a return to church discipline. They sought to hold their pastors and members accountable to the holy standards of God's Word. God greatly honored that return to righteousness among His people.

Although you get accused of being hateful when you confront sin and call people to holiness, and although some do it wrongly because they lack compassion, it is not hate, but the love of God that confronts sin and false doctrine. Sin and teaching contrary to God's Word destroy people. Holiness and sound doctrine save people from God's judgment and build them in the joy of the Lord. Our God is holy. We His people, and especially we who are church leaders, must be holy ourselves in all our behavior. God's word to all of us from these verses is, "Keep yourself pure from sin" (5:22b).

**Discussion Questions**

1. When is it proper to expose false teaching by a Christian author or well-known leader?  
When is it not proper?
2. When does talking about someone who is not present cross the line into sinful gossip?
3. How should we respond when someone shares with us something inappropriate about someone else?
4. How can we faithfully carry out church discipline without becoming sinfully judgmental?