

# 1 Timothy

## *A Call to Faithful Service*

### Lesson 10

To Timothy,  
my true child  
in the faith...



After a lengthy section on the care of widows in the church Paul returns to discussing the eldership. In this lesson we will also consider the relationship between the elders and evangelist.

### Further Instructions on Elders (5:17-25)

Elders within the church have important responsibilities to the flock and thus there are substantial qualifications for these men, some of which are outlined in chapter three. Even as the elders have a responsibility to the church, the members of the church must treat the elders with proper respect and charges can only be brought against them, when necessary, in a specified manner.

The elders serve in positions of leadership and authority as seen by the use of “rule.”<sup>1</sup> This word has no sense of tyranny or dictatorship, but of leading, directing, and protecting.

The word translated as elder in 5:17 is *presbyteros* which we discussed in lesson five and indicates age, wisdom, and experience. Men should only be appointed as elders after exhibiting the qualities listed in 1 Timothy 3 over a period of many years.



### **1. Why are young men not suited to appointment as elders?**

The elders who serve well within the church are worthy of “double-honour,” especially if they serve in preaching and teaching the world. The phrase “double-honour” refers to giving elders the respect they deserve as well as financial remuneration and generosity in the way the church treats them.<sup>2</sup> Some elders were able to devote their full-time efforts into serving Christ and his church and these men deserve to be compensated financially.

One more word of special interest is “labour” which means toiling to the point of exhaustion. The work of an elder can be mentally and emotionally draining since these men have responsibility for the spiritual development and lives of each church member.

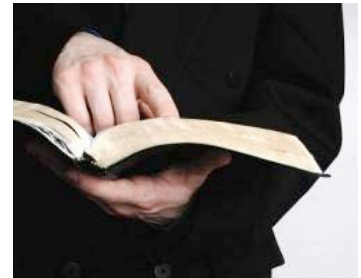
<sup>1</sup> The word translated “rule” is the Greek word προϊστημι (*proistemi*) which means: “to manage, direct, or lead.”  
<https://www.teknia.com/greek-dictionary/proistemi>

<sup>2</sup> Smith, James E. *Exhortation Epistles*. Lulu, 2011, p. 113.

Leading a diverse group of people of different ages, genders, and giftedness who have different struggles, strengths, weaknesses, and personalities to spiritual maturity requires wisdom and discernment. Elders must provide instruction, compassion, correction, sternness, and gentleness in the appropriate time and manner. This can only be accomplished by men who have the age, experience, temperament, ability, and knowledge of God's word necessary to fulfill this vital ministry.

## **2. List three reasons why church members should respect their elders.**

In the church today elders are not usually financially compensated for their work, but Paul makes it clear that they can and should be if they are labouring in preaching and teaching. The illustration Paul uses is that of an ox which should not be muzzled when it treads out the grain (see Deut. 25:4) and of a worker who deserves the wages he has earned for his labours (see Luke 10:7).



Those who work within the church deserve to be compensated for their efforts just as any other worker receives a wage from his employer. A church worker can decline to be paid as Paul sometimes did if he has another way to support himself. Paul writes at some length in 1 Cor. 9 that he deserved to be paid for his work as an apostle, but that he voluntarily declined support so that no one could accuse him of any selfish motives for preaching the gospel.

## **3. Give some Scriptural and practical reasons why it is right to financially support those who serve in the Lord's church.**



Many churches of today have deviated from New Testament teaching in the area of church leadership. Because of what we see around us and have experienced throughout our lives it is hard to approach this subject without bias. Still it must always be our goal to follow the pattern laid out in Scripture as best we can.

## **4. How many types of church leadership or organisation models do we see in the "Christian" world today and how do we determine the model we should accept?**

Ephesians 4:11 lists four leadership positions within the church: 1) apostles; 2) prophets; 3) evangelists; 4) pastors (or shepherds) and teachers. Two of these were temporary positions in the early days of the church and ended when the last of the apostles died and when the gift of prophecy ceased (1 Cor. 13:8). The two roles which remain are evangelists and pastor/teachers.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For further study see: [http://scbi.com.au/lessons/1corinthians/1 Cor. Lesson 25.pdf](http://scbi.com.au/lessons/1corinthians/1%20Cor.%20Lesson%2025.pdf)

While the term “evangelist” is not often used today it is a biblical word and should be used for those who labour in this position. Using the term “pastor” to describe anyone except an elder is an incorrect use of this biblical word and should be avoided.

One mistake we can make is to see evangelists only in the light of traveling short-term preachers while seeing elders as long-term church leaders. The example of the New Testament shows evangelists like Timothy, Titus, and Philip spending extended periods with one church.

In the New Testament elders (also called pastors or bishops)<sup>4</sup> and evangelists shared leadership and were mutually accountable to one another. Titus, the evangelist, is instructed to put the church into order and appoint elders (Titus 1:5) and in 1 Tim 5:22 Timothy is instructed not to be hasty in appointing elders.

While evangelists are involved in setting the church in order and directly involved in appointing elders, the elders are responsible for the teaching within the church and the shepherding functions. The evangelists or ministers like all other church members look to the elders as their pastors or shepherds. The elders and evangelists do not work for one another, they both work for God.

## **5. What is the benefit of mutual accountability between elders and evangelists?**

We often think only of the minister or evangelist as a paid position of the church, but this need not be the case. Elders and evangelists serve in different, but complimentary and related roles and full-time (or limited-time) paid elders can be as beneficial to the church as full-time (or limited-time) evangelists/ministers.

## **6. List some ways or times in which a full-time elder could benefit the church.**

Charges made against elders are serious accusations and must be handled appropriately. First, allegations against an elder cannot be accepted from just one person. People can be upset with the needed rebuke or decision of an elder and sometimes vent their anger with claims that are untrue or misleading. When multiple people come forward with the same accusation of sinful behaviour investigation is necessary.



The word translated as “sin” means “missing the mark” and is a broad term that pictures a man who is doing wrong or failing to do that which is right. If the charge made against the elder is proved true then Timothy, the evangelist, was to rebuke him publicly to serve as a warning to all others. Again we see the mutual accountability of evangelists and elders since the evangelist is the one to carry out the public rebuke against the elder who has been shown to be involved in persistent sin.

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<sup>4</sup> Though almost universally accepted, it is a misuse of New Testament terminology to refer to anyone, except an elder as a pastor.

Paul charges Timothy in verse 21 in a forceful and solemn way to follow the instructions he has given him in this letter. Perhaps Timothy needed encouragement to forcefully teach, preach, and practice the parts of his ministry which were especially difficult. These instructions were to be followed without prejudice or partiality.

The laying on of hands in verse 22 refers to the appointment or setting apart of men as elders. The decision to ordain a man as an elder must be made only after a lengthy period of careful examination. If Timothy appoints an unqualified man without proper evaluation of his life and giftedness he must take some responsibility if the man fails. To be capable of making these important decisions Timothy must keep his own life pure.



Paul inserts a short verse concerning Timothy's health in verse 23. Timothy was subject frequent ailments and difficulties with digestion. To improve his health he was to drink some wine and not only water. The water in first century Ephesus would not have had the purification standards we expect today and may have contributed to Timothy's illness. It is possible that all the stress of ministry also pressed against Timothy worsening any stomach problems. We can make two other observations: 1) Apparently Timothy had completely abstained from wine to this point; perhaps to set a good example. 2) Timothy's consumption of wine was for medicinal purposes only and does not say anything one way or another about the drinking of wine for private enjoyment or in social settings.<sup>56</sup>

Returning to his instruction on the appointment of elders and the need to thoroughly prove a man worthy, Paul describes how some sins are easily observed by everyone and others are not. Sin will not go unnoticed by God and judgment will reveal these sins. In a similar way good works are sometimes apparent to all, but at other times they are not obvious because they have drawn no attention. God sees these good deeds and he will one day bring them to light.

### Practical Application

1. Potential elders must be examined over a lengthy period to prove their character, knowledge of God's Word, and suitability for leadership. Once acting as our pastors we should respect them as they shepherd the flock.
2. Churches should strongly consider paid elderships when men with time and ability are available.
3. Elders and evangelists should never be in competition with each other, but value one another and their distinct roles while remaining mutually accountable to one another.

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<sup>5</sup> "We must remember that wine was one of the chief remedial agents of those times in which the science of medicine was in its infancy among Greek physicians." (Wuest, Kenneth S. *The Pastoral Epistles in the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964.)

<sup>6</sup> It is not proof, but this verse may give validity to the thought that the gift of healing had already passed from use in the church; otherwise we might have expected Paul to have healed his beloved son in the faith instead of suggesting medication.