

## 11. Learning to Minister to Elders

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn when the church is to provide for the needs of women that are widows. We also saw that the church is to develop a list of ministering widows who are able to teach and lead the younger women and help them grow to spiritual maturity. When there are family members available to provide the needs of widows, the church is to let those family members take care of the needs of widows in their family. When there are no family members, then the church is to take responsibility for the needs of the widows. Today, we are going to see how our children can help the church learn to minister to elders as the elders carry out the responsibility that the Lord has given them to lead the church.

In 1 Timothy 5:17-18, we read, “Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,’ and, ‘The laborer *is* worthy of his wages.’” We see, in 1 Timothy 3:4-5, that the word that is translated “rules” means *one that has been set over something as a protector or guardian*. Titus 3:8 says, “This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.” Here, the word “rule” is translated “maintain”. As the protectors and guardians of the church, the elders are to show the church by their examples how to lead through good works. The word translated “well” means *with excellence or to do that which is good*. Here, we see that this verse talks about elders who lead with excellence by doing good.

The word that is translated “be counted worthy” means *to think a person is deserving or worthy*. The word that is translated “honor” speaks of honor which is shown to a person or the valuing by which a price is fixed. Two examples of the first use are in 1 Peter 3:7 which says, “Husbands, likewise, dwell with *them* with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as *being* heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.” and John 4:44 which says, “For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country.” The second use of the valuing by which a price is fixed is found in Acts 4:34, “Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold.” Here, we see that double honor can include both respect to a person and also financial gifts to assist them in their ministry. Since elders may spend much time leading by example, preparing to teach, and teaching, it is appropriate to share with them financially.

Another way we show honor to elders is by the way we respond when someone makes an accusation against an elder. 1 Timothy 5:19-21 says, “Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear. 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.” Here we see that we are not to receive an accusation against an elder unless there are at least two or three witnesses. There are people who will try to destroy the ministry of a godly leader by making false accusations against that leader.

The word “receive” means *to accept or take to one’s self*. Elders are not to accept an accusation against a fellow elder unless there are two or three witnesses. This means that elders are to have the same process of discipline that any sinning Christian would experience. Matthew 18:15-17 says, “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. 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.” ‘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.’” There will be occasional cases where an elder has been guilty of sin and there are several witnesses of that fact. In such cases, the continuing sins of an elder are to be rebuked before all because an elder is an example to the entire church.

When an elder provides a negative example, he is to be rebuked. A rebuke may be either by word, by action or both. To rebuke before all means to expose the fact of continuing sin after appropriate private correction has taken place with no repentance. The word that is translated “fear” means either *fear or reverence*. We are to have a godly fear of sin in our lives. The instructions to not receive a charge against an elder without two or three witnesses and the instruction to rebuke an elder publicly that has sinned are to be carried out without prejudice or partiality. The word “prejudice” means *not to form an opinion before all of the facts are known*. The word “partiality” means *not to favor or join with one who is guilty*. Here, we see that we are to avoid forming any opinions for or against an elder but to follow the instructions of Scripture without partiality.

1 Timothy 5:22 says, “Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people’s sins; keep yourself pure.” The word that is translated “hastily” means *quickly or shortly*. Titus was given similar instructions in Titus 1:5 where we read, “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you—.” Here, we see that the primary ministry of Titus was to qualify elders on the island of Crete just as Timothy was to qualify elders in Ephesus and the surrounding region. Even though this was the primary ministry of both of these men, it takes time for men to meet the qualifications given in the following summary:

We see that the primary responsibilities of Titus in Titus 1:6-9 were to:

- Help potential leaders develop a respected life.
- Help potential leaders develop a healthy marriage.
- Help potential leaders develop a healthy family relationship.
- Help potential leaders become Christ centered and not self-centered.
- Help potential leaders deal with former sinful habits.
- Help potential leaders learn to use their homes for ministry.
- Help potential leaders develop godly character.
- Help potential leaders learn to teach the Word of God.
- Help potential leaders learn to correct those who contradict.

Both Titus and Timothy were given a similar list for developing qualified elders in every church. In the same way, we want to help our children learn to become qualified leaders themselves and then help others to become qualified. This takes time but should be the top priority of every spiritual leader because as leaders we know that our ministry will only carry on to the next

generation if we develop healthy reproducing leaders. However, if we understand that we are to use these qualifications to develop qualified leaders, we will lead our children and help them become qualified rather than drive our children by discouraging them and telling them that they are not qualified for spiritual leadership.

We also want to help every existing elder learn to work with a small group of men to help those men become qualified also. By being patient, we will be able to appoint leaders who have become qualified because we have shown them how to develop godly character. We have taught them the Word of God and have helped them to develop ministry skills. Paul and Barnabas gave us an example of how to develop such leaders as people become Christians in Acts 14:21-23 where we read, “And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the faith, and *saying*, ‘We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.’ So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.” Here, we see that Paul and Barnabas used the following process to develop qualified elders:

They preached the Gospel clearly.

They took time to develop godly character, Biblical knowledge and ministry skills.

They took time to strengthen the souls of the disciples.

They took time to encourage the disciples to continue in the faith.

They prepared the disciples for much tribulation,

They appointed those who became qualified as elders.

They prayed for the continued development of these elders.

They trusted the Lord to work through these elders as the new elders led the churches.

Paul went on to say in 1 Timothy 5:23-25, “No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach’s sake and your frequent infirmities. Some men’s sins are clearly evident, preceding *them* to judgment, but those of some *men* follow later. Likewise, the good works of *some* are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden.” Since Timothy had frequent problems with sickness and infirmity, Paul told him to add a little grape juice (wine) to the water he drank to purify the water to help him reduce the frequency of his sicknesses.

The sins of some Christians were easy to see so that Timothy was to know and recognize that those men were not yet qualified for spiritual leadership. As Timothy spent time ministering with other men, he would recognize those who had less obvious sins and still needed more time to become qualified spiritual leaders. In contrast, the good works of other men showed that they had become qualified to serve as elders because their lives met the qualifications listed above. As Timothy worked with other men, especially those who might be quiet and served the Lord where other people did not notice them, Timothy would also recognize those who were qualified that others may not have noticed. The same thing will happen as you help your physical and spiritual children grow and mature in Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children become qualified to serve as elders and equip them to develop others also.