

March 9, 2014

*PAUL'S LETTER TO TIMOTHY, PASTOR AT EPHESUS:  
XV. "Elders in a Local Church"  
I Timothy 5:17 – 25*

**Introduction:**

Our series is on Paul's letter encouraging Timothy to do remain at his post in the face of false teachers and teachings. Paul wanted his dear son in the faith Timothy to be a man of **T**\_\_\_\_\_.

The three truths that are central to the letter: **S**\_\_\_\_\_ for the faith, lead the church to **I**\_\_\_\_\_, **H**\_\_\_\_\_, and **I**\_\_\_\_\_ and **D**\_\_\_\_\_ the followers of Jesus.

The vital importance of personal worship, prayer, intercession, service, time in His word daily...

Today we study the issue of spiritual leadership in the local church. Leaders must model relationships that are **H**\_\_\_\_\_.

My personal definition of spiritual leadership...

Spiritual leaders must learn to play to an **A**\_\_\_\_\_ of **O**\_\_\_\_\_

Three critical heart issues leaders must pay attention to: They must be **W**\_\_\_\_\_ God's, **I**\_\_\_\_\_ - being comes before doing ministry, the attitude of a **S**\_\_\_\_\_

Model a heart **D**\_\_\_\_\_ and a **L**\_\_\_\_\_ that demonstrates to others that they have been with Jesus. Do we see His footprints and His life flowing from within us and deposited in the lives of others?

**I. The Elders Who Direct the Ministry of the Church:**

I Timothy 5:17, 18

The elders whose work is preaching and teaching are worthy of double honor. He tells Timothy what to look for elders, the Greek word kopiontes –

The first honor for me is that I am anointed to dig into the Scriptures and am given the call to **P**\_\_\_\_\_ and **T**\_\_\_\_\_ them to you.

It is my double honor to **R**\_\_\_\_\_ my **L**\_\_\_\_\_ from that honor

Paul tells Timothy to pay careful **A**\_\_\_\_\_ to his **H**\_\_\_\_\_.

**II. The Issue of Hearing an Accusation Against a Leader:**

I Timothy 5:19, 20

False accusations were common in the day ... someone took offense at being called to life change and decided to shoot the messenger. This happens a lot today – good people forced out of ministry

Paul tells Timothy exactly how to proceed when he heard an accusation:

1. If there is only one **A** \_\_\_\_\_
2. Two or three witnesses call for the elder to speak in his **D** \_\_\_\_\_
3. If it proves to be **T** \_\_\_\_\_
4. The goal of spiritual discipline is always the **R** \_\_\_\_\_ of the person who has sinned

The result of godly discipline is ...

### **III. The Issue of Laying on of Hands in Public Blessing:**

I Timothy 5:21, 22

Paul first addresses the issue of leaders living now with full knowledge that one day they will stand before God in **J** \_\_\_\_\_. They were to view themselves as **E** \_\_\_\_\_ of the whole church.

Three ways the early church did the laying of hands in public:

- Asking Jesus for **H** \_\_\_\_\_
- To celebrate salvation in a **N** \_\_\_\_\_ **B** \_\_\_\_\_
- To formally commission **N** \_\_\_\_\_ **L** \_\_\_\_\_

### **IV. Dealing with Sinful Behaviors:**

I Timothy 5:24, 25

The practical call here is...

Paul says that some sins are obvious in a life while others are able to hide sin under a cloak of human righteousness. Similarly some people's good deeds are open for all to see while others do good deeds that aren't public.

The key issue a life that is characterized by loving service is to invite Jesus to **C** \_\_\_\_\_ in us a **C** \_\_\_\_\_ **H** \_\_\_\_\_

Permitting the Holy Spirit to **C** \_\_\_\_\_ us, to **C** \_\_\_\_\_ us of our needs and to **C** \_\_\_\_\_ us from the inside out!

Jesus' words about what we bring out of our hearts Matthew 7:16 – 20

### **Concluding Thoughts:**

## *Discussion Starter Questions for Home Groups*

- 1. What is your opinion of the definition of spiritual leadership that Ken shared with us and that comes out of his own journey?*
- 2. Why is it so important for people who are called to spiritual leadership in a local church to be people of character and integrity above all else?*
- 3. What were your thoughts about how the early church leaders were told to field accusations that were brought against a fellow leader?*
- 4. What do you think of the truth that the goal of spiritual discipline, when it is necessary, must always be the restoration of the one who has failed?*
- 5. What did you think of the explanation of the word Paul gave to Timothy about not being too quick to do the public act of blessing, the laying on of hands in a worship setting?*
- 6. What were your thoughts about the call to permit the Holy Spirit to do His work in convincing us of our need and convicting us to draw us to repentance?*
- 7. Read aloud together Romans 7:14 - 25 and discuss insights that you have regarding what it means to struggle with the leaning to sin.*
- 8. Read aloud together Romans 8:1 - 17 and discuss insights that you have regarding the difference between living in the fleshly nature's desires and living in the desires brought into us by Spirit of God.*
- 9. Do you think we do a good job of confronting sin with gentle loving hearts as we live together in the church in North America today? Are there things from this message that were particularly challenging to your own spiritual journey?*

March 16, 2014 AM  
Pastor Ken Hepner

***PAUL'S LETTER TO TIMOTHY, PASTOR AT EPHESUS:  
XV. "Elders in a Local Church"  
I Timothy 5:17 – 25***

**Introduction:**

This morning we reengage in our study of Paul's letter to his son in the faith Timothy. Paul wrote this letter to encourage him to remain at his post and to do the right thing regardless of how difficult his circumstances might be. He was standing in a position that required him to be a man of the **Truth** because of the incredible amount of false teachers in the city of Ephesus.

There are three central truths that stand out in this letter, which are really relevant to our church family life at Cedar Grove nearly 2000 years later: Paul writes to him to **Stand for the Faith** as it has been passed on to him, the Gospel of Jesus. He writes to help Timothy to lead the church **Internal Health** by insuring that in every leader he can see the life of the Spirit of Jesus living daily. Paul also writes to help Timothy to **Instruct and Disciple** the believers at Ephesus in the truth, to make the connection between their beliefs and how they lived the message daily.

Paul calls his son in the faith Timothy to lead the church family to engage in the spiritual disciplines. Over the past few weeks we have seen the fact that the people who love and serve Jesus in a local church are invited to engage with the Spirit of God in deep and personal ways. Jesus calls us to worship, pray, intercede, serve others in love, and to be people who delight in God's Word.

Today we take an in-depth look at the call the Lord places on some of His men and women to give spiritual leadership in the local church. The leaders whom Jesus chooses are called to model **Healthy** relationships. The church of Jesus must have leaders involved in it that are willing to be men and women who love Jesus and others intensely from the heart.

In January when I spoke on Deacons and Board members, I shared with all of you my personal definition of spiritual leadership: *"A God-given, God-ordained discipline of seeking to exert godly influence in a group of people, to work with God to create a better future for that group of people."*

The Lord calls simple and ordinary people to walk with Him and to follow His will to create a new future for a group of people. The Lord's call to spiritual leadership flows from the person's heart and mind, as he/she engages in a meaningful spiritual journey with Jesus. Spiritual leaders have learned the primary lesson in life that we must play primarily to an **Audience of One!** They will never lead the church well until Jesus is leading them well by His Spirit.

There are three critical heart issues that spiritual leaders in a local church are called to pay very careful attention to: They seek to be **Wholly God's** by investing time alone with Jesus.

They know the importance of **Integrity**, that being comes before doing ministry! They also embrace the attitude of a **Servant** that they have come to know in the heart of Jesus.

John 12:25, 26 *“The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.”*

So the issue for spiritual leaders is that they must model two really crucial things in our church life. They must model a **Heart Desire and a Lifestyle** that clearly portrays to people that they have been with Jesus. They must live a life of serving love, genuinely caring about people whom they are called to lead. And they must model really good relationships with their family members and those with whom they live and work. Relationships are the way that the kingdom of God moves from heart to heart in life. So deepening relationships must be modeled for us in our church.

The fact is that if we have been alone with Jesus, and if we have welcomed Him to dwell in our life with us, then His footprints will be evident, clearly seen by people we love and interact with. If we want to know if a person is serving Jesus with his or her whole heart, we need only to look at what they have deposited in the lives of others. Do we see the self-emptying love and life of Jesus left in the hearts of others?

### **I. The Elders Who Direct the Ministry of the Church:**

I Timothy 5:17, 18 *“The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, ‘Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,’ and ‘The worker deserves his wages.’”*

The pastoral epistles are intensely practical. Paul tells Timothy that the elders whose work is directing the ministry of a church and who do it well, and especially those whose work also calls them to do the primary preaching and teaching ministry in the church, are worthy of double honor. That is a picture that pastors, bishops, and missionaries should receive their living from the work that they do.

As usual Paul doesn't leave us any room for misunderstanding exactly who are the elders who are worthy of that double honor. He uses the Greek word: kopiontes – meaning they are those who tirelessly work, faithfully labor behind the scenes, to point of getting very tired at times, to be a man or woman of God who shares the message of Jesus in a clear and loving way. Paul writes that Timothy should lead the church to understand that if it is evident that the speaker has worked hard to understand it and teach God's truth very well that is a person they should feel very good about supporting well! The Christian ethic is that we don't support laziness or shoddy work. Hard work deserves honor.

That word about double honor is really important to me and I want to try to make it live for you. First, it is an honor for me to be a man of God who is called, gifted, and anointed to dig into studying the Scriptures, to have the Holy Spirit make them live for me, and then to seek to diligently **Preach and Teach** them with you with the hope of enabling you to meet with the

Holy Spirit in the truth. It is an honor to have received the calling of the Lord Jesus and the gifting and anointing to **Speak the Word** in such a way as to build up your faith and encourage you on your spiritual journey.

It is a double honor to **Receive my Living** for my wife Raina and me **From the First Honor**. Raina and I have known very difficult times in ministry, when the body that we were serving didn't understand this principle very well. We have known what it is to choose between articles of clothing or shoes that we would buy for us or our boys this month and what would have to wait until next month.

But we are truly humbled and feel tremendously blessed by the way this body takes care of Raina and me so that we don't have to worry about being able to pay our bills on time. We can focus on doing what Jesus has called us to do without the worry of financial pressures or crises looming over our heads. So thank you so much from two people who love you deeply!

Paul then tells Timothy that he should also take very good care of his body, to pay **Attention** to his **Health**. The truth is that we only get one temple of the Holy Spirit to live in so we should all follow this instruction to take care of your body. The truth is that I am the only me that I have been given by God' gift, to work within to care for your spiritual journeys as a church family. So Paul is counseling me to be a good manager of my heart, mind, soul, and body if I am to do so for the long haul with you.

Here Paul tells Timothy that often used and abused quote, "drink a little wine for your stomach's infirmities." What it means is that you should be doing the right things to care for your body. Keep our body's needs in your focus by getting rest, having recreation, getting exercise, and then eat and drink the right things for your body's health!

## **II. The Issue of Hearing Accusations Against an Elder:**

I Timothy 5:19, 20 *"Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that others may take warning."*

False accusations were common in the day because often elders whose work was preaching and teaching said things in their messages that rebuked people's behaviors and some of them didn't like it. In conversations with people, if an elder had the courage to confront sin and invite the person to repent, and he or she chose not to do so, a vendetta could be launched against the speaker of the truth. The easiest thing for them to do was to create a story about something that the elder supposedly had done, so that he would be discredited in the eyes of the whole church family and removed from office.

Honestly, this happens all of the time today. Things haven't changed that much in 2000 years of church life together. People, who genuinely love Jesus, seek to make His truth live, preaching and teaching elders will invariably say some things that some people aren't going to like very much. The truth under the anointing of the Holy Spirit in preaching and teaching confronts something in a person that he or she isn't ready to deal with yet. I have been here and have done

this and have the T-shirt and the ball hat in my closet at home! Stories that are made up about people have destroyed hearts and have caused good people to leave the ministry forever!

So Paul counsels Timothy on exactly how to he was to proceed when he dealt with receiving an accusation from someone about one of the elders in the church at Ephesus. His words to Timothy in verse 21 are so powerful and on point here. Let's read them together: *"I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favoritism."*

1. It must not ever be accepted if there is only one **Accuser**. If the speaker has no one to corroborate his/her story then Timothy was to treat it as an invalid accusation.
2. If there are two or three witnesses who have seen and can verify what is being said, and they have done so without being prompted to do so, then it is time to open up the case for the elder's **Defense**, and invite the elder who is being accused into the process of verification of the truth.
3. If the accusation proves to be **True** and the elder is brought to ownership of the sinful behavior or choices made, then that elder is to be openly or publicly rebuked for what he/she has done. Paul wanted to insure that Timothy did the right thing, honestly rebuked the elder in front of the leadership team of the church family, so that it was obvious to the whole elder team that the discipline was being done from a heart of love for the church and the elder who had sinned.
4. The goal of doing an act of spiritual discipline is always the **Restoration** of the one who has sinned. This is never done in order to get something off of the chest of the pastor or other elders. It isn't even done primarily to clean up the church. The absolute first and foremost consideration has to be love for the fallen elder, restoring them to righteousness and the good of the whole body of believers.

The result of godly discipline in a church when done in love is that everyone understands the fact that in our church we don't look the other way at sin. We don't sweep it under the rug and pretend it isn't there. We engage with the ones who are broken by it and seek to bring about healing love and restoration in our church!

### **III. The Issue of Laying on of Hands In Public Blessing:**

I Timothy 5:21, 22 *"I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favoritism. Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others."*

There are two specific things that are said here about how Timothy and the elders in the church at Ephesus were to go about their work.

First, they were to live their lives now with the full knowledge that some day they would be standing before the very **Judgment** seat of God the Father, before the Lord Jesus and the holy angels. They were to act in righteousness now, to invoke the standards of the kingdom of heaven in the church they led in the decisions that they made. The result would be that they could stand

before the Lord on that day and rejoice that there were so many of their church family members there rejoicing with them!

--They were to see themselves as **Elders of the Whole Church**. They were called by God to go about their work without having their pets and favorites that got all of the attention to the neglect of those who also needed to have some quality time from them to encourage them along the way!

Secondly, Paul writes about the laying on of hands in a public worship setting. When the body of elders gathered around someone and laid their hands on their heads in the first century church there were generally one of three things happening:

Laying on of Hands **Asking Jesus for Healing** – It is Jesus’ brother James who helps us to understand this rite of the laying on of hands that was practiced in the first century church. James writes that sins must be openly dealt with and honestly confessed when walking through a time of calling on Jesus for divine healing. Before we read it let’s just state the obvious so we don’t miss it: **Willfully living in Sin** can prevent us from experiencing the life and the love of Jesus poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit!

James 5:14 – 16a *“Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other that you may be healed.”*

Laying on of Hands to **Welcome New Members** – Typically in the first century church the body of elders would gather around a person whom they had been discipling for a time, a person whom they believed was now honestly following Jesus, lay their hands on their head and pray confirming them as members of the church. Paul counseled them to not be hasty in doing this because the truth is that sin is persistent and time is needed to help the new member to deal with his or her own self-interest!

The truth is that everyone is welcome in the fellowship of the local church. Everyone is most welcome to attend worship and Sunday School here with us. But members of the church are held to a different standard than those who merely show up. Members of the church are expected to live in keeping with what the church stands for, to **Demonstrate the Message!**

Laying on of Hands to **Commission New Leaders** – This third expression of laying on of hands was the way that the early church acted to ordain new pastors, elders, and leaders in a local church fellowship. There is a picture in Scripture of Timothy’s ordination service when the elders laid hands on him and commissioned him to preach the gospel of the kingdom. I Timothy 4:14 *“do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you.”*

#### **IV. Dealing with Sinful Behaviors:**

I Timothy 5:24, 25 *“The sins of some men are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them; the sins of others trail behind them. In the same way, good deeds are obvious, and even those that are not cannot be hidden.”*

This one isn't rocket science either. Paul counsels Timothy to not be hasty in doing these public ordination times for new elders or leaders because you don't want to make the church a party to the sins that perhaps lie hidden in a life and that will be much more evident given the passage of time. Paul then gives Timothy some absolutely timeless and trusted advice about dealing with sinful attitudes and behaviors in the body of Christ at Ephesus.

Paul says that some things are obviously sin and must be confronted by the man of God who is responsible to give spiritual leadership in the local church. He says some other things that are sinful may lie deeply hidden in a life and be covered over by a veneer of human works righteousness. But eventually, the sinful attitudes, the self-focus, and prideful thinking of human superiority will come out.

Paul says likewise there are some people whose lives are just simply characterized by doing acts of love and mercy, good deeds flow out of them everywhere they go. Others do things that are wonderful and kind, but that are hardly ever seen. And then caps it off with the thought that the Lord who will judge us some day is not missing anything at all: bad or good attitudes, bad or good behaviors.

He builds on a principle that is interwoven throughout the entire Bible, and one that Jesus really focused a lot of attention on. The key issue to having a life that is characterized by love and good deeds of selfless service is to permit the Lord Jesus to work in me by His Spirit and **Create in me a Clean Heart!**

What we all must do is permit the Holy Spirit to **Confront** us, to **Convict** us of our needs, and to **Change** us from the **Heart!** When He convicts us He enables to see things in our hearts and lives as He sees them. Then as we cooperate with His presence and His conviction, and then repent, He acts to transform our hearts by giving us His heart and life where our sin and selfish attitudes once stood!

Jesus said it this way in Matthew 7:16 – 20: *“By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus by their fruit you will recognize them.”*

And in Matthew 12:34, 35 Jesus adds the following words: *“For out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.”*

**Concluding Thoughts:**

What this draws our attention to is this simple question as we conclude: What is going on in my heart right now? When the lights are out and there is no one around by the Spirit of Jesus with me, what is He pointing out to me? What is He confronting in me?