

Leadership Series
Cordova Community Church (1998)
By
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1. Our Model: The Humiliation of God (Philippians 2:1-11).
2. The Divine Shepherd (Psalm 23)
3. God and His Shepherds (Ezekiel 34:1-22)
4. Jesus as the Good Shepherd (John 10:1-18)
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8. Giving Elders Perspective (Acts 20:25-35)
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This material was presented in the form of 30 minutes of lecture followed by 30 minutes of discussion within small groups.

LESSON 1 - OUR MODEL: THE HUMILIATION OF GOD

Philippians 2:1-11

Teaching Moments

1. Verses 1-2 reflect the goal of Christian community (family). The goal is sharing the same love, like-mindedness, spirit and purpose in a unity. This unity is derived from the encouragement of union with Christ, comfort from Christ's love, the fellowship of the Spirit and the tenderness/compassion of God's work among us. Our unity is rooted in God's work to make us one. It arises out of his love, fellowship and union with him. Union with Christ, the fellowship of the Spirit, and the love of God gives rise to a family of shared commitments, purpose and love.
2. As a result, several imperatives (directions) follow. If the situation of verses 1-2 obtains, then the community will do two things:
 - a. Treat each other with humility rather than pursuing conceited ambitions.
 - b. Look toward each other's interests rather than one's own selfish interests.
3. This applies to how a community works together, shares its life and seeks leadership within the community. Humility and Sacrificial Service are the key ideas for genuine community, and for genuine leadership.
4. The model, of course, is Jesus Christ. He exhibits the "attitude" (mind) that acts in humility and sacrificial service (vv. 5-8).
 - a. The humility of Jesus is his willingness to move from the "form of God" to the "form of a servant"; from divine glory to human weakness; from equality with God to humble obedience, even to the cross. The cross is the humiliation of God—this is the length to which God's humility will go, and this arises out of his love for us.
 - b. The sacrifice of Jesus is his willingness to give up his glory to come to earth as a humble servant. The one who was rich became poor (2 Cor. 8:9).
5. The result is that God exalts the humble, sacrificial servant. By his humble service, Jesus returns to glory to the glory of the Father. The one who is willing to take the low place is exalted to the highest place.
6. Community, unity, and encouragement only exist when the people of a community serve each other with humility without ambition or selfishness. This quality is necessary for the unity of any community, whether a church or a family. Those who lead the family or church must model this sacrificial humility according to pattern offered us in Jesus Christ.

Discussion Questions

1. Reading between the lines, what do you think was the problem in the church at Philippi? (cf. “strife” and “envy” in 1:15-17; also 4:2-3).
2. What are some of the values of community/family that are listed in verses 1-2?
3. What are the four motives for living in unity? How is this unity related to humility?
4. How does Jesus exemplify what Paul means in verses 3-4?
5. Can you think of any stories from the Gospels that might reflect the values of verses 3-4?
6. In what ways did Jesus make himself a servant, and how is this a “humbling” experience for him?
7. How does Jesus model leadership within the family and church?
8. How does “selfish ambition” often arise within a church, and how is it sometimes reflected? How does this text teach us to deal with this? What is the ambition of leadership within a church/family?
9. What are some ways in which we can seek to redirect some of the “ambition” in a church to profitable service? What values do we need to inculcate in a church in order to avoid such ambition and self-interestedness?
10. How is the “gospel” summarized in this text in Philippians? If all you had was this text, what would you say the gospel is? What is the good news and what difference does it make in community or family when everyone lives out the gospel?

LESSON 2 - THE DIVINE SHEPHERD

Psalm 23

"God Who Has Been My Shepherd All My Life"

Genesis 48:15

Teaching Moments

1. The "Shepherd" metaphor is a rich and familiar notion. The relationship of a shepherd with his sheep was quite familiar. The Shepherd's duty was to provide for and protect the flock. He was responsible for leading them to grasses, water and protecting against predators.

2. Also, "Shepherd" had royal connotations in the ancient world. It denoted the rulers/leaders of a people. Kings were shepherds of their people. The kings of Israel were shepherds (Jer. 23:1-4), and David was as shepherd of sheep whom God made a shepherd of his people (Psalm 78:70-72).

3. The entire Psalm is an exposition of the first line: "I shall not want" or lack. The Psalm then tells us what the believer does not lack with God as his Shepherd. It does not mean "I don't lack for anything I ever desired," but "here is what the Lord has done for me so I do not really lack anything." The meaning is "so long as the Lord is my shepherd, I will not lack for anything I need."

4. The language of the Psalm reflects God's activity in Israel, and some of the language is reminiscent of "exodus" language (the language of God leading Israel through the wilderness into the Promised Land). For example, during the wilderness time Israel lacked nothing (Deut. 2:7), God lead Israel to holy pastures (Exodus 15:13), there is no fear because God is with them (Deut. 20:1; 31:8), God prepared a table for Israel in the wilderness (Ps. 78:19), and God dwelled among his people in the tabernacle during the wilderness.

5. The Psalm is a testimony to what God has done for his people (corporately and personally) and it is a testimony of God's caring presence among his people. The significance of "The Lord is my Shepherd" is that "I am with you."

6. The spiritual images in the Psalm include:

- a. spiritual nourishment (grass, water, "restores my soul")
- b. ethical guidance (paths of righteousness, "staff"=guidance)
- c. comforting presence (no fear, comforting staff)
- d. protection against evil ones ("rod"=club for defense, enemies)

e. festive celebration (table, oil, cup)

f. confident living (goodness and mercy will follow)

7. The key idea, if there is one, is what the Psalm begins and ends with as well as a summary point in the middle. The key idea is presence--it is a presence that does something, that acts. It comforts, nourishes, protects, celebrates with and blesses.

“The Lord is my Shepherd”

“You are with Me”

“I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

8. God as Shepherd is a model for his human shepherds, whether Israelite kings or church elders.

Discussion Questions

1. Who remembers the first time they learned this Psalm? What are your first memories of hearing this Psalm? What were the circumstances?

2. Why do you think this Psalm has captured the imagination of believers throughout the centuries? Why is it the most often read Psalm at funerals?

3. What images are most compelling and helpful to you in this Psalm? What in this Psalm speaks most directly to your heart and experience? How does that image reflect God's shepherding care?

4. How is this Psalm applied to Jesus as the shepherd? As a Christian reading this Psalm, what images are evoked about Jesus as shepherd?

5. Since God is the model shepherd for human shepherds, what qualities in this Psalm are most important for human shepherds, particularly shepherds of the church?

6. What might these qualities look like in a church which is led by elders? How should elders emulate the divine shepherd? If you could say to an elder, this Psalm means you should _____, how would you fill in the blank?

7. In the light of this Psalm, describe an elder's life in relationship to the church. What is the nature of his involvement with the flock and what are his responsibilities?

LESSON 3 - GOD AND HIS SHEPHERDS

Ezekiel 34:1-22

Teaching Moments

1. The shepherds of this text are the kings and officials that ruled Judah. God has removed them because of their inadequacies and will replace them ultimately with “one shepherd” (David; v. 24).
2. The text is fairly self-explanatory as it tells the story of God’s dissatisfaction with his shepherds, his removal them, and the fact that he will take their place himself. I think the significant point here, like last week, is that God expects his shepherds to follow his own model. He expects his shepherds to be like him.
3. This week we learn more about what God expects from his shepherds, and exactly what it means to be like God the Shepherd. God takes over the shepherding in vv. 11-16 and we see in detail what it means to be a godly shepherd.
4. Note the ways in which God’s shepherds failed him and their flock: selfish, consumed everything for themselves used the flock for their own advantage (eat curds, clothe themselves with wool, slaughter for food), mistreated the weak/sick/injured, did not care about strays. Indeed, “you ruled them harshly and brutally.” They mistreated their flocks for their own advantage. The shepherds did not lead their flocks, so the sheep scattered. The flock had no direction, no protection, and no guidance, no one who cared.
5. I think we should concentrate on this selfishness idea. It is in the text in v. 2 and in v.8—two book ends that surround the other details mentioned in point 4. These shepherds are in it for themselves rather than for their flock. Therefore, God will rescue the flock by holding the shepherds accountable.
6. This text stresses the accountability of the shepherds. They are responsible for their flock. If they consume them, use them, abuse them and do not care for them, God will judge them accordingly.
7. God offers the proper leadership in vv. 11-16. Here we see what a “good” shepherd does because we see what God does for his flock. God is the model for good shepherding.
8. What is the problem among the flock? The flock imitates their shepherds. Just as the shepherds are selfish and look after only themselves, so the flock does as well. God will judge between one sheep and another. While the flock must take responsibility for its own actions, the prior failure is among the shepherds who did not care for the weak, sick, etc. among the flock so that they were not abused. Thus, God will place a shepherd over them who will treat all with goodness and justice.

9. Most often, “church problems” are due to bad leadership and bad shepherding. Accountability starts at the top, and leadership must take responsibility for the care of all the flock and pay particular attention to the weak and sick among the flock. Yet, the flock must also take responsibility in how it treats each other.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the basic problem of “bad” shepherds (v. 2)? [They only take care of themselves!]
2. How is this basic problem reflected in vv. 2-3? What five different groups of sheep are mentioned in vv. 2-3? What were the shepherds doing for these sheep?
3. What happened to these sheep because the shepherds were not looking after them?
4. What will God himself do for the sheep (vv. 9-10)? [He will remove the shepherds, and he himself will take up the shepherding task.]
5. From God’s description of what he will do for the sheep, what do we learn is the function of a shepherd? [vvs. 11-16 describe what God will do, and notice the various things that are included in his task: searching for the lost, bringing back the strays, tending them, food, protection, justice, rescue from dangerous places. Notice how “good” is stressed—God does good for his flock.]
6. What does God’s speech to the flock say about how the flock behaves in relationship to God, each other and the shepherd? (vv. 17-22).
7. Why is God so harsh with his shepherds? What does this say about the responsibility of shepherds and the seriousness of their task?
8. In this description of the function of shepherds, what aspect of their task did you find most important in terms of your own experience with human shepherds (elders of the church)?
9. Why is God so harsh with his flock in vv. 20-22? What is the problem among the flock (vv. 17-22)?
10. What do you think a church should learn from this text about God’s expectations from his shepherds, the role of shepherds and the relationship between shepherds and the flock?

LESSON 5 - JESUS AS THE GOOD SHEPHERD

John 10:1-18

Teaching Moments

1. There is an interesting story in Lynn Anderson's *They Smell Like Sheep* about a group of shepherds who lead their flocks down into a valley and when they separate at the bottom the two flocks follow the appropriate shepherd. When the shepherd's call for the lost sheep, only the one's belonging to that shepherd hear the voice of the shepherd. The sheep know the difference. That story illuminates the background of this text.

2. The context here is the story of chapter 9 about the blind man. The implicit contrast is between the spiritual blindness of the Pharisees/Sanhedrin (and their supposed leadership) and the trusting faith of the blind man. Point: Jesus' sheep hear his voice but they do not listen to the strangers (Pharisees). Sheep know who loves them and cares for them as opposed to the stranger. Thus, sheep run from a stranger but follow their shepherd.

3. Notice the "parable" of verses 1-5 and the explanation of verses 7-18. Verse 6 is the transition verse: the disciples did not understand the point. The text naturally divides into two major sections: the parable and its explanation.

4. The parable contrasts one kind of shepherd with another...or contrasts the shepherd with the thief. It is the difference between caring and theft, between the familiar voice and the stranger. The sheep know their shepherd, trust their shepherd and know the difference between their shepherd and a stranger.

5. The explanation (verses 7-18) centers on two "I am" statements. I am the gate for the sheep and I am the good shepherd.

6. The gate metaphor does two things, I think. First, it contrasts the thief who does not enter by the gate (cf. 10:1). The thief comes over the fence, but the shepherd enters by the gate. The thieves come to steal and destroy, but the shepherd comes to care, feed—to give life. The gate, then, represents life. Second, the gate is the entrance into life and those who enter through the gate (Jesus) will be saved. Thieves destroy, but the shepherd gives life.

7. Verses 11-18 focus on the "I am the good shepherd." The key descriptive phrase (used four times) is that he lays down his life for the sheep. This reflects the self-sacrificing love that the shepherd has for the sheep. He values the sheep more than his own life, and this contrasts with the kind of care that "hired hands" give the flock. The shepherd really cares. He is present for the long-haul and puts himself on the line for the sheep.

8. The shepherd is also concerned about uniting flocks under one shepherd (v. 16). He has a goal of unity and caring for all sheep, not just the ones that he has the present.

Given the context of chapter 9, I think the “other sheep” refers to the Gentiles whom God will bring to himself and make them flock under one Shepherd.

9. The final word of this text is a promise about the resurrection. The shepherd will give his life for the sheep, but it will result in victory. This Shepherd has the power of life. In view of that power, he willingly lays down his life. It seems to me that human shepherds (elders) should also have that victory in their minds as they serve the flock with humility, sacrifice and care. Just as the good shepherd is willing to give up life for the sake of the flock in view of the victory, so the human shepherd is willing to sacrifice for the sake of the flock in view of the eternal nature of their work.

Group Discussion

1. How would you describe the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep in verses 1-5? How does the shepherd care for the sheep and how do the sheep respond to the shepherd?

2. How does this relate to the previous context about the healed blind man, the Pharisees and Jesus? Who is the stranger in vv. 1-5, who is the shepherd and who are the sheep? [I think the sheep are the house of Israel...thus, in v. 16 the “other sheep” refer the Gentiles.]

3. Why did not the disciples understand the point? What is so difficult about the parable? How do verses 7-18 illuminate the parable.

4. What is the point of the gate metaphor? What does it mean to say that Jesus is the gate?

5. When Jesus describes himself as the “good shepherd,” what does he say about his goodness? How is he the good shepherd? What does he do for the sheep?

6. How is the good shepherd contrasted with the hired shepherds? What is implicit in this contrast between “hired hands” and the “shepherd”? What does this say about the nature of shepherding?

7. How are shepherds of a church like “shepherds” rather than “hired hands”? What is the main value v. 13 teaches about how shepherds care for their sheep?

8. What is the significance of the Shepherd’s willingness to “lay down his life” for the sheep? What does this say about the sheep? What does it say about the values of the Shepherd?

9. In what ways would human shepherds (elders) “lay down their lives” for their flock (church)? What does that look like in a church?

10. What does Jesus mean by “other sheep” that are not of this pen? How does this reflect Jesus’ values as a shepherd? What is his goal with these “other sheep” and the sheep now has?

11. In what ways would human shepherds (elders) reflect this same goal for “other sheep”?

12. What do you think is the most important aspect of how a shepherd relates to and cares for his sheep? What does that look like practically in a church?

Lesson 6 - Servant Leadership

Mark 10:32-45

Teaching Moments

1. While many discuss this text beginning with 10:35, I think it is important to begin with verse 32 because it sets the context. This pericope begins and ends on the life-giving sacrifice of Jesus Christ. His leadership is defined by his sacrifice on the cross—it is the essence of his servanthood.
2. Verses 32-34 also demonstrate how “dense” the desire of James and John is. In the very moments that Jesus is discussing his eventual death in Jerusalem, these two are make a request that is totally opposite of what Jesus himself will demonstrate on the cross.
3. I don’t think we should demonize James and John. They were not necessarily motivated by evil or maliciousness. But they desired something—their goal was inappropriate because of the means by which they thought it would be achieved.
4. Jesus’ cup and baptism are his suffering. If you truly want to be great, then you must be servant, and being servant means you must sacrifice yourself for others, and this means you must suffer. Are the disciples willing to be a servant like Jesus?
5. The argument that broke out among the disciples revealed the heart of competition, zeal, self-worth and ambition. Jesus addresses these attitudes in his contrast between Gentiles and his followers.
6. Jesus uses some fairly strong language here: “lord it over” vs. “slave to all.” Leaders are to avoid one and practice the other. Jesus himself has modeled this in his own ministry and in his death. Jesus did not come to exercise authority, but to be a servant for all.
7. Further, Jesus did not see himself as a leader as the one to be served, but he saw his leadership as exercised in his servanthood. This is servant-leadership rather than power/position/status authority. It is unlike the Gentiles and like God himself whom Jesus reveals in his submission to the servanthood of the cross.

Discussion Questions

1. Would you say that James and John were motivated by evil desires? What would motivate James and John to ask for what they did? How could the one who loved Jesus so much and whom Jesus loved so much ask for this?
2. What did the disciples really want when they asked to sit at the right hand of Jesus? Was this a power grab? Was it special recognition or special power or approval?

3. What did Jesus mean when he said, “You don’t know what you are asking.”
4. What are the “cup” and “the baptism” and the “glory” as each applies to Jesus? What is Jesus referring to when he says, “Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?” How would this cup, baptism and glory apply to them?
5. What made the other disciples angry? What does this anger reveal about their hearts, desires and expectations? Does it say more about James/John than it does the disciples or vice versa?
6. How does Jesus use this anger to teach about the nature of leadership in the kingdom? What values did Jesus turn upside down when he answered this dispute among the disciples?
7. How does Jesus practice what he preaches? How is the death of Jesus the ultimate service for all? How does it demonstrate leadership?
8. Thinking about some past elders or leaders in your experience, what “great” things do you remember about them? How did they behave as servant-leaders in your church? What positive role models have you seen in your own life from leaders?
9. Why do we so often think about the relationship between elders and the congregation in terms of authority, power, and status instead of servanthood? What has existed in our culture and in our church heritage that has generated these notions? [Indeed, it is not absent from the early church either because Jesus had to address it with his own disciples.]
10. How do we model servant-leadership in our own ministries, and in our relationships with each other? What does this text call us to be and do?

LESSON 7 - JESUS AND HIS SHEPHERDS

1 Peter 5:1-4

Teaching Moments

1. Peter addresses elders here as an elder himself. Thus, he identifies himself with other leaders in the church and shares their responsibilities. He is one of them, not above them. He is called to the same standard to which they are called.

2. Peter also mentions the themes of suffering and glory which are prominent in 1 Peter. Glory follows suffering. Cf. 1 Peter 4:13. Christ first suffered, and then he was glorified. Elders will suffer with Christ, and then receive glory. This section begins and ends with the idea of glory, but also involves the idea of suffering. Just as elders will receive a crown of glory when Christ appears, they are also called to suffer (willing servants who are examples to the flock). Suffering comes first, then glory.

3. Three Greek terms come together here to describe the nature and function of “elders”.

a. “Elder” means older person. It probably refers to the fact that these leaders were older, respected leaders in the church rather than novices in the faith.

b. “Shepherd” is something we have studied previously. Elders are told to “pastor” God’s flock. This is the verb form of the noun in Ephesians 4:11: “pastors”. Elders are shepherds.

c. “Overseer” refers to the function of supervision and management. The object of their supervision is the flock—people. They are servants to people, care for people. The noun form of this verb is translated “bishop.”

4. Note the contrasts in the text:

a. “Compulsion or necessity” versus “willingness.” The contrast is between being forced into “eldering” or a willing servant. No one forced is a good servant. Willingness is necessary for service.

b. “Greed for money” versus “service”. What is the connection between “eldering” and “money”? It probably refers to the fact that congregations shared materially with their elders (“paid elders”) rather than the fact that they controlled the money or dictated monetary decisions. In other words, no one should become an elder out of covetousness for money or out of a desire to control the money.

c. “Lording it over” versus “example”. “Lording it over” is the same word that we noted last week in Mark 10:42ff. Elders do not dictate, they lead. They do not rule by fiat but by being out front as an example of service and ministry.

5. From a friend of mine, Terrell Lee: “The mutual submission and humility Peter commands throughout the epistle should be modeled by the elders before the church so that the whole church learns to show humility to one another. In this paragraph Peter goes back to admonishing specific individuals in the churches, just like he began in 2:13. The elders are the spiritual leaders and must make sure they do not go beyond their assigned role or function which is one of serving the flock and modeling the appropriate behavior of submission and humility. They must avoid turning a position of service into a position of power. They themselves are in submission to the Chief Shepherd.”

Discussion Questions

1. Think back to someone you respect as a church leader. What is one trait of this leader that stands out to you?
2. Does “oversee” have a negative or positive ring in our culture? Why? What do you think the emphasis of “oversee” is here in 1 Peter?
3. What is the contrast between necessity/compulsion and willingness? Why is this important? How do we balance the sense of duty (to become an elder because we have the gifts and opportunity) with the willingness (the sense of inferiority or lack of experience that hinders that willingness)? How can the church encourage willingness without backing people into the role?
4. What is the contrast between greed and service? Why does the subject of money arise in relation to elders? How does service contrast with greed? Why is Peter so concerned about “greed” in the context of advising elders?
5. What is the contrast between “lording it over” and “example”? How does this reflect different leadership styles? What is the leadership style of “example”? How are elders to model mutual submission and service rather than “lording it over”? What is “lording it over”?
6. Why are we sometimes more willing to be submissive to one person but not to another? What makes the difference?
7. Why is there a temptation to “lord it over” the people one leads?
8. [Here is a question from Terrell Lee]. What is a leadership style?
 - a. What is the difference between top-down and bottom-up leadership? (Top-down is the leaders’ calling the shots while bottom-up is the leaders being sensitive to the people.)
 - b. What is a pyramidal style of leadership? (The appointed leaders make all the decisions for the church.)

c. What is a participatory style of leadership? (The members share in the decision-making processes of the church. Cf. Acts 15:22 We will discuss this text further down the line in our Bible classes.)

d. Which leadership style do you believe is more in harmony with Mk. 10 and 1 Pet. 5—pyramidal or participatory?

9. In terms of decision-making in the church, what is your view of the role of elders? What does “oversee” mean here? What does “lord it over” mean here? What does “example” mean here?

LESSON 8 - PRIORITIES IN LEADERSHIP

Acts 6:1-7

Teaching Moments

1. This text reflects a couple of realities that we can often forget when we think about the "Jerusalem church". It is tempting to think about the "Jerusalem church" as the model congregation where problems did not exist. After all, they were new, guided by the apostles and they were all converts from Judaism. But problems did exist.
2. One problem concerned cultural diversity within the church. The Hellenistic Jewish felt their widows were neglected by the more dominant Hebraic Jewish church. The Hellenistic widows raised an issue of justice or fairness. This problem of fairness was exacerbated by the natural tensions that existed between Hellenistic and Hebraic Jews. So, in a church guided by the apostles, some felt they were mistreated, even mistreated by the apostles themselves (they came to the apostles to resolve the problem).
3. A second problem was the sense of burden felt by the apostles. Apparently, they had been involved in the distribution of money. In Acts 4:35 and 5:2, money was brought to the apostles. In some fashion, they shouldered the responsibility of this money. This gave rise to a second problem, that is, the apostles were diverted from their real ministry and mission. Taking care of widows is not secondary in the kingdom, but it is secondary to the mission of the apostles when others were available to complete the task.
4. The apostles prioritized their ministry. Their focus is on the ministry of prayer and word. Administration of benevolent distribution was not their primary mission. Rather, it is given to others. The apostles did not distribute the money, but it was given to others to make those decisions. Financial decisions were not the primary responsibility of the apostles.
5. The qualifications of these men are critical. They are men "from among" the church and filled with the Spirit and wisdom (note the further description in Acts 6:5--full of faith and of the Holy Spirit).
6. Notice that even with the apostles guiding the church, this was a "whole church" decision. They call together "all" the disciples and then the "whole group" chose seven men to fulfill these administrative duties.
7. The nature of the decision was to place the matter into the hands of Hellenistic Jews. All the names in verse 5 are Greek rather than Hebraic names. The church decided to put the decision-making power into the hands of those who felt unjustly treated. This displays tremendous confidence in the integrity of these men and it places gentle pressure on them to treat everyone fairly (rather than take revenge on the Hebraic widows).

8. What is the application to elders? There is no record of elders in the church at this point in Jerusalem. However, I think it is safe to assume that the apostles were functioning as the elders of the Jerusalem church or they were shepherding the Jerusalem church. They are certainly the "authority" figures. Nevertheless, they do not want to be distracted by financial decisions or administrative ministries. They know their focus.

9. I think elders need to know their focus. I think they should devote themselves to the ministry of prayer and word and devote themselves to the flock rather than spend their energies in financial decisions. Our shepherds need to understand their focus and maintain it.

Group Discussion

1. In such a pristine church where everyone's needs are met, how could the widows be neglected? What does this reveal about the internal dimensions of this church? How do their problems mirror our own?

2. How would pre-existing tensions between Hebraic and Hellenistic Jews give rise to problems in the church? What pre-existing tensions can cause problems in contemporary churches, even in the Cordova church?

3. What tension did the apostles feel in this dispute? Do the apostles devalue the ministry to widows by insisting on their priority in prayer and word? What is the nature of the contrast between ministry to widows and the ministry of the Word? How does that look today?

4. What procedure did the apostles use to resolve this problem? What principles do you see in this text for the resolution of church conflicts? What principles are here for the selection of leaders?

5. Why would the church choose Greek speaking Jews to fill all seven slots? What does this say about the maturity of the church and the maturity of those chosen to complete the task?

6. Do you think it is legitimate to parallel the role of apostles with elders here, given that there were no elders in the Jerusalem church according to the text at this point? Why or why not?

7. If the parallel is legitimate (I think it is also legitimate for comparing evangelists as well), then what does this text teach us in principle about elders? What is the focus of "eldering"?

8. What is the traditional relationship between elders and "money"? Do you see any principles in this text that might apply to that traditional understanding? Why is money always a "flashpoint" in churches? It was a problem then, and it is a problem now. How

might our elders insulate themselves from the conflicts that arise around money, greed and power? Is the apostolic model here an example to them?

Lesson 9 - Giving Elders Perspective **Acts 20:25-35**

Teaching Moments

1. Acts 20:17-35 is Paul's farewell speech to the Ephesians elders. Paul met the "elders of the church" at Miletus and said his "goodbye". He did not expect to see them again due to the hostility he would experience in Jerusalem.
2. In the first section of our text (verses 25-27) Paul summarizes his ministry as an evangelist among the Ephesians. It is characterized as a "preaching [hearing] of the kingdom" [the reign of God]; it is an proclaiming [announcing] of the whole counsel of God to the Ephesian church. Paul has been faithful to his responsibilities as a proclaimer and thus is free from the blood-guilt of his associates ("all men"). Paul summarized this ministry in Acts 20:20 as "proclaiming and teaching publicly and house to house."
3. However, in verses 28-31, Paul addresses the responsibilities of the elders in relation to the church at Ephesus. The first imperative is to "take heed, keep watch" over two groups: (a) themselves (elders to watch after each other) and (b) the flock (church). Elders are not immune to apostasy and acting like wolves among their own flock. They are to watch over the flock to protect them from wolves--those who would destroy the flock.
4. As we see, elders are to watch out for wolves as good shepherds. The wolves here are particularly people who will arise out of the elders themselves and they will "distort the truth" for the sake of their own following. We do not know the content of "distort the truth" but we see the motive clearly. It is motivated by a desire for "disciples"--people who will follow them rather than the Lord. They are more concerned about themselves than they are the flock. Paul warned them about this prospect even while he was with them the whole three years (20:31).
5. Again, in this text, like in 1 Peter 5:1-4, we have three key descriptions of these leaders: elders (20:17), bishops or overseers (20:28) and shepherds (20:28). These leaders are presbyters (elders), bishops (overseers) and pastors (shepherds).
6. There is an interesting phrase here in Acts 20:28. The Holy Spirit makes overseers. This is a debated expression as to its exact meaning. There are several options. (1) The Holy Spirit directly appointed these leaders by some prophetic vision or voice. (2) The Holy Spirit led the church to select these leaders. (3) The Holy Spirit through the apostle appointed these leaders. I am inclined to #2 and it assumes that God is at work in a community to raise up leaders through his Holy Spirit, much like he did in the Old Testament. But just because these leaders are selected by the Holy Spirit through the community does not mean they are permanently sanctioned. Rather, even some shepherds selected by the Holy Spirit can become wolves. Even one of those whom Jesus selected was of Satan (that is, Judas). Yet, this points to the confidence that a community can have in a collective decision, under the Word of God and out of love, to

trust its decision and trust that God will use it to his glory. Thus, when a church selects its leaders in harmony with the Word of God and out of sincere desire to glorify the Father, we may say that the Holy Spirit led the community to select these leaders.

7. The third section of our text (20:32-35) may speak broadly to the church, but I think is still mainly focused on the leadership. What does Paul want the leadership to learn from his example? Leaders should not covet money, but rather should support the weak. It speaks to the kind of orientation leaders should have. They are to be givers rather than receivers; and they are to take joy in their giving, as the saying of Jesus reminds us.

8. Paul "commends" or "commits" them to God and his grace (20:32). Paul warns them, but also seeks protection from the danger through God's grace. Thus, he prays for them (20:36) as well as teaching them.

Group Discussion

1. After reading 20:18-21 and 25-27, how does Paul describe his evangelistic ministry within the Ephesian church? What are some of the key words and phrases?
2. How would you paraphrase Paul's summary of the gospel (20:21) to explain the faith to someone?
3. Why does Paul emphasize how he lived among them? How does he emphasize this as well to the elders in 20:33-35?
4. What does "keep watch" mean? What are the two things they are to watch out for in verses 29-30?
5. How does the divine appointment as elders highlight the seriousness of their responsibility?
6. How does Paul fight against the danger of some viewing the eldership as a way of gaining power and wealth?
7. Why does Paul end his discussion on "money" and "giving"? What is it about elders that makes this an appropriate concern or issue? How does Paul address the problem with these words?
8. What would you say are the primary responsibilities of shepherds in this text?
9. Suppose you had the Cordova elders in front of you today--what charge would you give them based on this text and appropriate for our context? How would you complete this sentence...."Watch out for _____" and "Pay attention to _____" [Paul filled in the blanks as "wolves" and "the weak".]

10. To what aspect of the function of elders do the following words apply? (1) elders [older men]. (2) pastors (shepherds). (3) bishops (overseers). How are each of these terms used to illustrate the function of these leaders?

LESSON 10 - GENDER AND LEADERSHIP

1 TIMOTHY 2:1-2, 8-15

Teaching Moments

1. 1 Timothy is an epistle that is concerned about leadership issues. The primary reason for this concern is the presence of false teaching and incessant quarrels in the Ephesian church. The epistle has two bookends (beginning and end) and the topic in both is "false teaching" (1 Tim. 1:3-11 and 6:3-10).

2. In this context of dangerous false teaching and quarrelling, Paul is concerned about appropriate leadership. He addresses (1) gender issues in 1 Tim. 2:8-15; (2) elders/deacons in 1 Tim. 3:1-13; (3) evangelists -- instructions to Timothy himself -- in 1 Tim. 4:6-16; (4) instructions to widows who serve the church and about which widows should be permitted to function that way in 1 Tim. 5:3-16; and (5) the relationship of elders and evangelists in 1 Tim. 5:17-22. Leadership serves an important function in providing unity for the church and guiding it in appropriate directions.

3. The specific context of 1 Timothy 2 is prayer and worship. The first half of chapter 2 is about prayer (2:1-7) and the second half is about gender relationships in the context of worship. While it is uncertain whether this text is primarily concerned about corporate worship, I think it is best to understand it in this manner. It appears to involve (1) a mixed assembly; (2) prayer and teaching are involved; and (3) public issues of dress and quarreling.

4. Specifically, I think the context of 2:8-15 is the worship of the assembled church. Apparently, quarreling was part of these assemblies, women were dressing ostentatiously and there was some problem related as to who does the teaching.

5. Verses 8-10 are contextualized by prayer and worship. Men must not quarrel and women must dress modestly. In the prayer meeting, there was a tendency for men to fight and women to overdress. Paul says neither is appropriate for the assembly of believers.

6. I don't think 2:8 means the only men should pray any more than verse 9-10 means that only women should dress modestly. [Paul does not object to women praying, as we saw in 1 Corinthians 11 in a previous study.] Paul addresses the men and women in the way he does because that is the problem that the Ephesian church faces. Women should not quarrel when they pray and men should not dress immodestly, but in Ephesus the problem with the men was quarreling and the problem with the women was ostentatious dress.

7. The crux of the text is the meaning of 2:11-12. Clearly this text calls for submissiveness on the part of women. She is to have a quiet demeanor in the context of the assembled church. The word "silent" here does not mean "absence of sound" but to an attitude of demeanor. The same word is used in 1 Timothy 2:2 in reference to "quiet

lives." This text does not forbid women from talking, but it does call upon them to be submissive in this context.

8. The problem line is the prohibition of women "teaching and having authority over men" in 1 Tim. 2:12. What does this mean? We must be careful not to define "teaching" in our context and then import that meaning back into the text. Women teach through the songs they write and we sing. Women teach through books and articles and we read them. Mothers still teach their adult sons in many ways. Women teach through singing. So the question is "what kind of teaching does Paul prohibit here?"

9. "Teaching" must be defined in the context of 1 Timothy. What does Paul mean by "teaching" in this epistle? If we can define that, then we know what Paul is prohibiting for women. Some in Ephesus wanted to be "teachers of the law" (1 Tim. 1:7), Paul says he is a "teacher of the true faith" (1 Tim. 2:7), elders are to be able to teach (1 Tim. 3:2), Timothy as an evangelist is to teach (1 Tim. 4:13), elders who teach and direct the church are worthy of double honor (1 Tim. 5:17), and Timothy is told to "teach" the truths of this epistle (1 Tim. 6:2). It is important to note who is not told to "teach"--deacons and widows are not told to do so. Elders and evangelists are told to teach. I think Paul's prohibition against teaching by women is the kind of teaching that elders and evangelists do in directing the church and shaping the vision of the church. This is the kind of authority they are not to assume.

10. Why are women not to assume this kind of function in the church? Paul roots his prohibition in the order of creation (1 Tim. 2:13-14). This the same reasoning he used in 1 Cor. 11:7-9 where he teaches that man is the "head" of woman just as God is the "head" of Christ. Just as the husband is the head of the family, so God has entrusted "headship" functions in the church to men. Thus, women are prohibited from functioning as teachers and leaders in ways that assume the "headship" function of the church.

11. I think this is the point of 1 Timothy 2:15. Paul directs women away from "headship" functions in the church to the ministry of the home, just as he did the younger widows in 1 Timothy 5:11ff. The contrast between 1 Timothy 2:11-12 and 2:15 is the contrast between the church and the home. Women should not assume headship functions in the church (such as "teaching"), but rather they should find their primary responsibility in the home. This does not exclude women from performing functions and ministries outside of the home, but it does prioritize their responsibilities and it excludes them from certain kinds of functions within the church ("teaching and having authority").

Group Discussion Questions

This may be a difficult text to discuss since it is possible to go in so many different directions with this one. Use your best judgment, but try to keep focused on the meaning of this particular text. We do not want to engage a discussion of various scenarios, but we are simply attempting to understand Paul's meaning in this text. What is Paul prohibiting? I think he is fundamentally prohibiting women from assuming the functions of elders and evangelists (in the sense that Timothy was an evangelist; cf. 2 Tim. 4:6).

1. Why is this such a "hot" topic today? Why does this particular text "scandalize" many people in our culture? Why do many find it inherently objectionable?

2. What is Paul's rationale for his prohibition in 1 Timothy 2:11-12? What reason does he give in 1 Timothy 2:13? What is the connection between the prohibition and the reason? [I think the connection is that God created Adam as the head of his family and one in whom God invested headship functions, and this applies to the church as the family of God.]

3. Do you think Paul prohibits women from praying in the assembly, according to this text? What are the options in the light of 1 Timothy 2:8-10?

4. What kind of dress does Paul prohibit here? [It is interesting that the only place where Paul discusses the modesty of dress he is concerned about overdressing not underdressing.]

5. In what ways do women "teach" men that we do not find objectionable or have been traditionally received in the church?

6. What does Paul mean by "teach" here? Where does he use "teach" elsewhere in 1 Timothy? [Read some of the texts listed above in question #9.] What sense do you get from reading the usages of "teaching" in these texts? What do you think is the context of this "teaching"?

7. If this prohibition in 1 Timothy 2:12 is primarily about prohibiting women from the role of elders and evangelists, what areas of teaching does that open up for women and what areas does that prohibit? Since our situation is not exactly like the first century ["bible classes", "group leaders," "committee chairpersons," etc.], how do we assess what is appropriate and what is inappropriate for women in a church? [I would use "headship" functions (taking on the "overseeing" function of elders and the responsibility for the teaching of the church) as the principle of discrimination. As long as women are not functioning as elders or evangelists, then I believe it is permitted and should be encouraged where the gifts are present.] What does that look like in the Cordova Community Church?

8. If you feel comfortable you might offer this analogy [or I may introduce and then you can discuss it in group]: We might parallel the problem here with the issue of modesty. There are some things that we believe are clearly forbidden in terms of modesty (e.g., nudity for the purpose of sexual arousal) and there are some things we believe are clearly permissible (e.g., showing ankles in a dress). However, there are some gray areas in-between that are matters of judgment and where culture would have a significant impact. I think this gender discussion is similar. There are some things which I believe are clearly wrong (e.g., women serving as elders) and some things are clearly permissible (e.g., women serving on ministry committees or women teaching through singing). However, there are some gray areas in-between that are matters of judgment and where

culture would have a significant impact (e.g., women passing the communion trays, or women directing a women's ministry, or women facilitating a group discussion). What do you think about these gray areas?

9. You probably won't have time for this one, but if you run out of things to discuss (which I doubt), you might want to raise this discussion (which will not end, I assure you): what is the contrast between 1 Timothy 2:11-12 and 2:15? What is the difference between the function of women in church and their function in the home? Does this text limit women to only serving in the home? Does it prohibit them from working outside of the home?

LESSON 11 - RESPECTING LEADERS

1 Thessalonians 5:12-15

Teaching Moments

1. Chapter 5:12 begins a series of general exhortation. It is an exhortation to the whole church with 5:12-13 regarding a particular set of leaders and 5:14-15 more generally the inter-congregational relations within the church (mutuality). Notice how the beginnings of verses 12 and 14 are similar. The structure indicates that they are addressing the same group but about two different items. The first regarding leaders, and the second regarding mutual relationships within the church.

2. It is unfortunate that Paul does not specifically identify the group he is talking about in verse 12. It would have erased all doubt if he had just said "elders" or "evangelists" or something like that. But, alas, he does not. Let's first try to understand what the text calls for and then perhaps we can identify the group about which he is speaking.

3. There are three participles in verse 12, all governed by a single article: "the ones [plural] who labor...rule...admonish..." The singular article seems to indicate that Paul is thinking about a particular, identifiable group. We can at least say, "leaders," in the church. Each of these verbs identify a function for this group.

a. They "work hard" or labor which indicates a strenuous effort to the point of weariness. It is not a passive activity, but one that engages the energies of the leader.

b. They "rule" or "are over you" is a more difficult verb. It may indicate either the exercise of leadership or direction (as in 1 Tim. 3:4,5,12; 5:17) or of care and assistance (as in Romans 12:8; 16:2). I don't think they are simply financial patrons because they also "work hard among you" and "admonish". Consequently, it is probably the function of direction, even "ruling." It has the ideas of leading, caring for, and protecting. "In the Lord" reflects a kind of spiritual authority invested in these leaders.

c. They "admonish" which includes the idea of instruction in correct behavior and belief. This reflects a teaching role in the body.

4. Who are these people? Elders, evangelists, both? One function is certainly used to describe the function of elders in 1 Timothy 5:17 (rules well). I think we can understand this text to refer to elders at the very least. But perhaps they are not called "elders" here because Paul has something more in mind as well, perhaps inclusive of evangelists or his own fellow-workers. I think we can say that this at least includes elders. We will study evangelists at another point in our study.

5. What is the congregation's responsibility toward them. Two things are identified. In Greek it is one sentence. We are to respect and esteem leaders in love for their work's sake. This recognition and esteem should result in "peace" within the church. There is the potential for conflict between leaders and followers, but peace goal.

a. To "know" (recognize or respect) the leaders. Perhaps it is best to think in terms of recognizing their responsibilities and gifts. This reflects a relationship with the leaders. Thus, the text says to know "those who labor among you"--it is not an absentee leadership.

b. To "hold them in highest respect in love" involves the use of an emphatic term. These are leaders are to be held in the highest esteem or the highest possible regard.

c. "Their work" in v. 13 is identified by the verbs in v. 12. The church must recognize and esteem these leaders because of the nature of their work. Their function is important for the body and the body must recognize them. It is not their power that evokes this response, but their work.

6. Verses 14-15 address how the congregation treats each other. Notice that one of the things we are to do for each other is also one of the functions of the leaders: to warn or admonish. The verb "warn" in verse 14 is the same as the verb in verse 12 for "admonish." The leaders do not have an exclusive function, but a leading function. The church is to have a mutual concern for each other's spiritual health, particularly in this context for those who are idle. The idle or undisciplined are the willfully irresponsible who neglect their responsibilities.

7. The list of mutual responsibilities is to the point: (1) warn the idle; (2) encourage the timid [the discouraged, the beaten down, the fainthearted]; (3) help the weak [spiritually, physically or financially]; (4) be patient [restrain from anger...suffer long with a person] with everyone.

8. Verse 15 speaks to a particular problem in this community; or a potentially volatile one given the situation of the Thessalonian church. Retribution was a temptation in a persecuted church, toward each other perhaps, but probably primarily for those outside...the persecutors. Be kind to everyone, not just to each other. We do not seek vengeance; God will pay back in his own time (cf. 2 Thess. 1:6-10).

Discussion Questions

1. In verse 12, what are the functions of this group of leaders in the church?

a. What do you think is the practical meaning of "work hard" here? What images does that conjure up in your mind?

b. What does it mean to say that these group of leaders is "among you"? What is the significance of saying "among you."?

c. What is the practical meaning of "who are over you in the Lord"? What image does that conjure up in your mind? Some translations say "rule". What does that mean?

d. What is the significance of saying "in the Lord" in this connection? Does this imply some kind of spiritual authority or a particular sphere in which these leaders care for the church?

e. What is the practical meaning of "admonish"? What kinds of settings or contexts does Paul perhaps have in mind? How would you see a group of leaders "admonishing" a church?

f. How do our preconceived notions of what an eldership does or doesn't do affect the way we understand the meaning of these terms?

2. In verses 12 and 13, what are the responsibilities of the church regarding these leaders?

a. Literally verse 13 tells us to "know" our leaders. Some translate "respect". What do you think the significance of this is?

b. How does a congregation come to "know" their leaders? What kind of relationship is this describing?

c. What is the practical meaning of "hold in high esteem or regard"? What does that look like in a local congregation?

d. Why the exhortation to peace? How can that be a problem in leadership/membership relationships?

3. In verses 14-15, what is the responsibility of the membership to each other?

a. Can anyone give an example of where they have seen any one of these particular instructions at work in a church? [for example, where the church helped the weak, or where a person who was depressed was encouraged, etc.].

b. What do these verses communicate about the nature of Christian community?

c. What attitudes underlie Paul's instructions here? What impressions of the Christian life do these commands give you?

d. How can we encourage these attitudes in the Cordova Community Church? What practical things can we do to shape this community into the kind of one that Paul expects here?

4. What would you say to the members of the church about Cordova's leaders? What exhortation would you give the flock about their relationship to the elders in the light of what Paul says here? Give a contemporary exhortation for this church.

5. What would you say to the members of Cordova church about their relationship with each other? What exhortation would you give the flock about their mutual relationships in the light of what Paul says here? Give a contemporary exhortation for this church.

Lesson 12 - Qualities of Leadership I

1 Timothy 3:1-7

Teaching Moments

1. The text has five main divisions. (a) Introduction (3:1); (b) character traits (3:2-3); (c) family (3:4-5); (d) church relationship (3:6); and (e) community relationship (3:7). In summary, we might say that whoever wants to be a bishop (overseer) must have a Christian character, good family life, mature spirituality, and good reputation.

2. Introduction. Paul commends the ambition to be an elder/bishop. It is not a character flaw to want to be an elder. It would be a character flaw to want to be an elder for monetary or power purposes--bad motives. But one who wants to be an elder is commended for his desire because of the nature of the work. It is a “noble” (praiseworthy, excellent) task (literally, work) and important for the spiritual health of the Christian community. The significance of this ambition is underscored by the highlighting of this sentence with the phrase “Here is a trustworthy saying”. This phrase occurs elsewhere in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus to emphasize a point (1 Timothy 1:15; 4:9-10; 2 Timothy 2:11; Titus 3:8). In other words, it is important for the church to have elders/bishops. Mature leadership is necessary for a healthy church. Elders need to understand that the task they take up is an honorable and praiseworthy task which is worthy of the total sacrifice of their lives and deserves respect from the congregation.

3. Christian Character.

a. above reproach -- unassailable, uncensored, good/spiritual reputation

b. the husband of but one wife -- often debated. Literally, “one-woman man”, that is, faithful to one woman. It does not mean “married only once,” but married to one at a time. The same words are used to describe church-supported widows in 1 Timothy 5:9. Paul does not mean married only once because he encourages younger widows to marry (1 Timothy 5:14). Once these younger widows are older and become widows again, would they be excluded from church support? I don’t think so. Consequently, the statement is not being married only once, but about faithfulness in family relationships to one’s present wife. The character question is whether this man is faithful to his wife and above reproach in his other relationships with females.

c. temperate -- literally, “wine-less” which means sobriety in life; freedom from excesses, clear-mindedness, a stable person.

d. self-controlled -- prudent, sensible, balanced; has his emotions under control; no tantrums.

e. respectable -- orderly, disciplined, honorable in terms of lifestyle

f. hospitable -- displays generosity, a friend of strangers; willingness to share; providing for strangers.

g. able to teach -- knowledge, readiness and communicator; teaching is a responsibility of the elder and giftedness is important here (though we should not think that every must have an equal measure of this gift, nor that this gift must be primarily concerned with the public teaching of the church, though that is an important aspect). More about this in Titus 1:9 a couple of weeks.

h. not given too much wine -- brawler, overindulgent in wine, addicted or preoccupied with it. I don't think this is a prohibition against drinking wine, but rather the abuse of wine (or any other chemical, I might add) which was a particular danger then (as now).

i. not violent but gentle -- this contrast goes together. This person is not a "fighter" or "striker"; neither quick-tempered nor easily inflamed so as to result in violence. Rather, he is forbearing, gracious and conciliatory. He is easy to get along with.

j. not quarrelsome -- a peaceable man; uncontentious; stays away from strife and quarreling.

k. not a lover of money -- prohibition against materialism and the motive of money as a reason for being elder (as some elders were paid).

4. Family Relationships. However a person treats his family is how he will treat the church. Managing a church is more like managing a family than it is managing a business or government. The former is more indicative of the kind of leadership that is important rather the latter. His children say more about a man than his wealth or success. There is no requirement in this text that the children be Christians (we will discuss that possibility in Titus), but it is required that they be submissive and respectful in every way. Does he have obedient children within the family life? That is an important question.

5. Church Relationship. Maturity requires time and experience. Shepherding a church requires maturity. Consequently, the elder cannot be a new convert. For a young Christian the temptation of pride is tremendous, and this is the danger of a new convert becoming an elder. He could become conceited because he does not have the maturity to know his own heart and understand his own motives. Pride was the Devil's problem, even as an angel. A wonderful new convert can be destroyed by the pride that arises within him if he is selected as an elder by the church.

6. Community Relationship. A church can be disgraced by its leaders. Does the man have a good reputation in the community? Does he pay his bills? Is he honest in business? Is he respected in the community? The real test of character is not on Sunday, but Monday through Saturday. If the community leader does not model Christian light in the world's darkness, when the darkness will never see the light and the church will not have a model (example) of light in darkness from its leaders. Satan attacks leaders

because he can bring down the whole community through the leaders. It is important for the leader to have a good reputation in the community in order to protect him against Satan's attacks.

Questions for Discussion

1. What is the difference between an ethics of "doing" and an ethics of "being"? ["Doing" refers to acts and deeds and assesses character by a list of accomplishments; but "being" refers to one's orientation in life, their direction, their goal and assesses character by a mode of existence, a mode of living, and general approach to life.] Which does Paul emphasize in Timothy? What characteristics refer to "being" and which to "doing"?
2. Assess the relative importance of this list as a whole. Given the current situation of the Cordova Community Church and the knowledge that Timothy is functioning as a located evangelist in Ephesus (2 Timothy 4:5), what do you find especially significant for Cordova in this text? Why?
3. Can you describe a person in your experience that reflects these qualities? Who in your past history of Christian friends and acquaintances would fit this description? What about this person makes you think this way? [Looking for concrete examples of such a person as described by Paul here. Do they exist? Where have you seen one?]
4. Is there a danger that we press the qualifications legalistically? What does that mean? Does it mean that we should not seek perfection in each of these areas, but does it also mean we should expect some maturity in each of these areas?
5. What kind of behavior should disqualify a person from being an elder based on what Paul offers Timothy here? Give concrete examples.
6. What in these qualifications is distinctly Christian in contrast to the culture? What in these qualifications is required of elders but not of all Christians?
7. What are the dangers of a "new convert" becoming an elder?
8. What in this text indicates the function of elders in a local church? How do the qualifications point us to the function of elders?
9. Do you tend to think of people who "seek" the office of elder in a negative way? Do we fear those people? Why? How can we encourage people to "seek" the office? Don't we want our children to grow up "seeking" the office?
10. Why is the "home life" of the potential so important? What does it reveal about the person?

Lesson 13 - Following Leaders **Hebrews 13:7-8, 17, 24**

Teaching Moments

1. The present text refers to past leaders (13:7) and present leaders (13:17,24). It calls upon the church to (a) remember; (b) obey; and (c) greet their leaders. But who are these leaders? Are they elders, and only elders? Does it include “evangelists”? What kind of authority does this text envision? There are several significant questions about this text.

2. Who are these leaders? I will reserve my answer until after I have commented on each verse. We may be able to identify these leaders by the functions which are attributed to them and the respect accorded to them. The word “lead” is a general one that is used in many ways in the OT and NT, and used in reference different kinds of leaders. It is used of the heads of tribes (Deut. 5:23), commander of an army (Judges 11:11), ruler of Israel (2 Samuel 5:2), superintendent of the treasury (1 Chr. 26:24) and chief priest (2 Chr. 19:11). Jesus uses it in Luke 22:26. So the word does not identify “elders” or “evangelists” or any particular “office.” It simply means “leaders.” We must identify more specifically by what is said about them, if we can. But it may say “leaders” because the writer does not want to specify any particular “office” but it is a way of referring to the leadership team of a church (whatever that may include).

3. Verses 7-8. The first instruction is to “remember” past leaders. These people originally “spoke the word of God” to us and we saw their life of faith. Therefore, imitate them. Leaders should be people we can imitate. They lead by example, and their example has a powerful influence on our memory. We can shape/model our life through remembering their life. Their faith and perseverance provides a model (much like the “heroes of faith” in Hebrews 11). When the leaders imitate Jesus, then their model is something that has enduring value because Jesus himself has enduring value. The character of faith does not change, just as Jesus himself does not change.

4. Verse 17: Imperatives. This text contains two imperatives: (1) obey and (2) submit. These two verbs have overlapping meaning so that they are both used in an emphatic one. The writer did not want simply to say “obey”, but he emphasizes the point by using a synonym (“submit”). The church is to yield, defer or give way to the leadership. The NIV has the word “authority” but it is not in the original text. But the idea is there by virtue of the imperatives.

5. Verse 17: Accountability. The reason the congregation should yield and defer to the leaders is because they have responsibility for the “souls” (NIV says “you”) of the church. They are responsible and they will give account for the life of the church and the spiritual health of the people. This is the idea of “stewardship”--managerial care for which a group of people are accountable. “Keep watch” is the idea of vigilance, tireless effort and care. It is applied to city-watchers who protect a city from enemies, but also to shepherds who watch a flock. These leaders are spiritual watchmen. Leaders need a

deep sense of accountability in order to take their task with sufficient gravity and pursue it conscientiously.

6. Verse 17: Rationale. Obedience and submission will enable the work of the leaders to be a joy rather than a burden (grief, sighing, groaning). Many do not want to be leaders because followers will not follow and they will not yield/submit. Leadership becomes a struggle, a fight and never-ending battle. Where there is this tension, then leadership either becomes manipulative, overbearing and demanding or it becomes weak, lacking vision and energy. In addition to warping the leadership, it does practically irreparable spiritual harm to the church.

7. The imperative to submit and obey does not sound right in our culture. We do not like any assertion of authority. And this text has often been abused by an overbearing leadership that wants its own way to the harm of the church. But there is a real sense in which we can speak of “spiritual authority.” Yet, this is not derived from power and position, but from the task of leading itself. It is rooted in the nature of the work and the task, and it must arise out of a genuine love of the leadership for the church.

8. Verse 24. Note a distinction is made between “leaders” and the “people” (church). God has set leaders among his people to whom the people should be deferential and submissive. And the imperative here is “greet” which reflects the loving, cordial and healthy relationship that exists within the church.

9. Who are these leaders? Many would understand them to refer to “elders”. The idea of “keeping watch” is certainly reflective of the task of elders. But is it restricted to “elders.” Verse 7 seems to point back more to evangelists or the original church planters. This probably includes those mentioned in Hebrews 2:1-4, but also other leaders as well throughout the history of this church. If this is written to Jerusalem, then this church has had a 30 year history. If it is written to Rome (cf. 13:24, “from Italy”), then this church has probably had a 15-20 year history. Either way, the original leaders probably do not refer primarily to elders, but to evangelists or house church leaders. Consequently, I don’t think the preacher here has in mind simply “elders” to the exclusion of all other leaders. Rather, given the functions of these leaders, I think he has in mind church planters, evangelists and elders as leaders of a particular congregation. It would have been nice if he had specified, but, alas, he did not. So we are left to our best judgment. My best judgment is that “leaders” refers to a broad class of teachers/equippers (including apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastors, as in Ephesians 4:11) as they relate to the planting, growth and stabilizing of a particular congregation.

Discussion Questions

1. Who is a past leader that you “remember”? What do you remember about him? In what ways do you want to imitate him?
2. What does it mean to “consider the outcome of their way”? Outcome of what? What is the meaning of “their way”?

3. What is the relationship between verse 8 and verse 7? Why make this comment on Jesus in this context?
4. What does the current culture reject the attitudes of “obey” and “submit”? What are the negative overtones of that language?
5. How can we avoid some of those negative connotations in verse 17 without sucking out all the weight of the imperatives there? What does it mean “to obey” and “submit” to leaders?
6. Is there a legitimate sense in which leaders should “submit” and “obey” the congregation? What is the nature of this mutual submission?
7. Why should the congregation obey its leaders? What is the rationale? What is the goal?
8. In what sense do leaders have “accountability” for the souls within the congregation? What does this accountability mean? What does it entail?
9. So, who controls a church? Is that a legitimate question? Who makes the decisions? How are decisions to be made? Can a leadership decide without dictating to a church? Can it lead without making decisions?
10. Who are these “leaders?” Does it refer only to elders, or does it include others? Why would you think so?

Lesson 14 - Qualities of Leadership II

Titus 1:5-9

Teaching Moments

You will notice that qualities of leadership in Titus are not exactly the same as in 1 Timothy. For example, Titus does not prohibit a “new convert” from taking the role of elder. Paul tailored the qualities to the needs of the two churches he is addressing. With newly planted churches in Crete, all the converts were “new” there so the requirement was not appropriate, but in Ephesus (where Timothy was) it was appropriate since the church had been established there for about a decade. These qualifications, then, are tailored to the needs of the church and the culture in which the church was set. There is common ground between them and they are essentially one, but the emphases are different because of the different contexts. It is their character and faithfulness to the word that is important in both contexts.

1. This text may be divided into five parts: (a) Introduction to Titus (1:5); (b) Positive Requirements (1:6); (c) Negative Requirements (1:7); (d) Positive Requirements (1:8); and (e) Task (1:9).
2. Paul does not offer Titus any praise. In fact, he appears to rebuke him because he was not doing the two jobs Paul left in Crete to do. He was to (1) shape the community with teaching that they had lacked and (2) appoint elders. Paul takes up the elder task in this chapter, but takes up the teaching task in chapter 2. Titus is expected to establish elders in these new-planted churches in Crete, just as Paul had done in Acts 14:23 after his first missionary journey in Galatia. Thus, in this text we have a record of an apostolic directive to appoint certain kinds of men to the eldership. “Appoint” here is a semi-technical term which usually means to appoint to an office. It is certainly used to mean here that these men are appointed to a role and task that is not shared by everyone in the community. These are the leaders of the community along with Titus himself.
3. The Positive Requirements (1:6). “Blameless” is used twice (1:6 and 1:7). Each time it is used to introduce a cluster of qualities. Here “blameless” describes his family relationships. His family life must be “without accusation” or “blameless” (a slightly different word is used in 1 Timothy 3:2) so that his conduct has not been called into question. He mentions his wife and children.
 - a. “the husband of but one wife”--this is the same phrase used in 1 Timothy 3:2. See the comments on that phrase in the January 17 lesson.
 - b. “a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient”--this is an ambiguous statement in Greek though the NIV tries to make it clearly teaching one idea. The word “believe” in Greek is literally “having faith” which may mean (a) “those who believe,” that is, Christians, or (b) “faithful,” that is, obedient children. Which is it? Christians have debated this one for years. I am inclined to “obedient” because the modifying phrase stresses this point (these children are not wild

[debauchery] or rebellious) and because there is no requirement for Christian children in 1 Timothy 3. Neither of those considerations are definitive, but they are suggestive to me. I believe one can be appointed an elder who does not have baptized children and still be faithful to this text as long as those children are respectful and obedient to their father. However, if there is not a consensus on this interpretation, I would not press it. But I think Paul's point is about healthy family relationships (whether or not the children ever actually believe in Christ or remain faithful Christians--parents cannot dictate their children's faith nor guarantee the outcome).

4. The Negative Requirements (1:7). Paul emphasizes the role of elder by calling him a "bishop" (overseer). This demonstrates that bishop and elder are the same task. But he also calls him a "steward." He is God's representative who manages God's house. He acts on behalf of God's interests and is entrusted with the flock for his care. The emphasis here is on God as the steward's boss. This is God's house, not the elder's. He must always treat it as that which first belongs to God. He must be blameless (without accusation) in other relationships as well (in addition to his family). He must not be:

a. not overbearing -- self-willed; arrogant (literally, "self-pleasing"); consequently, must be concerned about team and shared-leadership; doesn't always get his way and is sensitive to other's feelings.

b. not quick-tempered -- slow to anger (cf. Proverbs 29:22; James 1:20).

c. not given too much wine -- see 1 Timothy 3:3 for the same phrase.

d. not violent -- see 1 Timothy 3:3 for the same word.

e. not pursuing dishonest gain -- must not turn the house of God into his own business for monetary gain; he must not be greedy and out for his own financial interests; he must not turn his position into his own financial advantage.

5. More Positive Requirements (1:8). Now the character of the elder is stated more positively. He must also be:

a. hospitable -- see 1 Timothy 3:2 for the same word (literally, "lovers of strangers")

b. one who loves what is good -- literally, "lovers of good"; one who willingly does God even at the cost of self-denial; he loves what is good more than he loves himself. Thus, always helpful, generous, kind and loving.

c. one who is self-controlled -- see 1 Timothy 3:2 for the same word (prudent, sensible)

d. upright -- just, righteous; acts in accordance with God's standard of righteousness.

e. holy and --devout, pious, godly character and conduct; committed to God's character.

f. disciplined -- self-restrain, self-control; does not give into sinful desires; stability.

6. Task (1:9). The requirement is a person committed to the “faithful word” (literally) according to the teaching Paul has given. This person must know the teaching and be able to communicate it. He must be able to (1) exhort the church and (2) refute those who contradict it. An elder must be able to exhort and rebuke according to his knowledge of the word. The elder must protect the flock from false teachers and exhort it in godly living. “Sound doctrine” refers primarily to ethics in Titus (cf. 2:1-10).

Discussion Questions

1. What is the difference between an ethics of “doing” and an ethics of “being”? [“Doing” refers to acts and deeds and assesses character by a list of accomplishments; but “being” refers to one’s orientation in life, their direction, their goal and assesses character by a mode of existence, a mode of living, and general approach to life.] Which does Paul emphasize in Titus? What characteristics refer to “being” and which to “doing”?

2. Assess the relative importance of this list as a whole. Given the current situation of the Cordova Community Church and the knowledge that Titus is functioning in newly planted churches, what do you find especially significant for Cordova in this text? Why?

3. Can you describe a person in your experience that reflects these qualities? Who in your past history of Christian friends and acquaintances would fit this description? What about this person makes you think this way? [Looking for concrete examples of such a person as described by Paul here. Do they exist? Where have you seen one?]

4. Is there a danger that we press the qualifications legalistically? What does that mean? Does it mean that we should not seek perfection in each of these areas, but does it also mean we should expect some maturity in each of these areas?

5. What kind of behavior should disqualify a person from being an elder based on what Paul offers Titus here? Give concrete examples.

6. Why do you think Titus 1:9 is emphasized so heavily here whereas in 1 Timothy the ability to teach was listed without comment? Is this particularly important in a new church? Or was Titus doing the elder’s job, and Paul wanted Titus to his job and not the elders’? Cf. 1:10-16 and 3:9-11.

Lesson 15 - Elders as Caregivers

James 5:13-20

Teaching Moments

1. I think this section should be read as a unit. While 5:7-12 calls for patience on the part of those who are suffering (probably, the suffering inflicted by the rich upon the poor; see verses 1, 6, 7, 10), 5:13-20 addresses a wider concern about sickness and sin. How does a church deal with sickness and sin in its midst?

2. The text begins with three questions: (1) any of you suffering hardship (same as word in v. 10)?, (2) any of you happy?; and (3) any of you sick? The corresponding answers are: (1) pray; (2) sing praises; and (3) call the elders to pray.

3. The sick person should call for the "elders of the church". This is an act of faith on the part of the sick, but it also reflects the particular responsibility of the elders. They are caregivers for the sick; they have a special responsibility of prayer. This text is more about the power of prayer than it is elders, but it does reflect a special call for the elders to be praying people. They are "righteous men" who pray effective prayers.

4. The "anointing" probably refers to a physical act of pouring olive oil or medicinal oil on the person. It may be symbolic (thus, representing blessing, the power of the Spirit) or it may be medicinal in purpose (thus, a medical application), but in either case it reflects the caregiving task of the elders. I think it is most likely medicinal in purpose though is probably never without symbolic import. Consequently, it is probably both!

5. The "prayer of faith" is probably a reference to the faith of the elders, but may also include the sick person. It is the kind of prayer that makes a difference here--it is the prayer of faith (not doubt; cf. James 1:6-7). Thus, there is tremendous responsibility on the part of the elders to be men of living, vital faith and prayer.

6. The qualified promise of healing is similar to other unqualified statements associated with prayer (cf. Matt. 21:22; Mark 9:23; 11:22-26; Luke 11:5-13). These are general statements that are themselves dependent upon the will of God. God must ultimately decide how to answer the prayer of faith, but the assurance is that God will listen and act. God has reasons for saying "No" sometimes (cf. 2 Cor. 12:8-9).

7. The connection between sin and sickness is made here though it is not absolute. The sick one will be healed, and if he has committed any sin, then he will be forgiven. Some sicknesses are related to sin, but not all are (as Job, in James 5:11). Where there is correlation, however, there must be prayer for sin as well as sickness.

8. Prayer for sin involves confession of sin to each other. This is a mutual confession, not a priestly one. It is a mutual prayer. Here the prayer function extends to the whole body now, not just the elders.

9. The Elijah story illustrates the power of prayer, and notice how he grounds the Elijah story in the humanity and power of prayer. Elijah is just like us and we can pray just like him with similar effects. It is the righteous prayer that is effective, not status of prophet. There are no miracles here, just the power of prayer. Prayer is effective.

10. Just as we have a mutual responsibility of prayer for each other, we also have a mutual responsibility of bring each other back from the brink of sin and its effects. We should turn the wandering sinner back to God. This may also, just like prayer, be a primary function for elders. While both prayer and restoration are mutual responsibilities, both are also enhanced responsibilities for elders.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you think this "call for the elders" to pray for the sick is practiced much these days? Has it been practiced in your experience? If not, why do you think? What is the responsibility of the sick person in this instance?
2. What does it say about the function of elders (shepherds) that they are the ones called to pray for the sick? How does this fit into the larger dimensions of "shepherding"?
3. What is the power of prayer here? Why is the prayer of righteous people or the prayer of faith effective? What is significant about that point?
4. Why is the prayer of Elijah an example for us? Was not that a miracle? Or, perhaps it wasn't.
5. Why is it difficult to believe in the power of prayers?
6. Can you testify today about some answered prayers in your experience? How did they evidence the power of prayer and faith in your life?

Lesson 16 - Leaders as Equippers **Ephesians 4:7-16**

Teaching Moments

1. Verse 7 makes an astonishing claim, and one that is usually overlooked. Everyone has been given “grace.” This does not refer to the category of salvation, but rather to giftedness. Verse 8 makes this clear as that line is explained by the quotation from Psalm 68:18 that Christ gave “gifts” to his people. Each Christian is gifted. Christ has distributed gifts among his people according to his own design.

2. Paul then lists some of these gifts in verse 11. He lists four: (a) apostles; (b) prophets; (c) evangelists; and (d) pastors/teachers. Some think (d) should be broken out into two separate gifts: (d) pastors (shepherds) and (e) teachers. However, I think the structure in the Greek text (indicated by the four-fold use of “some” in the NIV) indicates that “pastors and teachers” refer to the same gift.

3. Paul does not offer a comprehensive list of gifts. There are many more than these, as other texts indicated (as, for example, Romans 12:3ff). But why does he mention these particular gifts here? Why does he focus on the teaching function of the pastor here?

4. I think the answer is found in verses 12-13. Paul has an explicit purpose in mind here. He is thinking particularly about gifts that equip the saints for ministry within the body. While the NIV says “prepare,” a better translation might be “equip”. The role of leaders is to equip saints so that they are prepared and enabled to do works of ministry (service). The leaders equip so that the members are able to serve. In fact, it may be that the list (apostles, prophets, evangelists and shepherds) is ordered along the lines of their role in the kingdom from very broad (church universal=apostles) to very specific (a particular local congregation=shepherds). Prophets and evangelists were generally itinerant workers, traveling from place to place though also working specific congregations as well.

5. The immediate result of saints ministering is that the body of Christ is edified or built up. The body grows (matures and is enlarged) when saints minister as leaders equip. The goal of this growth is the “faith and knowledge of the Son of God” in unity and maturity. The goal is to grow up the body of Christ into a mature and full likeness of Jesus Christ. The church is to embody Jesus in this world. It is the image of Jesus. Consequently, the measurement of the church’s maturity and unity is how well it reflects Jesus Christ; how well it images Jesus.

6. The function of apostles, prophets, evangelists and shepherds is to provide the leadership to accomplish this goal. They equip the saints for that goal by preparing them to serve. Leaders and saints work together toward the same goal--to be like Jesus Christ.

7. Verses 14-16 are a further comment on the stability that this maturity creates. We are no longer infants, and we are no longer easily deceived. We are rooted in truth. [This

may indicate that a significant part of the function here is teaching. Thus, the focus on the teaching function of shepherds in this text.] We have roots through the leadership of apostles, prophets, evangelist, and shepherds. These roots enable the church to grow into the likeness of Christ, that is, we grow up into him who is the head of the body.

8. Verse 16 is particularly significant because it offers a vision of unity and diversity in ministry. The body grows and is edified (matures) when each part of the body does its work. The whole body is benefited when each one does their part. We are a diverse body of people, but each ligament -- joined to each other -- must do its part for the whole to grow.

9. This text offers a vision for the mechanics of “doing church.” Leaders equip (teach, prepare, enable), members serve (good works of ministry, everyone does their part), and the body grows in the context of love (speak truth in love, grows in love) toward the goal of embodying the reality of Jesus Christ in our community.

10. The church is the body of Christ. So, the church must look like Christ. The church is Christ in the world. Leaders equip and members serve in the light of that responsibility toward the mutual goal of imaging Jesus in the world through the ministry of the church.

Questions for Discussion

1. Ephesians 4:1-6 talks about a unity that is already here. Ephesians 4:7-16 talks about a unity that is to come. What is the difference? How does 4:7-16 build on and assume 4:1-6?
2. In what way is the task of the church ongoing? Why is it never complete? When will we reach this goal of unity and maturity?
3. How would you define the goal of the church in your own words?
4. What is the function of leaders in reaching this goal? What is the function of members in reaching this goal?
5. How does this text highlight the teaching role of shepherds? What do you expect from shepherds in terms of teaching?
6. Does it surprise you that evangelists are in this list as well, and that they are listed before shepherds? Do you see any significance to that order?
7. What is the role of an evangelist in this text? What do you expect from an evangelist in the local church setting? [We will discuss this more next week in the light of 1 Timothy 4:6-16.]

8. While this text focuses on four particular gifts, it does say that everyone is gifted? Do you have a sense of what your gift is? How can we discover these gifts? What can leaders do to help you discover these gifts?

9. What does this text say about trying to live the Christian live apart from a community? In what way to do we need others? How must the body work as a whole?

10. What one thing would you tell your leaders must be part of the equipping process if the church is truly to mature and grow?

Lesson 17 - Evangelists 1 Timothy 4:6-16

Teaching Moments

1. 1 Timothy, of course, is addressed to Timothy as an evangelist in the church at Ephesus (cf. 2 Timothy 4:5). Paul left him in Ephesus to function as an evangelist (1 Timothy 1:3). This is a church that already has elders and is looking to add more (as a result, Paul instructs Timothy concerning the selection of elders in 1 Timothy 3:1-7). So, we have a situation where Paul writes to an evangelist about elders, about the evangelist's task, and their relationship with one another. This week we will study the work of an evangelist. Next week we will study the relationship between elders and evangelists (1 Timothy 5:17-22).

2. Paul has spent several chapters providing Timothy with guidelines of one sort or another. In chapter 1 it was about the false teachers and the basic message of the gospel. In chapter 2 it was about prayer and worship. In chapter 3 it was about elders and deacons. In chapter 4:1-6 it is about the dangers ahead. In chapter 4:6-16 it is about the focus of Timothy's work as an evangelist.

3. The text, I think, has two primary foci. First, Timothy must model godliness and train himself in that task. Verses 7-10, 12 focus on the personal life of the evangelist. Second, Timothy must teach and guide the church. Verses 6, 11, 13-15 reflect this task. Verse 16 is a summary verse about life and teaching. The evangelist must be concerned about both.

4. About life....The evangelist (Paul uses the term *diakonos* [servant, minister] in v. 6) must be involve in spiritual training. He must have a rigor about his spiritual training that is analogous to the rigor of physical training. Paul clearly points us to which is more valuable. It is valuable both in terms of eternity and the present life.

5. Part of this training is his role as a model for other believers. He is an example.

6. Timothy must not let his youthfulness deter his importance or undermine his responsibilities as an evangelist. We do not know how young Timothy was, but we must estimate that he was in his high 20s or low 30s. [If he was an adolescent (maybe 14-18) when Paul met him on his second missionary journey in Acts 16 around 51 A.D., then by 64-65 A.D., he would be around 28-32.]

7. Timothy's youthfulness was a problem due to the presence of shepherds who have been Christians longer than Timothy perhaps, and certainly of more mature age. It was a danger that they would ignore him or underestimate him. Timothy should give them an excuse for such (e.g., by moral failure), and he should press his standing in the community as teacher (he has been trained by Paul, and he is able to train others, as Paul calls him to do in 2 Timothy 2:2). Shepherds must respect the training that Timothy has despite his youth, and the congregation must respect the task he has been given.

8. The task he has been given is to instruct (v. 6), teach and command (v. 11). I believe this is the "gift" that Timothy has. He is gifted for teaching (v. 14). Note that the gift is not prophecy, but that it was given by prophecy. I don't think this means that it was foretold that he would have a gift, but that he was ordained to this task (the gift of teaching) by the prophetic ministry. In other words, he was ordained as an evangelist through a prophetic oracle at his installation as evangelist.

9. It is important to note the relationship between shepherds and evangelist here. The "council of elders" (or, eldership) is a body of shepherds that acts as a body. This body lays their hands on Timothy as an act of ordination--he is ordained to a specific task. He is ordained to teach and guide the congregation as an evangelist. I presume Paul means this particular body of elders in Ephesus, but he may even be thinking about some earlier act like at Lystra on the second missionary journey where there were elders as well (Acts 16:1-4). In either event, shepherds invest Timothy with his evangelistic duties in accordance with how God has gifted him..

10. His task is to teach. He must persevere in this task for his own sake as well as the sake of the congregation. He is to be diligent and give himself to this task wholly. I think this involves not only his spiritual training, the dedication of his life, but also the support of the body. The body must support its teachers so they can give themselves wholly to this task.

11. The evangelist has a corporate responsibility for the church. He must guide and teach it. Consequently, he must focus on Scripture rather than fables (vv. 7, 13). This is a function he carries out in cooperation and harmony with the shepherds who have appointed him to the task.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some of the action words in this text? What must the evangelist do? [like, teach, instruct, command, read Scripture publicly, set an example; persevere; be diligent...]
2. By what "authority" does the evangelist do this? What grounds the appropriateness of his task? [Think, for example, of his giftedness, his relationship with the shepherds, his training (as in v. 6), and his moral character.]
3. Why does the evangelist do this? What is his purpose? What is his goal? [save himself and others; so everyone may progress in v. 16; so that prepared for eternity by proper training.]
4. What is the relationship between the church and the evangelist in this text?
5. What is the relationship between the shepherds and the evangelist in this text?

6. Why does Paul emphasize spiritual training here? What is important about that for Timothy? What does Paul mean by training to be godly?
7. What kind of spiritual training program would you design? What would it involve? What would spiritual training mean for you?
8. What kind of spiritual training do you expect evangelists and shepherds to model for the church?

Lesson 18 - Elders and Evangelists

1 Timothy 5:17-22

Teaching Moments

1. The first part of chapter 5 offers instructions about dealing with widows in the church. Older widows should be enrolled for ministry and prayer, but younger widows need to remarry. Verse 17 is a change in subject. Paul now offers Timothy some parting advice about his role within the leadership of the church at Ephesus.
2. The phrase “direct affairs” is also used in 1 Timothy 3:4,5,12. Elders manage the affairs of church in analogous way that the husband manages the affairs of the home. He is responsible for the church in an analogous way that the husband is responsible for the home. The text notes that the function of the elder is to “direct affairs,” but that some do more...they also labor in preaching and teaching. In other words, they do more than the work of an elder. They also function in an additional role.
3. “Double Honor” belongs to elders who not only “direct the affairs of the church” but also work in “preaching and teaching.” Literally, the text says “word and teaching.” However, the idea of “word” here is the kind of work the evangelist does. He proclaims the word (cf. 1 Tim. 4:6; 2 Tim. 4:2). Teaching is a responsibility of both elder and evangelist, but this additional comment on elders who take on a double task indicates that we are talking about an elder here who takes on the additional task of preaching (that is, takes on the role of evangelist as well). Thus, “double honor” belongs to one who serves as an elder and evangelist.
4. The honor under consideration here is remuneration for their ministry. Paul quotes Deuteronomy 25:4 (which he also quoted in 1 Corinthians 9:9) and Luke 10:7. These texts are applied to financial remuneration for ministry tasks.
5. Paul offers some guidelines for receiving an accusation against an elder. First, it must be brought by two or three witnesses. Second, the rebuke must be public. This excludes private and personal (only one individual) offenses. This protects the elder, but also provides the church with a way to correct an elder.
6. The purpose of the public rebuke is to warn other elders. Elders need accountability. They must be accountable to the church and the church needs some means of holding them accountable in a responsible way.
7. Paul charges Timothy to carry out his instructions without partiality and without favoritism. This may particularly relate to his relationship with elders, but it may involve the whole letter and his relationships with everyone in the church. In either event, the principle applies to his relationship with elders.
8. “Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands.” Laying on of hands was some kind of “ordaining” or appointing ritual (cf. Acts 6:6; 13:3). Timothy apparently had some

responsibility in appointing people to ministry tasks, and, most probably, appointing elders. This may be a general point as #7 (and the rest of verse 22 is general as well), but it also has application to the selection of elders. Titus and Timothy had a role in the selection of elders.

9. I think the appointment of elders was not done by fiat. Rather, it was a process of congregational consent led by the evangelists. Both the congregation and the evangelists have a role and each has a responsibility.

10. There is a triangular relationship between elder--congregation--evangelist. Each is accountable to the other. Elders lead the church as responsible for its affairs, the evangelists lead the church as teachers and equippers, and the church ministers empowered by this leadership. There is mutual accountability in their respective roles.

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever been part of a church where the paid evangelist of the church is also an elder? How did that work out? Does this text speak to the appropriateness of such a role?

2. What are the dangers of an elder also serving the church as an evangelist? What are the potential advantages?

3. Have you ever been in a church where an elder received a public rebuke? How did it happen? Why does it not happen more often when there is a need for it? Are elders too intimidating to even think about rebuke?

4. What mechanism does a church need in order to ensure that elders are accountable to the church? What do you think about a "reaffirmation" process?

5. What other means of accountability can the church exercise in relation to the elders? What protection do we need to offer elders from false accusations?

6. Why do you think Paul emphasizes the impartiality of Timothy in this text? Why is that important?

7. What is the relationship between Timothy and the appointment of elders or other ministry tasks? What do you think is the meaning of this "laying on of hands"?

8. What does this responsibility of laying on of hands mean today? How does this reflect the responsibility of an evangelist?

9. Discuss in what ways the church is accountable to the elders, the elders accountable to the church, the evangelist accountable to the elders, the elders accountable to the evangelist, and the evangelist in relationship to the church?