

Sermon or Lesson: 1 Timothy 5:17 (NIV based)
[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: Worthy Of Double Honor

READ: 1 Timothy 5:17, with vv.18-20 for additional context

INTRO: What normally comes to your mind (your opinion or attitude) when you think of how well those in the position of elder, or pastor, or ministry leader in the church carry out their duties? Perhaps you think that:

- - they are little dictators;
- - they make secret decisions behind closed doors;
- - they look important but do very little;
- - they use their position to push their pet projects.

How do you regard and treat elders, and pastors, and ministry leaders in the church?
Let's study what God says about this topic.

from v.17 - READ: "**The elders who direct the affairs of the church**"

[Lesson Question: Contemplate and explore the ramifications of what God is saying here about the "elders" in relation to the "directing of the affairs of the church".]

SECTION POINT: The elders have been given authority by God to direct the affairs of the church.

- - The elders and top leadership in the church oversee and manage the various aspects and programs of the church, which as cited in this Scripture passage includes the dispensing of resources to widows in the church who are genuinely in need. (vv.9,16)
 - - God has ordained, designated, and authorized that the elders are to govern the operating of the local church.
 - - So the elders have both the right and the duty to govern and direct the affairs of the church.
 - - Therefore, this is an authority structure established by God for the local church.
 - - To rebel against the authority structure God has established is to rebel against God.
 - - By implication then, fomenting a hostile church split or hostile church takeover is rebellion against God.
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from v.17 - READ: "**direct the affairs of the church well**"

[Lesson Question: Without disclosing identifying information, contemplate, describe, analyze, and then biblically refute several common ways in which elders, pastors, and church leaders do not direct the affairs of the church well.]

SECTION POINT: To direct the affairs of the church **well** minimally requires having God's perspective, continuously seeking His will, and following His guidelines for conduct.

A Kingdom-of-God Perspective:

- - God expects the elders, pastors, and ministry leaders to fulfill their governing duty "well".

- - As authorized overseers, they are to direct the functioning and all other affairs of the church with wisdom, spiritual discernment, care, concern, love, patience, and proper management of the limited resources God supplies them. (cf. 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:1-3; 1 Timothy 5:16)

- - Moreover, in their directing the affairs of the church, they are to maintain a Kingdom perspective, in other words the overarching goal is to build God's Kingdom. (Colossians 4:11)

- - Sadly, many elders, pastors, and ministry leaders fall into the errant philosophy that they need to build their own "Tower of Babel" (Genesis 11:1-9) - their own little kingdom, over which they are its irreplaceable Supreme Ruler (1 Peter 5:3).

- - Their desire to preserve and protect the kingdom they have built develops into an obsession, with accompanying paranoia or fear of losing their kingdom.

- - So, to ensure the continuation of their kingdom, they increasingly exert restrictive control over every aspect and activity within their jurisdiction of the affairs of the church.

- - Consequently, instead of fostering a culture in the church that is inclusive and expansive in the doing of ministry, the church leaders cultivate in essence a culture in the church that is reductionistic or restrictive, not allowing the release of people to do ministry that is outside of the direct tight control, comfort zone, or area of operation of the church leaders.

- - This restrictive control exerted by the church leaders to protect their kingdom in actuality usually quenches the moving of the Holy Spirit to accomplish God's will in, and for, and through that church.

- - The local church belongs to Christ, and the elders, pastors, and ministry leaders function as its guardians, keepers, caretakers, servants, overseers, and managers - not its owner. (Matthew 16:18)

- - Every elder, pastor, and ministry leader is replaceable - God can remove and replace each of them whenever, however, and for whatever reason He so chooses. (vv.11,14 in 1 Corinthians 12:1-30; Ephesians 5:23-24)

- - The primary objective of the church is to make disciples who go forth to do ministry and make more disciples. (Matthew 28:18-20)

- - Previous verse 16 along with verses 9-13 clearly indicate that the elders and church leaders are also to frugally manage the resources that come into the church, applying those resources in a manner that seeks to maximize the resulting effects for the building of God's Kingdom. (cf. investing of talents - Matthew 25:14-30, picking up leftover baskets of food - John 6:1-14)

- - Even though they may not recognize that this kind of building-our-own-kingdom approach of directing the affairs of the church fails in numerous ways to do it rightly, they may try to rationalize their own-kingdom-building approach as doing it "well" because of the phenomenal results they are achieving in building a bigger and bigger kingdom - for themselves.

Ongoing Testing And Approving:

- - Similarly, many elders, pastors, and ministry leaders fall into the errant philosophy that every decision they make and every action they take as the church's leadership is comprehensively without error - absolutely correct and entirely according to God's will.
- - But this kind of approach of "infallibly" directing the affairs of the church grossly fails to understand the principle and its implications in Romans 12:2b, "Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is -- his good, pleasing and perfect will."
- - Each of us humans is imperfect in this life due to our inherent sin nature, which remains within us even after we have become a true believer. (Romans 7:14-18)
- - This is why we have to daily, every day, all day long, put to death our sin nature. (Romans 8:5,13)
- - We have to continuously work strenuously at trying to achieve and maintain "true righteousness and holiness" in our thinking, speaking, and behaviors. (Ephesians 4:22-24)
- - Our imperfection and the influence of our sin nature make it impossible to always know exactly what God's will is.
- - And by design, God requires that to be pleasing to Him and to determine His will, we must "walk by faith, not by sight". (2 Corinthians 5:7)
- - Therefore, we must "test and approve what God's will is" - we do not and cannot know in advance with absolute certainty all of what His will is, so we are to proceed by faith while simultaneously testing and determining what His will actually is as we are proceeding forth by faith. (Romans 12:2 - "test and approve" = Strong's #1381)
- - Likewise, God has designed that even elders and pastors in the directing the affairs of the church must test what God's will is, and make adjustments when there is indication that God's will is different than or outside of what the elders and pastors had previously thought it was.
- - To be accomplished "well", the directing of the affairs of the church by the elders and pastors should be predominantly influenced and shaped by the exercising of faith in God, with simultaneous ongoing testing and approving to ensure that God's will is continued to be followed.

Compassionate Exhortation:

- - Another pitfall for many elders, pastors, and ministry leaders is that by their actions in the directing of the affairs of the church, they think it is acceptable for them to get angry at and verbally abusive to other people in their church.
 - - But anger, verbal abuse, and "harsh rebuke" are contrary to God's instructions in verses 1-2 that leaders in the church are instead to use "exhortation" that treats congregants as beloved family members.
 - - Calling a congregant or ministry worker into one's office and going into an hours-long angry tirade that is thinly disguised as a 'righteous confrontation' is not directing the affairs of the church well.
 - - Compassionate exhortation is to always be the response of elders, pastors, and ministry leaders in all of their confrontative interactions with congregants, ministry workers, fellow leaders, and every person in their church. (v.1 - "do not rebuke..., treat... as brothers...", v.2 - "...with absolute purity")
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v.17 - READ

[Lesson Question: Contemplate and then describe the ramifications for the people in the church in regard to how they are to evaluate, determine, and respond to the quality of the work each elder, pastor, and ministry leader is doing in directing the affairs of the church.]

SECTION POINT: The people in the church are to maintain the same regard as God has for those elders, pastors, and ministry leaders who direct the affairs of the church well.

"are worthy of double honor,"

- - For every elder, pastor, and ministry leader who do their ministry functioning "well", God instructs that they "are worthy of" and "entitled to" not just honor, but "double" "honor". (Strong's #0515)
- - This double honor suggests that the people in the church are to hold them in unshakeable very high esteem, respect, treatment, and cooperation.
- - Therefore, people in the church need to be overly careful and cautious when inclined to lower their regard of an elder, pastor, or ministry leader to any rating below "double honor".
- - Certainly, no elder, pastor, or ministry leader is perfect, nor should they be expected to be perfect.
- - The standard to use to measure their worthiness of double honor is whether or not they are directing the affairs of the church well.
- - To use any other standard to measure worthiness of double honor is to risk violating this God-given instruction.
- - In measuring worthiness, therefore, the focus is to be centered on their performance of their ministry duties, while simultaneously allowing for their defects and imperfections that are not major, harmful, or disqualifying.

"especially those whose work is preaching and teaching."

- - Those elders, pastors, or ministry leaders "particularly" or "especially" deserving of additional double honor and regard are those "whose work is preaching and teaching" the Word. (Strong's #3122)
- - By implication from the Greek word used here for "work", the preaching and teaching of the Word is regarded by God to be difficult and strenuous labor that produces mental and spiritual fatigue. (Strong's #2872)
- - Obviously, this preaching and teaching functioning may be one of several other duties the leaders are performing in the directing of the affairs of the church.
- - But by implication, preaching and teaching have extra significance, value, and importance to God, thereby adding special or extra double honor to those elders, pastors, and ministry leaders who are regularly engaged in doing preaching and teaching of the Word with sound doctrine. (v.4:16)

BIG IDEA: God says that those elders, pastors, and ministry leaders who direct the affairs of the church well deserve your double honor.

APPLICATIONS:

-- Deep down inside, what is your normal regard for elders, pastors, and leaders of the church?

----- Is your regard different for those who do their jobs well?

----- How many of you have been significantly abused or grossly mistreated in some manner by an elder, or pastor, or leader in a church? Raise your hand.

----- Do you harbor a loathing for all of them, whether or not they do their jobs well or poorly or inappropriately? Perhaps because you were abused by one a long time ago?

----- Or do you regard them with covetousness, having an intense hidden inner desire to possess their power in the church? Or their prestige? Or their influence? Or their job?

-- When you have an issue with an elder, pastor, or leader in the church, how do you handle your side of the issue?

----- Do you mumble, and grumble, and mutter to yourself and to others around you?

----- Do you sow seeds of discord against that leader?

----- Or do you spread assumptions, or conjectures, or misrepresentations as being facts about that leader?

-- Given the directive by God in this verse 17, what is your regard now going to be for elders, pastors, and leaders in your church? For those who do their job well?

----- Are you going to readily extend the respect and honor that God says they deserve?

----- Are you going to ignore their imperfections and minor deficiencies, to instead focus on the overall good quality of their directing the affairs of the church and of their preaching and teaching?

-- For those of you who are elders, pastors, and ministry leaders, how are you conducting yourself and your interactions with people in the church?

----- How do you regard yourself, and your functioning, and the results that have been produced under your leadership in the church?

----- How do you regard God, and His program, and His activities, and His guidance in the church while it has been under your leadership?

----- How do you regard and treat people in your church when they want to start ministry work that is different than what you have control over?

----- Do you comprehensively align with what God says in these Scriptures verses we have just studied?

----- Or do you need to make some corrections to your own personal approach, and your own philosophies, and your own conduct in the directing of the affairs of your church?

[Additional Lesson Questions to ponder (optional, if time allows):

-- What should our regard be for elders, pastors, and ministry leaders who direct the affairs of the church in a mediocre manner? Specifically, are mediocre-producing elders, pastors, and ministry leaders

nevertheless deserving of 'single' honor or 'regular' honor because they hold that job functioning? Explain your answer.]

Works Cited:

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"Strong's Greek Dictionary." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

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