

Message #17

I Timothy 3:4-5

“Manage His Own Household Well”

The truth is if a man does not have his children under control, he is disqualified from leadership. The home is the nursery school for leadership. The family is the measuring stick whereby we may determine if a man is qualified to lead God’s church.

The famed reformer and theologian John Calvin includes a quote on this qualification that is powerful and important:

“The house of a believer ought to be like a little church. Heathens, who did not know what a church is, said that a house is but an image and figure of any public government. A poor man, living with his wife and children and servants, ought to be in his house like a public governor. But Christians ought to go beyond this. Every father of a family should know that God has appointed him to that place, that he may know how to govern his wife and children and servants; so that God shall be honored in the midst of them, and all shall do Him homage. Paul speaks of children; and why? Because he who wishes to discharge his duty as pastor of a church must be like a father to all believers. Now, let us suppose that a man cannot govern two or three children which he has in the house. They are his own children, and yet he cannot keep them in subjection; they are deaf to all that he says to them. How then shall he be able to govern those who are at a distance, and who may be said to be unknown to him, who even refuse to become wiser, and think that they have no need of being instructed? How shall he be able to keep men in dread, when his own wife is not subject to him? Let us not, therefore, think it strange if it is required in all pastors, that they be good fathers of a family, and know what it is to govern their own children well. It is not enough to condemn the children, but we must condemn the fathers, when they permit their children to be worse than others” (Calvin, p. 83).

The main point of this 13<sup>th</sup> qualification is this:

**IF THE CHURCH OF GOD IS TO BECOME A PILLAR AND SUPPORT OF THE TRUTH OF GOD, IT NEEDS MEN OF GOD WHO ARE GOOD MANAGERS OF THEIR OWN HOMES.**

H. A. Ironside once wrote: “We have often seen men aspiring to this office in the church whose children were a disgrace to them because of their willfulness and worldly ways” (Ironside, pp. 78-79).

No man may be a leader in God’s church unless he is a leader in his own home. If a man cannot control his wife or children, he is not fit to lead. Many of the same skills and qualifications that are needed to lead a home are the same skills and qualifications needed to lead a church.

**QUESTION #1** – What do the words “manage his own household well” actually mean?

The word “manage” is a combination of two Greek words–“pro” which means before, which speaks of a preference of position and rank, and “istami” which means to stand or set.

When these two words are combined, they form the meaning of presiding over, ruling, governing, directing and maintaining (G. Abbott-Smith, p. 381). The words literally mean to stand in first rank, to be in the before or front position. One who manages is one who rules, governs, and directs from a front position of leadership.

The word “household” refers to the wife, the children, and all who are under a man’s roof. There is a legitimate sense, when looking for a leader for the church, one must look for a man who is the leader of his home. He must be seen as the one who manages his own home. If his wife is the one who has dominating authoring in the home or if the children have total control of the home, then the man is not fit to be a leader in God’s church.

The term “well” is a Greek word that means ways that are fine, right, good and well. The future leader must be a fine and good manager of his own home.

When we combine these words, what they mean is that the man who would be an elder in God’s church “must” be a man who presides over his own home—his wife, children, and anyone else under his roof. He must be leading everyone in his home in the right direction. He must be pointing them in the true, pure ways of God. He must be a pacesetter when it comes to spiritual things. He must govern from a front position in his own home.

**QUESTION #2** – How do we determine whether a man actually “manages his own household well?”

The answer is pointed out very clearly; look at his children. This passage clearly refutes the idea that a man should be celibate. Look at a man’s children and you can quickly determine whether or not a man is leadership material. Now one might ask what do we look for in the children? What are we specifically looking for in determining this qualification?

From this passage in I Timothy and from the parallel passage in Titus, there are four key behavioral traits to look for in a man’s children:

**Trait #1** - The leader must keep his children under control with all dignity. **3:4b**

Homer Kent really makes an important observation when he said that this would obviously presuppose that the children are in the home (Kent, p. 129). In other words, while the children are under the father’s roof, it is critical that he keep them under control with all dignity.

The word “keeping” is a present tense participle which speaks of a continual action. The word “keep” is the Greek word “eko” which means to have, to hold, to possess. The idea is holding fast to something (*Greek Lexicon*, p. 192-193).

The words “in control” speak of being in subjection to rank. The word “dignity” speaks of being grave and serious, especially in things pertaining to God.

Paul's point, as near as I can determine, is a leader must be one who continually holds and keeps his children in subjection to authority and continually holds them responsible to be grave and serious when it comes to the things of God.

**Trait #2** - The leader must have children who believe. Titus 1:6a

The participle "having" is the same translated "keeping" in I Tim. 3:4. The participle is present tense, meaning a continual action is in view. The Greek text literally reads "continually having faith children." The difficulty comes in trying to interpret what the words mean.

Since no father can force a child to believe on Jesus Christ, the phrase cannot mean that a father makes a child believe. It is possible that one key to determining whether or not a man is a fit leader is whether or not his children are believers. This interpretation would mean if God has worked in the life of a man's children and they have believed on Christ, then they are saved and then he is qualified to be a leader. John MacArthur believes that a man is not fit to be a leader unless God has touched the children with His saving grace. He said there is no greater discredit to a man's ministry than children who do not believe in the saving grace of God (*The Master's Plan for the Church*, p. 229).

It is also possible to interpret this as meaning that as long as a child is in the home he/she must be a faith child, that is he/she must be continually brought up in the character and quality of the faith. A man who has children living at home who are not continually in church is not a fit leader in the church. If a man can't even demand his own children go to church, he certainly is not in any position to demand that others go to church.

**Trait #3** - The leader must have children not accused of dissipation. Titus 1:6b

The word "dissipation" means that the man who is to lead cannot have children who are continually accused of wasting life in riotous living.

John Calvin said, "...it will be a great disgrace to a bishop, if he has children who lead a wicked and scandalous life" (Calvin, p. 32). A leader in God's church must keep his children under control. He cannot let them come and go as they please. He must keep close tabs on them and continually exhort them to the righteous ways of God.

What happens if a leader's wife or child chooses to do something disgraceful or shameful? The leader must make them "face the music." He cannot show partiality.

**Trait #4** - The leader must have children who are not accused of rebellion. Titus 1:6c

What this means is that a leader's children cannot be continually unruly, that is they must be continually subject to rule. They must be those who will submit to authority and the husband/father must personally see to it. It is a shameful disgrace that a man would let his children run around totally unaccountable to anyone. Such a man is not a fit leader in God's church.

Remember the story of Eli? His sons were worthless. Eli did not rebuke them and God removed him from ministry (I Sam. 2:12, 22-26; 3:11-13).

**QUESTION #3** – Why is it important that a man knows how to “manage his own household well?” **3:5**

If a man does not know how to manage his own home, he certainly will not know how to manage God’s church. The “if” clause is first-class conditional. It is a clause that assumes reality. It is worded in such a way that Paul means since a man cannot manage his own home, he certainly cannot take care of Gods church, can he?

The idea is in reality we are going from lesser—a man’s home, to the greater—God’s church. The church is greater than the home. A man’s management ability to direct his family in the things of God will be first seen in the home before it can be seen in the church.

When looking for a leader, we must look for a man who has his own house in order. It does not mean perfection, but it does mean that the continual character and quality of his family is that of being faithful to God. His wife and children will be subject to him and the authority of God’s church.