

One of my favorite authors (Randy Alcorn) has written:

Suppose you buy shares of General Motors. What happens? You suddenly develop interest in GM. You check the financial pages. You see a magazine article about GM and read every word, even though a month ago you would have passed right over it. Suppose you're giving to help African children with AIDS. When you see an article on the subject, you're hooked. If you're sending money to plant churches in India and an earthquake hits India, you watch the news and fervently pray.

Do you wish you cared more about eternal things? Then reallocate some of your money... from temporal things to eternal things. Put your resources, your assets, your money and possessions, your time and talents and energies into the things of God. Watch what happens. As surely as the compass needle follows north, your heart will follow your treasure. Money leads; hearts follow.

Now before I utter another word... let me acknowledge a truth about such passages that we come to today. ... Many Christians have become very **cynical** at the start of any sermon about money.

(I won't ask for a show of hands) But my guess is that some of **you** may have already formed a perception... that... I will be trying to position myself for a higher salary. And if you haven't yet... perhaps you will ... when we read the opening verses –of **THIS** particular passage. ... I say this because... many of us have been subjected to sermons (in our past) that made us feel as though we were being manipulated into supporting some such an effort or supporting some new (or existing) program of the church. It's true (isn't it?) ... believers **are** (sometimes) abused in this manner. In recognizing this... my first thought when I began to study this passage in my office was: "*Oh no! How am I going to separate this sermon from so many scheming efforts... that arise from passages about money?*" ... But

eventually I had a different thought (which quelled my initial temptation to just skip over the passage and go to the next.) ... “*Such abuses should **never** keep us from hearing what God has to say in any passage of Scripture – even one like 1 Timothy 5:17–25.*” ANYTHING that would keep us away from a section of God’s Word... must be an absolute **delight** to Satan.

That thought became even truer (to my understanding) as I studied these verses and saw one of it’s emerging themes... (and it is this... .. now here is what Satan would be delighted for you and I NOT to think about): “*How the church cares for elders (both financially and otherwise) communicates something about the heart of that church.*” ... [P A U S E] ...

As we get started... working our way to this theme of the passage... recognize (please) that Paul (in chapter three) called the church “*God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth*” (3:15). ... I remind you of this because it could not be any clearer that the church must be very **different** than the world. ... This is especially true in regards to its people and leadership.

To see this contrast clearly... consider your own experience in the secular workplace. The relationship between a company’s leadership and the rest of the employees can often be strained... to say the least. ... (Furthermore) Isn’t it common for there to be: gossip... suspicion... favoritism... and distrust of leadership...? ... This all makes for a cutthroat environment. ... While this may be common in the world at large... it shouldn’t be the norm in the church. ... (And yet – sadly – it is!)

The household of God ought to look and feel different. ... In stark contrast to the secular business model... elders should have a genuine concern for the members of the body... and the body ought to have a loving esteem for its elders. ... This dynamic is crucial because God intends for unbelievers to look at the church and see the glory of God expressed as the gospel of God impacts the people of God.

In today's passage... Paul will not only say that the congregation should care for its elders... but (also) that the elders are responsible and accountable to the congregation. ... This is a two-way street.

God's intention is for pastors and elders to lay their lives down for the flock... living among them and loving them with the love of Christ. ... In response... (what Paul writes) is that the congregation (the sheep)... love and follow their shepherds... giving to them generously and willingly as the Word of God is faithfully taught. This is the context in which the gospel flourishes.

We will undermine our efforts to see the advance of the gospel if we don't pay attention to God's design for the church. ... The end goal of this passage is not that we would have a well-paid pastor... (which you may think the opening verses teach)... or a system in place for handling a sub-par elder. ... It is that the church would display the glory of God and uphold the truth. ... The ultimate purpose is that the gospel would go forward from this (and every) church.

This is why it would be so dangerous for us to skip over this passage. In fact... we need to sense the gravity of disobeying God's Word on these matters. God's glory is seen when we order the church according to what

He has said in THIS passage (and all others.) So... please break it open with me now... and look at...

1 Timothy 5:17-18

Do you see (now) why I initially felt dis-inclined to preach on this passage? ... But God (in His Word) says honoring elders in this way demonstrates the power of the gospel and the glory of God.

Verse 17 says that elders (and in today's language he means "pastors" who work hard at preaching and teaching)... are "worthy of double honor." Understanding the words "double honor" is the key to understanding this verse. ... Commentators have different opinions about what it means for the church to show this kind of honor... to those who rule well in teaching and preaching. ... Paul never used this expression in any of his other letters... but the wider context (taking verses 17 and 18 together)... makes me think that Paul does NOT mean "double pay" - as most of the commentators say. I think the context suggests an honor that is shown two ways.

First... we need to see that double honor involves respect. ... This comes from the meaning of the word that Paul used here. Paul uses it again at the beginning of the next chapter (1 Tim 6:1): "*Let all who are under the yoke as bondservants regard their own masters as worthy of all honor.*" ... (Now stop and think) ... Clearly he is not telling slaves to pay their masters financially. (Slaves don't pay masters.) No. ... He meant that they must present a sense of gratitude and appreciation.

But this word **CAN** (also) be translated as “*honorarium*” or salary or remuneration. And we do see that Paul’s intended meaning of “double honor” included this idea - because of verse 18.

1 Tim 5:18

Paul is giving the basis for what he had just said in verse 17... about showing honor to elders. The apostle was referring to compensation for those men who give themselves (either full-time or part-time) to the ministry of teaching and preaching. ... Paul used the Old Testament to remind the church that the laborer is worthy of his wages. In short... pastors should be compensated.

Paul quotes two unquestioned authorities to bolster his insistence for pastoral remuneration — Moses and Jesus! ... First... he quotes Moses from Deuteronomy 25:4... and then Jesus from Luke 10:7. ... An ox is at least allowed to eat - as he labors... and the same should be true for pastors. ... Otherwise... we are treating those who minister the Word worse than a beast!

Before I **continue** down this road with you... I need to say again... that I am **not** asking for a pay raise (OK...?) ... More than three years ago I voluntarily took a pay **decrease** – until our church gets *better* positioned financially. So THAT is not what I am after.

But I have seen (and perhaps you have too) a common mentality about pastors that many church-people have... which says: “*Lord, You keep him humble, and we’ll keep him poor.*” ... These verses are meant to correct that mentality.

If anyone in society ought to get good pay it ought to be the people who give help spiritually. ... But society is more prone to give their big money to the worthless—star athletes... and Hollywood entertainers. ... Church people often reflect the attitude of our godless society **MORE** than the attitude of the Scripture about preachers' pay. ... No work is more important than spiritual work... and a pastor's salary is a reflection of how a church values excellent teaching and strong preaching.

If a church does not adequately provide for their pastor – the testimony of that church to the outside world is shot! The gospel going forth is hindered.

This may seem like a trivial matter... but like all matters of money in the Bible... it really goes straight to the church's heart. (Repeating part of the quote from Randy Alcorn): *“As surely as the compass needle follows north, your heart will follow your treasure. Money leads; hearts follow.* **[P A U S E]**

So far... I have been showing that “double honor” involves two different things: respect and financial compensation. ... As I have proposed... I don't believe “double-honor” means “double-pay.” He is not calling for extravagant financial compensation (by any means.) In fact... Paul is going to warn against materialism and the desire to get rich... in the next chapter that we will get to.

(Now)... the question is: How do we know when a minister of the gospel is being a good leader... and is worthy of this “double-honor”? ... For some people the idea of “good” may bring up certain comparisons in their minds... as though the church needs to find the Christian version of a successful and efficient CEO. ... But the word “good” here is not used as a

measuring stick for (business-like) “success” - which focuses on the numbers. Rather... it is a word that speaks of meeting a certain **standard**.

Paul is saying we ought to evaluate elders on the basis of a whether they are **faithful**. ... We need to ask, “*Is this man doing what he ought to be doing?*” And we don’t have to go any further than 1 Timothy 3 to answer this question. ... Recall some of the qualifications for elders Paul gave to us: an elder must be above reproach... he must manage his household well... he must hold to sound doctrine... he must point out error... and he must be an example to the flock. ... **This** is what it means to be a good leader.

Another condition of worthiness... we find in verse 17. They must labor diligently in the Word. ... After saying that elders were worthy of double honor... Paul then said: “*Especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.*” ... That word “*especially*” might be better translated as “*that is*”... so that the verse might (more clearly) be translated: “*The elders who are good leaders should be considered worthy of double honor, **that is**, those who work hard at preaching and teaching.*” ... [P A U S E] ...

So faithful elders are to be honored... and then Paul says that they are owed something else – PROTECTION against false accusations.

1 Tim 5:19

We should not be surprised when elders are accused. ... Anyone who has been close to pastoral ministry for any stretch of time... will know that pastors are frequently the target of accusation... even more so than other members of the congregation. Pastors are highly visible and are tragically

vulnerable to the adverse actions of the those who engage in gossip. The human inclination to believe the worst (sadly) exists – even in good churches... and among those with a reputation as being “good Christians.” ... John Calvin... reflecting on his pastoral experience in Geneva... wrote:

... as soon as any charge is made against ministers of the Word, it is believed as surely and firmly as if it had been already proved. This happens not only because a higher standard of integrity is required from them, but because Satan makes most people, in fact nearly everyone, overcredulous so that without investigation, they eagerly condemn their pastors whose good name they ought to be defending.

The remedy? Never listen to gossip about leaders... or even to a serious accusation... if it only comes from one person. ... Don't receive it. Stop the person. (You are not being rude. You are stopping them from ***sin***.) ... All charges must be substantially proved by two or three responsible people if it is to be heard (*at all*) by you. How much grief would have been avoided in the church... if this ancient Biblical pattern were followed. ... (Even more important)... if this procedure were observed... the gospel would be able to go forth to the outside world much more effectively. But if the church looks just like the cut-throat business world... (full of gossip... suspicion... and distrust of leadership)... it is seriously hampered.

Because of the criticisms that frequently come against elders... we should be cautious when elders are accused. The bottom line is that accusations ***are going*** to come. We should not be surprised when they do... but we should be cautious. Our verse says Elders are owed thoughtful protection.

Someone might ask, “*Shouldn't we use that kind of caution with everybody?*” ... Why should elders get special protection? ... The reason Paul said elders deserve this kind of honor... has to do with the public

nature of the elder's position. If a church leader were destroyed... and later it was found out that the allegations were unfounded... it would be a black stain on the church in the eyes of the world.

Church members are to be zealous to do whatever they can to protect the reputation of the elders in the church... not because they are a special class of Christians... but more importantly... because the church is the “pillar and foundation of the truth” (3:15). ... We don't want the display of God's glory diminished in any way... and we don't want the gospel to be hindered in its advance... as a result of people in the church (or in the community)... who don't trust the integrity of elders.

By God's grace let's be eager to eliminate unfounded accusations. Let's put an end to unhelpful and ungodly criticisms that bring down the reputation of those who labor in the leadership of the church. ... [P A U S E] ...

So far Paul has given us two instructions: Honor faithful elders with financial provision... and protect all elders from unfounded accusations. ... There were leaders in Ephesus who were worthy of honor because they did their jobs with integrity. ... However... sadly... there were others who were failing. (They were even teaching false-doctrine.) ... And so Paul addresses the matter of disciplining such leaders.

1 Tim 5:20-21

When there is credible evidence on the basis of two or three witnesses... those who “continue in sin” are to receive a public rebuke. (The words “*continue in sin*” assumes that they have been confronted – but they “*continue in sin*” anyway) If that happens then do everything openly and aboveboard. The “back-room” and “under-the-counter” deals that politicians

do... have no place in a church. ... Openly... an elder is to be brought before the whole church.

Does rebuking elders publicly seem inefficient and disruptive? ... Why not just dismiss the elder quietly and move along? Because an elder not only has great honor. He also has greater accountability... and it is with the entire congregation.

Second... we should rebuke as a warning to others. ... Paul wanted others to look on public rebuke and say: “May THAT never be so with me. I don’t want that.” ... It’s like how one of my daughters (now says) that when she was young... she steered herself clear of a lot of trouble... because she saw her sister get disciplined for her misbehavior.

This is a weighty matter! ... “God” ... “Christ Jesus” ... and “the elect angels” ... are called as witnesses. ... Timothy and his leaders are called to exercise fair... even-handed discipline in the sight of God and Jesus Christ - who will one day judge them. But why are “*elect angels*” mentioned?

The reference to “*elect angels*” is perplexing – especially since this phrase is not used anywhere else in Scripture. But here is what I think: Angels are curious about God’s redemptive program for the human race (1 Peter 1:12 tells us that). ... And God is teaching the angels about His wisdom through His dealings with the church (according to Eph. 3:10). So SOME get to watch – to see how we will impartially execute discipline in the church... wherever it is needed. This is SUCH a weighty matter - that even angels are watching us... to learn about God’s wisdom! (We better do it right!) ... [P A U S E] ...

A few years ago... I was asked to be part of a church planting effort... by being on a board that oversaw it. We sent two pastors to a different city to start a new church. Things went very well for the first two years. Then when one of the other board members that was part of... the oversight in which I was involved... was visiting this new church... he was asked by one of the two pastors to do some marital counseling... with him and his wife.

When he did... my fellow overseer discovered that this pastor had been heavily involved with internet pornography... and that had deeply wounded his marriage. The overseer offered as much immediate help as he could... which included telling them that he would be informing the other overseers so that we would diligently pray for his victory over this sin.

About six months later we were informed that the pastor's sin continued... and now his wife refused to attend church services... saying that she would not be part of her husband's hypocrisy. As overseers... we called the wife and she verified it. Then in a tearful conversation the pastor himself verified everything to the overseers.

We spent the next several days in lots of prayer about the situation... and then we met and made a decision. Oh! How I wish that I could stand before you today and tell you that we followed the instruction in 1 Tim 5:19-20. We didn't. ... Instead we QUIETLY took him away from the church... moved him to a different city... which was only to be temporary (while we provided him with a Christian counselor.) ... Our mistake was to think this was the best way to restore this pastor. That was out full intent. (We thought that we were extending Biblical grace to him.)

So when we tried to relocate him and get him professional help... neither he and his wife wanted to leave. Rather than face any potential embarrassment about leaving for a while... they chose to deny the pornography problem... and that their marriage was suffering. ... They blamed the overseers for playing favoritism and trying to give the other pastor greater prominence. ... They told this young church their story... and they wrote to the supporting churches (who had supported this church planting effort... from the beginning.) THEY talked freely. They spun their own narrative. (Meanwhile) the overseers remained quiet – never telling anyone the truth – because we thought that was the best way (and the kindest way) for the sinning pastor to be restored.

I probably don't need to tell you what happened. The church plant was ripped apart. Members left thinking that a jealous pastor convinced the overseers to favor him... and wrongfully disfavor the other. Needed support that had been coming from other churches to plant this new church – began to dry up.

Today the new church continues to exist. It struggles. But Boy(!) how I wish we had followed the instructions of today's passage – AND **THEN** sought counselling for the pastor and his wife. The gospel would not have been so hindered in that new church.

Rebuking an elder in the presence of all may seem overly-harsh... and disruptive... but in the long-run... **not doing it** bears greater destruction.

So far we've seen that the church is to honor... protect... and rebuke elders... which brings us to Paul's fourth and final overarching instruction. Verses 22–25 make this point.

1 Tim 5:22

One way to avoid the sticky problem of disciplining an elder is to be very careful about who is placed in that important position. Timothy should never be in a hurry about appointing an elder because he might overlook major problems or sins. To “lay hands” on someone in the context of ministry is to ordain and endorse that person to serve the congregation and to represent the church in an official capacity. Don’t do this too quickly.

Those who take part in the premature ordination of an errant elder share some of the blame for the negative consequences to their church.

Whichever is the case... Timothy was to keep himself free from sin. You won’t be able to discern a qualified elder if your own life is stained with sin. You will increase the likelihood of getting the right leaders in place – if you keep your life pure.

In order to follow this instruction... Timothy needed to know what “pure” meant. ... This was part of the false teaching going around the church in Ephesus. In chapter 4... we saw that the false teachers were advocating ascetism. (Ascetism...? What’s that...? ... Ascetism is denying ourselves... or not partaking of certain things like food and drink... thinking that we will gain God’s favor.) They taught that spiritual purity came from denying ourself certain pleasures... (But in chapter 4... Paul said God gave such good things to us... in order that we would be thankful to Him.)

Our next verse here in Timothy 5... will not make any sense to us... unless we remember that context. ... What did purity mean? Did it mean to deny yourself of certain things...? Paul told Timothy to stay pure... and then he addressed what was perhaps a misconception about purity.

Timothy may have given-in to the “*ascetic spirit*” (which we know had infected the church at Ephesus)... Verse 23 suggests that Timothy probably gave total **abstinence** from alcohol. ... So Paul needed to tell Timothy... that for the sake of his health... he ought to consider drinking a little wine... to combat what we call today (“Montezuma’s Revenge”) when US Citizens travel to Mexico.

Whenever I travel to a third-world country... I am very careful NOT to drink the common water... or I will be retching my guts out for days. I only drink bottled water... and when I go to Colombia... I take a water-purifying straw.

Verse 23 seems to be a note to Timothy in parenthesis... “*By the way Timothy... speaking of pure... put away your false thoughts about purity. Go ahead and drink a little wine... not just water (alone) which is making you sick. There is no need for you to suffer from a foreign city’s water...*”

1 Tim 5:23

The perils of legalism and asceticism can entrap the most holy people... even people like godly Timothy! ... Certainly the Bible teaches moderation (use A **LITTLE** WINE, TIMOTHY)... HOWEVER a destructive...self-righteous... asceticism is to be avoided. ... Ascetism does not make you pure... Timothy... so there is no need to be puking your guts out...”

Verse 24 picks up after Paul’s practical little side-note... in verse 23. He gets back to careful selection of elders.

1 Tim 5:24-25

When selecting elders for the church... we need to know that some people **sin** or perform good works in ways that are obvious to everyone. ... But others have sin or do good works that trail behind... (hidden from view.) They become known only after the individual has died and is judged by God. ... So Paul emphasized the difficulties that are so characteristic of choosing qualified candidates for the ordination. ... Mistakes will be made. ... Hasty... superficial assessments... (whether positive or negative)... are sometimes inaccurate... leading to the enlistment of unqualified men... or the overlooking of those whose fine qualities are less obvious.

With time (however) a man's true colors will emerge to a perceptive observer. So the warnings of verses 24–25... are designed to underline the caution of verse 22: *do not rush to ordain someone!*

There's always a need for more elders to be raised up in the church. ... However... the last thing we need is hurriedness in making this kind of massively important decision. To be sure... sometimes we are going to deny brothers we shouldn't deny... and sometimes we are going to appoint brothers we shouldn't appoint. ... That's just part of our fallen and finite nature. ... But we need to make sure we are doing everything we can to minimize those mistakes. ... We need to obey the Word in appointing godly men for the protection of the church.

(LISTEN!) Here is what we have been seeing in our passage today: How can we have the gospel flourish in the church and effectively go out into the world? It is by following God's intentions.

God's intention is not for shepherds to exploit the sheep... or for sheep to abuse the shepherd. ... God's intention is for pastors to lay their lives down for the flock... living among them and loving them with the love of Christ. In

response... the congregation will love and follow their shepherds... giving to them generously and willingly as the Word of God is faithfully taught. This is the context in which the gospel flourishes.

We will undermine our efforts to see the advance of the gospel if we don't pay attention to God's design for the church. The end goal of this passage is not that we would have well-paid pastors or publicly rebuke elders... but that the church would display the glory of God... and faithfully uphold the truth. ... The ultimate purpose of these verses... is that the gospel would go forward (unhindered) from our church. ... This is why (I believe God had me preach this passage today.)