

# The Duties of Discipleship

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Well, take your Bibles and go to 1 Timothy as we continue through this New Testament epistle. It's a very practical book, a lot of practical exhortations, of course, primarily it's the practical guidance of Paul to Timothy as he's left Timothy behind in Ephesus to set things in order in the local church. I call this beautifying the bride because that's what it's all about. As we fashion the church, that is, order or arrange it, and function in the church biblically, rightly, then the church will be the beautiful organism, creation God wants it to be and that's got to be the driving force of your life and I didn't overstate that. That's gotta be the driving force of your life, that you want to see God's church for us in this time, um, ah, time and space history, that's the local church for us, we want to see it fashioned, structured and functioning biblically. Of course, that's what we've been about for decades now, striving to be thoroughly biblical in the totality of our doctrines and our methods.

So we come now to 1 Timothy 1:18a. I'm sorry, that's as far as I got. 1 Timothy 1:18a, Paul writes to Timothy as he's continuing and he says this in verse 18,

18 This command I entrust to you, Timothy,

This command I entrust to you, Timothy. Now I call this "The Duties of Discipleship" and actually there's two sides to this, the immediate and specific context, of course, is Paul telling Timothy, "Here's some things, some duties, that you must make sure you carry out as a pastor, as a church leader," but that does not leave out the fact that God has called all Christians to the duties of discipleship. So today we'll lean on that side, we will look at every Christian's duties for the Lord in the local church, and then next week, Lord willing, we'll focus more on the pastor's duties, alright?

Now, this, this phrase, "This command I entrust you," the word "command" here is actually a term that was used in the military of this day. It has the idea of "to order. I'm ordering you, Timothy. Stand to attention. Obey what I'm telling you." So in this case, this is not a suggestion, it's not an option, it's not an opinion of Paul's, it's an order. It's a duty to be obeyed. And I just want to build on that concept that, are you listening? Christianity has duties assigned to it. Now that is, this is so out of vogue in professing Christendom today. As a matter of fact, pastors far and wide actually promote a church membership and a Christianity that's costless, that's almost meaningless. As a matter of fact, it's like, "Come here and watch us bless you and encourage you." Well, that's

wonderful, I hope that's always a part of church, but you don't hear a whole lot about duties today.

Paul amplifies this a little bit. He says, "This command I entrust to you." The word "entrust" there means "to lay it before you; make it clear as day." He said, "Now Timothy, this is an order and there's no debate about what I'm saying here. This is clear as a bell, you understand what I'm saying."

Now specifically, I think you have to go back up to verse 3. Look at it there. He says, "I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines." I think that's the specific thing he's referring back to. "Now Timothy, I'm commanding you to carry out this pastoral role teaching true doctrine, ordering the church to function according to that true doctrine, and at the same time," it's never one or the other, they always go together, "at the same time refuting, correcting and fixing the problem of unsound doctrine that's crept into the church. Now Timothy, this is not an opinion, this is not a suggestion, it's not an option. I've made it clear as a bell honor this order." Now this comes from Paul, his mentor, and beyond that, Paul had the office of apostle which had authority in every church.

So let's talk about the word "duty" for just a moment. Again, it's a foreign concept to so many so-called churches. I, I'm trying to discipline myself to not call them churches and I mean, I'm not trying to be funny. This is not tongue-in-cheek. There oughta be some irreducible minimums that you embrace and walk in if you're a church. There's some irreducible minimums that you should embrace and walk in if you're a married couple, certain things you have to do to be married and function as married. Well, that's the way the church is. Ah, we've been through all kind of movements in "the church" in the last several decades. We, you know, the seeker friendly movement, the church growth movement, and on and on, the missional movements, etc. etc., as if the 2,000 year old Bible is not sufficient, we've gotta come up with new stuff, new clever ways to package it, etc. etc. Well, here's the movement that serves me the most and it's the latest movement and it's quite big and it's gaining a lot of ground: the non-church movement. There's a movement abreast that's so shallow, so ridiculously intentionally unsound you can't call it a variety of the church.

By the way, brothers and sisters, there are no varieties of the church. This book is the truth. I can't put my variety, I can't put my latest niche, my latest viewpoint on the church. The church is God's church and he's written the manual and he dictates to me what his church is to be like. It matters not to me how excited people get about a certain trend or a certain fad, is it true? Now that gets us back to the word "duty." Do you come into church life grasping, embracing, standing on the fact that whether I'm thrilled this week or not, whether I'm blessed this week or not, whether the music did anything for me this week or not, whether I like the ladies in my small group or not, whether I like the guys in my small group or not, I have duties to my Lord in his church. That's what I want to get to this morning but that's a foreign concept. I mean, literally and I'm not, again, this is not pastoral verbiage of, of, of, of exaggeration. Millions and millions of Southern Baptists, the largest Protestant denomination, though we are declining, by the way, barely even

show up for church, much less embrace that they have any duties to perform. That's why we changed, ah, now decades ago to begin teaching people, lovingly always, sweetly in our spirit always, but teaching folks who want to come into membership their duties to being a church member, and if you're not gonna strive or at least try in some of these areas, then why do you, you don't need to join yet. You're welcome as an attender. We'll love you and welcome you and include you in so many ways, but membership has some responsibilities. It has some duties.

I mean, think about it for a moment. When's the last time you heard a tv preacher talk about the duties of following Jesus Christ? Actually I hope you're not listening to tv preachers. I mean, we're talking about, you talk about wicked nonsense. Now there's a good one or two but they're hard to find. When's the last time you heard anybody talk about the duties of being a Christian or to your local church? Can you imagine Joel Osteen coming on and saying, "Today I'm gonna talk to you about your duties to the local church." He'd lose three-fourths of his audience because three-fourths of his audience plus are goats, they're not sheep. It takes a sheep heart to respond to these truths. Goat heart doesn't like this stuff. The hot topics today in church are how to have peace in your life; how to have a life full of joy; how to have a life of happiness; how to have a life that's successful; how to have a life that's fun; how to have a wonderful marriage; how to raise your children to be good kids, etc. And all that's good, by the way, and church has some of that but the truth is all of these things that should be involved in any true church are the byproducts of our duties to God and his church. They're not the main things, they're the overflow. Ladies, you'd better hope that guy when he said I do didn't just mean as long as the thrill is there, I'm in. No, when the thrill is gone, he's still committed to his duties to his wife and his marriage, and of course, vice-versa.

Paul frequently exhorted Timothy about his duties as a pastor, for example. Over in 2 Timothy 4:1-2, listen to how Paul does this. This is strong. "I solemnly charge you," and he just, notice the weight he puts on this, "in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom." Paul's saying, "I'm summoning everything I can to tell you about the gravity and the seriousness of this duty you have as God's pastor. Preach the word." Not use the word in your message, preach the word. Very big difference there. Men, you've gotta be discerning. There's a difference between using the Bible and preaching the word.

"Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season." Means there's gonna be a lot of times when it's not gonna be fun and the people will clamor for something different and you'll start losing folks if you just keep preaching the word. That's not a good season, but even when it's out of season, you keep on. This is your duty. This is your charge. But brothers and sisters, there are duties in Christianity. "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction."

Jesus taught in a weighty manner about our duties as a Christian. Luke, ah, 17, verses 7 through 10. Jesus said, "Which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come immediately and sit down to eat'? But will he not say to him, 'Prepare something for me to eat, and properly clothe yourself and

serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink'?" Well, that won't go over in today's, ah, social justice climate, will it?

Verse 9, "He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he? So you too," as Christians, he means, "when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have only done that which we ought to have done.'" He said when you do all your duties I've commanded you to do, your attitude should be, "For what the Lord's done for me, I, I, I haven't even started yet." The concept is, the point is the duties he's laying out.

Paul understood his own duties. We know he exhorted Timothy heavily on a number of occasions but Paul understood that he didn't sign up for this thing, he had, an, an, a commission placed upon him, duties to perform for his Lord. 1 Corinthians 9:16 and 17, Paul says, "For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel. For if I do this voluntarily, well, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me." Paul said, "I want you to understand something, I didn't sign up for this job." Paul says, "I didn't write my own job's description. God did that. I submit to him and I carry out my duties." Moms and dads, grandmothers and granddads, teach your children and teach your grandchildren, yeah, yeah, there's joy in church and there's sweetness and there's love like you can't get anywhere else, but first and foremost foundationally you need to understand your duties to God and to his church.

All of today's believers have their duties and those duties are centered in the local church. I was reflecting back in my study this week how that dawned on me one day because I, I, I mean, I, I'm a little bit, um, a little bit, um, I've already told you I was a little bit obsessive and a lot of you laughed and said amen, so I don't want to say that again, but I don't know of another word. So as a young Christian, I was just, think, I would get these texts about loving your brothers and serving each other and I thought that meant just every Christian everywhere so I'd just kinda lose my mind for a while, like I, this guy I know at work and this guy I know in the neighborhood and then I got church people and I couldn't wrap my arms around it. It was exhausting and overwhelming and then I understood, "No, no, no, the New Testament is written to local churches," and man, it's like everything worked then. I can get that. Sure, we do good to everybody as we're able, the Bible says Galatians 6:10, but I'm to focus on my church, then I can really fulfill my duties to God if I get it inside that context. Now the key is make sure you're in a church, solid church. That's very key.

Now we do have duties to Christ in all areas of life. Matter of fact, brothers and sisters, the totality of your life is spiritual. Never ever look at your life like a pie and each slice of the pie is a different part of your life: my social life, my family life, my work life, and then my church life or my spiritual life. Absolutely foreign to the Scriptures. No, the totality of your life is Christianity. The totality of your life is spiritual and so in the totality of our lives as we, as we are husbands or maybe we're wives, as we're children or we're employers or we're employees, or citizens, the Scripture addresses these things and we're to fulfill our duties in all of those areas. Now not all of those areas apply to all of

us, of course, but all Christians, all born again "called-out ones," that's the word "church, ekklesia," means you're a called out one. Called out from what? You're called out from Satan's kingdom to God's. You're called out from the world to God's church. You're called out from the, the groups and the, the, the collectivities and organizations you may belong to in the world. That's no longer the center of who you are, you're called out from that to a new group, a new organism, the local church. You're God's ekklesia. You're God's called-out ones.

All who are born again, all who are of the called-out ones, you have duties for God in your local church. Hebrews 10:23 through 25, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful." In other words, he's saying keep on keeping on now. Now specifically how are we to do this? Verse 24, "let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds." Who are you supposed to be considering how you're gonna help them carry on their Christianity lovingly and with good deeds? Well, the folks in your small group, the folks in your local church. You can't do this for all the Christians everywhere, of course, but you can focus there and get it done. Verse 25, "not forsaking our own assembling together," you're gonna have to get with people to learn one another well enough to trust, bond, build some sort of transparency so that you can encourage one another, to go on for God. He said, "Don't forsake the meeting together. Some are already doing that as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near."

Now I want to expand on how this works. What does this look like? Okay, I wanna do my duties for my Lord in his local church. What does that look like? Well, Paul was Timothy's mentor, and hopefully all of you have had a mentor or two, maybe it was a parent, maybe it was a grandparent. Ah, our, our decorations lady, Amanda Hollander, she's just gave birth to a baby and in between having babies, she's been ordering carpet and stuff, hope in July we'll get some of the renovations started. It's gonna be, it's gonna be beautiful, and, um, won't it be nice to walk on the carpet and not have lumps all in it? But I'll, I'll never forget when Amanda told me that her grandfather was such a spiritual and godly patriarch for the family. He was a mentor to the whole family. Thank God for those, amen? We all need mentors.

Paul was Timothy's mentor. As a matter of fact, the New Testament is full of that example. Paul might be the only guy you can find who didn't have a direct mentor, and even then he had Ananias and some others who helped him early on to understand and grow, but you know, God's given no matter who else you may have and sometimes our mentors come and go, we have someone for a while, then maybe they move off and then it changes, but you always have one mentor that never goes away, your pastor or your pastors. That's kinda the way it was with Paul as the apostle mentoring Timothy, the pastor, and now God's ordained that God gives you pastors who mentor you in your service to the Lord.

Now for the remainder of our time, we're gonna go to 1 Thessalonians 5. Would you do that? Turn over to 1 Thessalonians 5. It's only about three pages back. 1 Thessalonians 5 because as Paul's writing the church at Thessalonica, he amplifies just how easy it is and

how simple it is for you – now listen – for you to know you're doing your duties to God. Alright, this isn't hard. It, it's just so simple and by the way, this is something I know I'm preaching to the choir this morning because you've embraced this many years ago. As a matter of fact, most of you embraced it before I became senior pastor but now we've grown in how to live this out better, but 1 Timothy 5:12 and 13 gives us an understanding of how we're to live this out.

Now but here's what I want you to understand first of all is, that context is everything. Always remember that, context is everything. Matter of fact, ah, when you're studying your Bibles and you see in the New Testament the word "us" or "we," those plural pronouns, almost without exception unless specifically it says differently you can say local church, local church, local church, local church, my church. That's who that's talking... The Bible really has almost no instruction to an individual. Almost never. It's always church, church, church, the whole church family, and that's one of the hard things for Americans. We have this rugged individualism that has good in it but it, out of balance it's bad because in Christianity you can't think in terms of individualism. You miss the point because the Bible's written to a group, local churches.

But context is everything. Verses 9 through 11 here of 1 Thessalonians 5 is the context. It builds the context for where we're going in verses 12 and 13. He says, "For God has not destined us," or appointed us, "to wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." Verse 10, "who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him." Notice the wording there. He says God has appointed you not for wrath but for salvation and all those words the Bible uses for our salvation, we're chosen, we're called, we're elect, we're predestined, and now we've got we're appointed and every bit, every one of those you did nothing. You are the subject acted, acted upon by God but that's for another sermon. God appointed you not for wrath and then he goes on and he amplifies that, "who died for us," verse 10, died for us, the plurality, the group, "so that whether we," the plurality of the group, the local church, we "are awake or asleep, we," the church, "will live together," that's all of us again, "with Him." He's saying, "Here's how it works. Whether you live on the earth, you always have Him and each other, or whether you die and go to heaven, you still have Him and each other."

Are you listening to me, church? See the collectivity is always emphasized and all these preachers, I used to grow up hearing that the great majority of their sermons would be addressed to an individual and how to live your life better and they weren't really always wrong, I don't mean that, but they missed the point so often because it's not about you having a better life as much as you in the church family, in the collectivity of the church living out your life. So the context here is strongly the local church.

He continues on in, ah, verse 11, "Therefore encourage one another," that's encourage one another in the context of the Lord's coming one day. He's not destined us for wrath so let's encourage each other to keep on keeping on together. "Encourage one another," that's the group again, "and build up one another," that's the group again, "just as you," that's plural for the whole group are, "also are doing." So he says, "Ah, you need to keep getting together, you need to keep meeting together, and you keep striving together, to

keep encouraging and building up each other to be the best Christians you can be for the glory of God."

Um, Malachi 3:16 is a good cross reference here, "those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD gave attention and heard it." Those who feared the Lord spoke to one another. Here's the context: the world around them hated them, hated their doctrine and hated their God. Does that sound familiar to you? You and I live in a world that around us hates our doctrine and hates our God, so much so that, um, ah, the Christian community, I mean the real Christian community today reminds me of the Romanians I visited many years ago right after, after the assassination of their dictator, Ceausescu, and the people there were just muted, just blank, because they knew they could say something and the government would pounce on them, that is, say something about their Christian faith, and we're kinda getting that way in America where we're kinda afraid to talk about our doctrine, talk about our convictions, talk about our morals. I mean, with the social media today, we, I mean, ah, 100 people could make you think 10 million people are on you. Remember, that's usually the way it is.

Brothers and sisters, are you listening to me? It's usually not near as many as you think it is. It's like the guy who was selling frog legs to the restaurant owner who had the seafood buffet. The farmer said, "Man, I've got bullfrogs, I've got thousands of them. I'll bring you at least 100 set of frog legs for your seafood buffet." The restaurant owner said, "That's great. I need three times that many." He said, "Well, I can have three times that many." He said, "Alright, next, next Friday afternoon, deliver them to me and I'll pay you for them." They worked out an agreement. Friday afternoon came, the farmer showed up and he only had 10 sets of frog legs and the restaurant owner said, "I've been advertising this all week, what do you mean only 10 sets? You said you had hundreds and hundreds." He said, "Man, when I heard them, it sounded like hundreds and hundreds."

Well, that's the way it is when our world decries against us. They know how to amplify their voices. We found out in the last election there's a lot of silent people who still have convictions about what they believe and what they stand for. But as that happens, as Malachi 3:16 says, the people of God get together and they speak truth to each other. As the wicked blaspheme our God and blaspheme our doctrines, we continue to meet together to build one another back up, encourage one another again, "Stay with it! Don't bend! Don't bow! Don't run! Stay strong!" Build each other up. That's what the local church is for. Some of you slipped on me this week. You slipped on me this week. Some of your thinking went off track this week and that's why it wears me out on Sunday because I gotta get the truth back in there every Sunday and get that silly nonsense kicked back out again. That's what preaching is. I'm gonna show that to you very specifically here in a moment.

So the point is when, when you get to 1, ah, 1 Thessalonians 5:12 and 13, which we're gonna camp on for the rest of our time, the context is local church, local church, local church, local church, and our duties to one another in the local church, alright? Here's what I want to say: God gives pastors to the local church to organize and oversee our duties one to the other. I mean, and I used to have, ah, I, I, I used to be swayed by this.

I'm not swayed by it no longer so don't try it. Somebody would come in and say, "Brother Jeff, God's led me to do this ministry. Brother Jeff, God's led me, God's gifted me to do this ministry and that ministry." Yeah, that's just what we need is a thousand different people walking in here and telling me what their ministry is gonna be. Can you imagine the chaos and the disorder of that? There can be no functioning of a church if there's no honoring of the leadership to oversee it and guide it. Just can't be.

And so Paul writing to this local church, Thessalonica, when he gets to verses 12 and 13, in effect is saying this, "Your duties to the church starts with your duty to your pastor." Did you hear that? Our duties to the church starts with our duties to the pastor. I mean, how in the world, we've been at this almost four decades together and we've been striving to be biblical in our doctrine and in our methodologies, how could a guy waltz in here and say, "Boy, God told me to do this. Y'all gotta dismantle this area, dismantle that area because I know what God wants us to do." I'm gonna say, "Wait a minute, buddy, I love you but time out. You'd better open a Bible and show me where we're wrong, number 2, you need to show me where you've done this for 20 or 30 years and it worked better. First the Bible, then experience." Here's my point, the simple point is: your duties to the local church begins by understanding your duty to the pastor and I'm not making this up. Now, you won't hear this many places because pastors are scared to preach this. Sometimes they're just cowards, they're just afraid. Some men are genuinely trying to be humble but it's a false humility, even though they're genuine if it's not, because if I don't preach this straight to you and teach this to you, I'm dishonoring the Lord, I'm doing a disservice to you and a disservice to the church at large. So I, I, I will not back up one iota from what I'm about to say and preach. It's as much God's word as Jesus died on the cross for our sins.

Let's look at it together. He tells them in verse 12, "we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you," and we're gonna go into all that in just a moment. So when he says he requested, it's interesting in this case, unlike Paul's statement to Timothy, he does not command, he does not, ah, require, he does not charge but he's in the flow of the preceding context and what he seems to be saying is, "Brothers, you know, you grasp it's right, it's proper, you grasp that it's essential for your well-being that you do what I'm about to tell you to do." So he lovingly affirms in this request that they go ahead and do what they know to do, what they already believe in their heart, and that is fulfill your duties to your pastor.

Now here's the likelihood, this is a newer church. It hadn't been around very long and newer churches, especially when they're started out of radically pagan environments like Thessalonica, have lots of issues. Those were spelled out very clearly in the Corinthian church as we see in 1 and 2 Corinthians. And so they have a young pastor or pastors who are green, who are learning, who are still growing, who are still repenting, so it'd be easy for especially some of the older guys to say they don't know quite what they're doing yet, but here's what you've gotta remember, God knows what he's doing when he placed them in that office. Be careful raising your hand and your voice against a God-called minister. Now if he's a hireling, you'll get by with it, but if he's God's, be careful.



So Paul writes to a church, I mean, they had seen these men for some time but likely they're green and new, but here's what he says to them about their duties. I. He says, "First of all, understand the sovereign hand of God put you in the church and under your pastor's rule." He said, "You've gotta remind yourself God did this." You didn't sign up for his family, God did that. You didn't say, "I think I'm gonna join a local church," God put you in a local church. You know he put you there when you find a biblical one.

He says in verse 12 very clearly, "you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you," here's the phrase for now, "in the Lord." In the Lord. He said, "Now all of you who are in the Lord know the sovereign hand of God saved me, put me in His family, and put me in the local church and put me under the pastor's charge or rule."

Let me ask you afresh: how did you get "in the Lord"? How did you become saved? How did you become one of his? Did you get in the Lord by self-renovation? You just said, "You know what? I'm just gonna clean myself up. I'm a little bit dirty, I'm a little bit slimy, I'm a little bit, ah, ah, ah, unkempt morally and ethically. I'm gonna clean some things up." Is that how you got in the Lord? You know the answer to that: absolutely not. Did you get into the Lord by religious participation, then? "Tell you what, I'm gonna join the church. I'm gonna let the preacher baptize me down there. I'll start taking the Lord's Supper and I'll start, ah, attending the services," and if you're in some churches, "I'll start going to the Mass and I'll start doing the things the priest says to do. I'm gonna participate. I'm gonna do this by religious participation." Does that get you in the Lord? It'll get you in the church but it also gets you into hell if you're not in the Lord.

Paul says here those who are in the Lord need to grasp this truth and this duty. Whether through spiritual or rather self-renovation or religious participation, what about works accumulation? Is that how you got in the Lord? "Well, I'm just gonna start doing some good works. I'm gonna start tithing. I'm gonna start helping the lady down the street that needs help. I, I'm gonna help out some in the children's program at the church," and here we go. Is that how you get in the Lord? No, you do those things because you got in the Lord.

The point is, brothers and sisters, it was not self-renovation, it was not religious participation, it was not works accumulation, it was a spiritual regeneration that got you in the Lord. God used the human means of a preacher preaching the Gospel or some servant of God sharing the Gospel and God's Holy Spirit used the message of the Gospel, pierced your heart, repentance came, the weight of your sin became real, and faith in Christ birthed within you. That's how you get in the Lord.

So now I'll just give you a disclaimer: if you're not in the Lord, this don't apply to you. Don't expect it to make sense. Don't expect your heart to grasp it and embrace it. This is only for those who are in the Lord but if you're in the Lord, I., you understand it's the sovereign hand of God that saved me and placed me under the rule of a God-called pastor. We're talking about duties to God begin with duties to our pastor.

II. He says here: be aware of them and respect them. Talking about your pastors. Be aware of them and respect them. He says in verse 12, "But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those." The idea of appreciation here is, is, is the idea that, um, you take them seriously. You listen to them. They're high up on the scale of those you listen to. I'm telling you, if you, if you, if you polled the average Baptist or Evangelical, the pastor's importance to them is barely a blimp on the radar screen of their lives, much less being where Paul said they have to be, up high. His point is of all the people in your life in which it's right to show honor and respect, make sure the pastor's up high on the list. This instruction is so important because – listen to me now – the world doesn't want your pastor to be that high, the devil doesn't want him to be that high on your list, your religious friends at work and school don't think he should be that high on the list, and your flesh scoffs against this, so he says it's gonna have to be an intentional effort to say, "I'm gonna put my pastors up there." Not because we're better men, but because we hold an office of responsibility for your soul.

So the sovereign hand of God put you in the church and put you under the pastor's rule. He said be aware of that. Secondly, be aware of your pastor and respect them. Thirdly, your pastors are proven. He says in verse 12, 1 Thessalonians again, 5:12, "But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those," here it is, "who diligently labor among you." Now even though in this immediate context their pastors may not have been there as long as I've been with you, they were still there long enough that the people had seen them and had good encouragement about the genuineness and the diligence of their work. Now you, Grace Life Church, are on the other end of the spectrum. It's virtually impossible to find a church staff with a longer tenure than your church staff. You've watched me right at 40 years. Many of our staff, 25-35 years. He said, "You've watched them. Do they appear genuine to you? And appear diligent about what God's called them to do? Have they striven to be faithful even when it wasn't fun or maybe when it caused great difficulty?" He said, "That's another reason why you ought to see your duty to God beginning with your duties to honor your pastor."

IV. God appointed them to this rule. God appointed them. Verse 12 again, "But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord," that's the phrase, "have charge over you." Really it means to take the rule over you. Now in the day in which this was written, this wouldn't have ruffled any feathers even in the secular culture. They got authority. They just lived under it Roman or Jew. But in today's world, this is scoffed at. It's ridiculed. It's undermined. And they'll always throw up the example of a Jim Bakker or a Jimmy Swaggert, somebody that, "Oh, these people followed them and they were a phony." Well, two side to that coin. First of all, if they're phony, thank God when they're exposed and you can get out from under them and get in, get in and follow a good one. And secondly, don't let a few bad apples spoil the whole bunch.

God appointed them the literal wording Paul uses, "to have charge over you." Now here's what you need to know about a God-called pastor. Now perhaps in my young and immature years but I want to tell you after almost four decades, I don't relish that truth. God's given me charge over you which means I give an account for your soul at the

judgment bar of God and if it wasn't for the sovereignty of God, I'd never sleep at night, and any pastor that's flippant about this thing and foolish with it, is not called of God. Eternal souls are on the line and the Bible says your pastors are proven and God has appointed them to this charge. Remember what Paul said? We'll not read it again but Paul said, "I didn't choose this thing. I, I, I didn't volunteer for this thing. God called me into it. It wasn't of my will, it was His will." And I'm telling you, you're looking at a man in the pulpit this morning who knows God called me to this job and any man that can't say that and look his people straight in the eye needs to resign immediately.

Now committees in churches, committees can be helpful but committees do not have the rule over the church of Jesus Christ. Democratic voting in the church can be useful in some church decisions, yet the democratic process alone does not lead the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is head of his church. Jesus is Lord of his church. Jesus is the leader of his church and he administrates his lordship and leadership through called men who must lead according to the word of God because God appointed them to that role.

Now I don't care at all about many many areas of your life. I don't care what car you choose to drive. I don't care what clothes you choose to wear as long as they're modest. I don't care whether you home school, Christian school or public school, as long as you're actively knowing what your children are being taught. And 1,001 other issues, they're none of my business. Now I've had many guys, a lot of our businessmen have come making a decision, "Pastor, what do you think? Would you pray with me?" And I'm honored to do that but I would never put myself there. I don't understand these pastors that put on their people all of these extra-biblical legalisms that, you know, like, you've gotta dress like you came off the cast of "Little House on the Prairie" or something. I just don't understand that nonsense. Trust me, it's hard enough to get you guys to walk in the truths that are clear in the Bible, much less me making a bunch of them up. As a matter of fact, I lean toward liberty, not law. Obviously the things that are crystal clear in Scripture we're all gonna stand on and enforce one to another, always lovingly, always with humility, but we've got to stand on something.

I mean, we basically, I know they kinda have affirmed their old position but the Methodist Church for all practical purposes is gone. Now there's some godly Methodists and some godly Methodist pastors, don't misunderstand me, but the system is gone. The fact that they had to debate about whether or not they're gonna embrace the sin of homosexuality, which sin is next? Let's just go on down the list. Let's just get to where none of it's sin anymore. If it wasn't for the African bishops who came over here and looked the American bishops in the eye and said, "We don't care what you believe and we don't care how much money you give us, we can't be bought. Right is right. Wrong is wrong." If it wasn't for that, they'd have already voted to go that route.

Here's my point: when things are clear, look, when things are clear I want you to know as your pastor I'm not dogmatic, I'm bulldogmatic, but on all the other things, liberty and charity, amen? So I don't care about all that stuff but on the things God's clear about and when it comes to structuring and ordering the church, you're to honor God's pastors.

V. You're to honor them and see your duty to God as first your duty to honor your pastor because your pastors are gifted to give you brain transplants. That's right. You've got some bad stuff in your head. Bad, bad, bad stuff and a lot of it's so bad it parades as good Christian thinking and it's not. It's been spun around and twisted up and reshaped. Bad stuff in there.

The word here is "instruction." He says in verse, um, 12, the last phrase, these men "have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction." The word "instruction" comes from two root Greek words. The two root Greek words for "instruction" are these: number 1 means "the mind"; number 2 means "to place into." So God says your pastor has been given to you by God to repeatedly, hopefully powerfully, consistently take the truth of God and put it in your mind and get the non-truths out of your brain. You are in the continual flow of a brain transplant as a child of God. That's why, dads and granddads, make sure your families are under clear, strong, biblical teaching and not this silly carnival nonsense that's going on called Christianity today. Not enough truth in their messages to dislodge any error. If you don't leave here sometimes thinking, "I hadn't really thought about it that way before," then I'm failing in my job or you've already arrived, but according to Paul you need instruction, you need it placed in your brain. Placed in your brain, and by the way, I need it placed in my brain too and, and in my study every week, God's placing stuff in my brain and kicking other stuff out, and so I get to come in here on Sunday after he's done it to me and yell at you for a while, and hopefully you're wise enough, hopefully you're in the Lord so you grasp the wisdom of coming in here with humility to keep taking in the truth of God and kicking out the error that's lodged so strongly in there.

You see, you don't gain God's truth through the common five senses, you gain God's truth through the sixth sense of the Holy Spirit. God has ordained, ordained pastors to faithfully labor in the word in preaching to put truth in your mind, then the Holy Spirit comes along and he says inside of you, "Yes, take hold of that and throw out the other thought." So I can do all I can do but if the Holy Spirit of God doesn't come up within you and say, "Grab that and let the other junk go," you've been thinking backwards. Then you're, first of all, you're not in the Lord because the Holy Spirit is in those who are in the Lord, helping you.

Ephesians 4:11 and 12, "And He gave," I said your pastors are gifted to give you these brain transplants, "He gave," that means he's in the context of the gifts he gave to the church and then he comes to Ephesians 4:11 and says, "Here's another gift, He gave you apostles," that office is gone, "prophets," the office of prophets is gone, "evangelists," I debate on that one, but here's the one I know is in effect, "and pastor teachers." Now here I would argue this don't mean elders in general, it means that elder who's uniquely gifted to be the preaching pastor. Now what has he given you them for? "For the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ." So he gave you as a gift your pastor to help you in this process of brain transplanting. Old thoughts out, new thoughts in from the word of God.

Romans 7. Highly esteem your pastors. Look at verse 13 of 1 Thessalonians 5, "and that you esteem them very highly." Literally the Greek means here "with extreme abundance." You hold them up with extreme abundance. Why? Why would you do that? Well, we're gonna amplify it in a moment because their work is that valuable to your soul, to your wife's or your husband's soul, to your children's souls, to your grandchildren's souls. They're on the line because God ordained preaching as a primary means to convert their soul.

VII. Understand that your duty to Christ and his church begins with your duty to the pastor. You need to draw strength for this out of the supply of agape. He says do all this in love, verse 13. Do it in love. Now he doesn't just mean do it in a loving way, that's included, what he means is there's been a new love transplanted into you when you were converted. This new love gives you a high appreciation for God's wisdom and God's way in contrast to man's wisdom and man's ways. So you could draw out of what was put in you in the new birth and get this energy to do what's right, i.e. honoring your pastor and fulfilling your duties to honor your pastor.

Romans 5:5, "hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us." You as a, you have a reservoir supply of agape love, a unique, new, radical kind of love that you did not have beforehand. It's not of this natural element. It's supernatural. It's placed within you. Therefore when you hear truths like what we're preaching this morning, it's not a woeful drudgery to you, it's just an overflow of that new love God put in you so you say, "Now I love God and now I love Christ and now I love His church, and I love that He loves me, and I love His wisdom, His wisdom to justify me through His Son Jesus Christ, and I love His wisdom to sanctify me by putting me in a local church and putting me under the rule of a God-called pastor." You're honoring the wisdom of God when you do what Paul is writing to the church at Thessalonica here.

VIII. Embrace the value of their work. He said now do all of this, well, appreciate them, that is respect them, take them seriously, they diligently labor among you, I'm in verse 12, you've seen them enough to know you, you should follow them. They have charge over you. God placed them in this position of rule over you. They give you instruction. They, they're doing a brain transplant on you and you need it so badly. Verse 13, you esteem them very highly, super-abundantly hold them up high, you do it in love out of the reservoir of love God puts in you at the new birth, and then because of their work. Because of their work. They have a work like no other work.

The value of their work is beyond estimation. What's the value of your eternal soul? First of all, it's hard work. It's not easy work. Now you can get in the pastorate if you've got good human skills and good personality skills. I'm not gonna say that. If you've got good people skills, if you're good on your feet and good at the gift of gab etc., you can, you can really kind of have fun in the pastorate and make a good salary, but you'll be a hireling and you'll answer at the judgment bar of God, but if you try to reform a church to be biblically healthy, which is what every pastor has to do in every generation, it's hard work.

1 Timothy 4:2 through 7. Preach the word. Be ready in season and out of season. Reprove. Rebuke. Exhort. With great patience and instruction for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine." Not it might come, the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine but wanting to have their ears tickled, they accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires and will turn away their ears from the truth, that means they'll turn away their ears from the pastor who preaches truth, and turn aside to myths. But you be sober in all things. Endure hardship, this is to the pastor, endure this hardship through the work of evangelists, fulfill your ministry. Then Paul says, take me for example, verse 6 here, for I'm already being poured out as a drink offering and my time of departure has come. I fought the good fight. Paul said it was hard, it was a fight all the way to the end. We need more boys to be called into the ministry but let's make sure God's called them. It's too hard. It's too hard if God hasn't called him.

Not only is it hard work, it's a heavy work, what I mean it's weighty. God has ordained that his primary glory is through his local church and when he calls you to have the rule over a local church, that's a weighty thing. You've gotta make sure your motives are right and make sure you're thoroughly biblical. The eternal good of man is on the line. That's a weighty thing.

The Lord's work in the ministry is a heavy responsibility and humanly speaking, it would be overwhelming except for the sovereignty of God. You have to throw back on yourself and talk to yourself as a pastor and say, "God called me to this. I'm not adequate but He knows what He's doing."

Paul talked about how he pastored with great sorrow and unceasing grief. Paul talked about how he would preach the Gospel to some. He's an aroma of life, to some he's an aroma of death, and he talks about who's adequate for these kind of things?

It's a hard work. It's a heavy work. So consider, he says to the church members, the value of their work. Lastly, number 9: it's essential for peace and God's glory in the local church. It's essential that you honor the Lord and see your duty to the Lord as being faithful in your duties to your pastor because it's essential that you have peace in the church, or to have peace in the church and to glorify God through the church. If, if, if your football team got together and everybody did their own thing and they didn't understand their duty to honor the head coach, you'd just have chaos. Nothing would work well. There would be no peace and there'd be no glory for that team, I can assure you that.

When he says live in peace here, where is it? In verse, um, I'm in 1 Thessalonians 5, verse, um, 13, the last phrase, "live in peace with one another," what he really means here, the amplification of the Greek means, "and you will have peace with one another; to the end of obtaining peace in the local church." If you're altogether humble and grasp God's wisdom and honor the things he says to do for your pastors, then there's gonna be, the end will be peace in the church, unity, sweetness, love. Vast numbers of professing

believers today believe that their duty to their local church is nothing more than showing up on Sunday morning, getting blessed by the song service, and getting something out of the sermon to help them be a better person that week. Well, that's part of it but it's only maybe 10%. That's kinda like saying, "I, I, my purpose in buying a car is to have a place to relax because the seats are comfortable, especially if they have heating and cooling in them, and they got good cup-holders for my iced tea or my Route 44 Diet Coke." Well, that's part of what is in a car but maybe only 10%. You're missing the point. That's not what a car is for and just coming and hoping you're blessed and get a little insight to live better the next week, that's part of it, but barely 10% of what a church is. I mean, if your primary view of a car is comfortable seats and good cup-holders so you can relax, you have a warped or incomplete or both view of your car. A car is too expensive to buy it for only that. A car is too valuable to use it for only that. The church of the Lord Jesus Christ is too valuable, is too valuable for you to come and give it a tip of your energy and not be sober and serious about your duties to the local church.

It's too valuable and, Ma'am, may I say to you, you may not get your way, Sir, may I say to you, you may not get your way, Pastor, you may not get your way, but the good of the church and the glory of God is worth all of us viewing one another as more important than ourselves. The church is too valuable. Peter said the church of the Lord Jesus Christ was bought with precious blood, imperishable, spotless, the blood of Jesus Christ. No wonder John did not, I don't think John even raised his pen off of his parchment paper when he came to write this next verse. I don't think the Apostle John had one moment of hesitation when he wrote 1 John 3:16, "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the," local church. That's what that means. You can't run through the world finding every Christian to lay down your life for, that's unreasonable, but in your family, your local family, you can do that.

Now I charge you this morning on the authority of the word of God and for the honor of Jesus Christ to renew your hearts to do your duties to God and his church. Some of you must, some of you must step it up a notch or two. You must. Now don't make this an overwhelming thing. Basically if you'll come to church and try to serve in your small group, I believe because we've worked hard to make this biblical, I believe you can face the Lord one day and say, "Lord, I feel like I fulfilled my duties." I believe you will likely hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant." But we've put this kind of energy to structure this church so that it's biblically sound. You'd better not face God on the great, or rather the judgment seat of Christ and say, "I coasted on that stuff." Do your duties to the Lord, now then you'll find your life increasingly filled with love, joy, peace, success, contentment, but they always follow your commitment to your duties. Always. I'm not worth it, let must just tell you that upfront. Brother Matt's not worth it. Brother Tom, all the rest of us. But the Lord's worth it. We do it for the Lord's sake, amen?