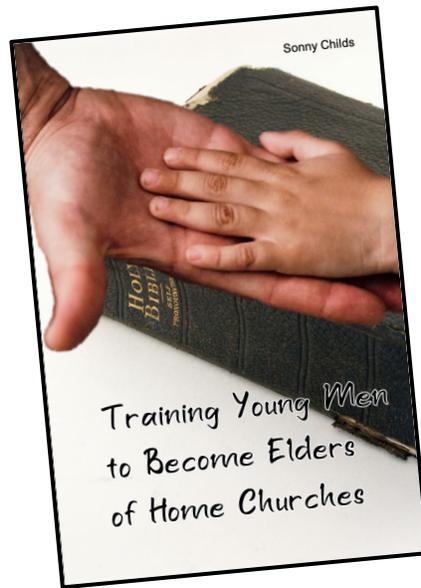


Training Young Men to Become Elders of Home Churches



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Introduction

Few things are more important to the future of the Lord's church than training young men to become effective shepherds of the flock of God. No position within the collective body of the church carries with it a greater responsibility. Because of the awesome nature of this opportunity, preparation for this task should receive much greater priority than any other educational pursuit in life. It is the goal of this material to promote just such training.

According to the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, the characteristics of a man who is worthy to be a shepherd are outlined in two very important passages of Scripture. Below is a combination of those passages with the account from 1 Timothy serving as the primary text and any unique instructions from Titus being inserted within parentheses. These inspired instructions will serve as our list of goals for young men to achieve.

1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 (ESV) The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Therefore an overseer (Titus – “elders”) must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled (Titus – “He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered”), respectable (Titus – “upright, holy, and disciplined”), hospitable (Titus – “a lover of good”), able to teach, 3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money (Titus – “greedy for gain”). 4 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, (Titus – “his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination”) 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? (Titus – “For an overseer, as God's steward”) 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. (Titus – “He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.”) 7 Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

The characteristics listed above fall into five areas of influence for which young men need to prepare:

1. His Character
2. His Wife
3. His Children
4. His Church
5. His World

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Lesson 1

His Character, Part 1

1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 (ESV) The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Therefore an overseer (Titus – “elders”) must be **above reproach**, the husband of one wife, **sober-minded, self-controlled** (Titus – “**He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered**”), **respectable** (Titus – “**upright, holy, and disciplined**”), hospitable (Titus – “a lover of good”), able to teach, 3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money (Titus – “greedy for gain”). 4 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, (Titus – “his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination”) 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? (Titus – “For an overseer, as God's steward”) 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. (Titus – “He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.”) 7 Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

From the list of characteristics above, let's look at the ones which specifically describe a man's personal character and seek ways to develop that trait within the lives of young men.

“must be above reproach” – A young man should strive to live a life that keeps him blameless and unrebukable. While this certainly does not mean he must be perfect, it does mean that his life pattern is free from the need of constant rebuke. He should be able to learn lessons the first time and not repeat mistakes.

Suggestion: Teach young men to be conscientious of their image and aware of the acceptable standards placed upon them by their context. As an elder, his life will be under the microscope by the church and the world. For the sake of the Lord's flock, he must keep his pasture free from the accusations of worldly clutter.

“sober-minded” – A young man needs to learn how to be clear-minded.

Suggestion: Teach young men to control their thoughts through focusing exercises. Teach them how to meditate on the words of God. Teach them the essentiality of a personal prayer life. As a shepherd, he will need to be able to handle conflict and controversy without the drama of overreactions.

“self-controlled” – This characteristic directly relates to the previous one – “sober-minded.” Young men must be taught that controlling the impulses of self is the source of their sober-mindedness.

Suggestion: As part of their declaration to make Jesus Lord of their life, young men should understand that total dependence upon His power and authority is essential to “self-control.” Actions begin in the mind. Teach young men how to change the channel in their mind and keep it centered upon holiness. As an overseer, learning to bring his impulses under control will be essential to sound judgements.

“He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered” – A lack of sober-minded self-control often shows itself through arrogance and explosions of anger.

Suggestion: All sin is essentially selfishness. Teach young men that very few things in this life are actually emergencies. Help them understand the big picture. Impress upon them the insignificance of physical inconveniences and the powerful testimony of a temperance focused upon spiritual priorities. As an elder, he will be expected to be “the adult in the room.” He must learn now how to park his ego and be secure with who he is in the Lord.

“respectable” – Young men need to develop a life that is well-ordered and virtuous.

Suggestion: It is vitally important that young men are taught not to judge their virtue by the world’s standards, or even by the level of popularity it brings them within the church. A respectable young man must first seek God’s validation. As a shepherd, he will be tempted to judge his success by human approval. He must learn now that human accolades are not to be trusted.

“upright, holy, and disciplined” – In order for a young man to be respectable in God’s eyes, he must focus upon the priorities of sanctification.

Suggestion: Teach a young man to prioritize and set apart the things of God. Help them understand the supreme importance of ordering their life in ways that always give God the first fruits of their efforts. As an overseer, he will be faced with many opportunities to bolster his own self-worth rather than seek God’s sanctity. Teach him how to find his value in being holy.

Questions:

1. What two passages provide us with a list of characteristics that young men should be trained to meet in order to become elders of home churches?
2. To be “above reproach,” a young man must strive to have a life pattern that is free from what?
3. To be an effective overseer who makes sound judgements, a young man must learn to bring what under control?
4. In order to be “respectable,” a young man must seek the validation of Who?
5. In order to be “respectable,” a young man must focus on the priorities of what?

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Lesson 2

His Character, Part 2

1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 (ESV) The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Therefore an overseer (Titus – “elders”) must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled (Titus – “He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered”), respectable (Titus – “upright, holy, and disciplined”), **hospitable** (Titus – “a lover of good”), **able to teach**, 3 **not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money** (Titus – “greedy for gain”). 4 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, (Titus – “his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination”) 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? (Titus – “For an overseer, as God's steward”) 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. (Titus – “He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.”) 7 Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

From the list of characteristics above, let's continue to look at the ones which specifically describe a man's personal character and seek ways to develop that trait within the lives of young men.

“hospitable” – According to the original language, being hospitable is rooted in having love for strangers.

Suggestion: Expose young men to unfamiliar contexts. Show them how to make friends and how to safely judge the character of those with whom they have little knowledge. Teach them to avoid the selfishness of hoarding, and help them discover the true meaning of “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Acts 20:35, ESV) As an elder, his home and belongings will need to be used as resources to help others. Help him find a wife who will value this giving lifestyle. Without this essential characteristic, leading a home church will be very difficult.

“a lover of good” – Living in a world given over to the negativity of evil can often pull at a man's heart. A young man must learn to focus on the good.

Suggestion: Teach young men to intentionally search for the silver lining and value it. As a shepherd, he will often need to encourage the flock by emphasizing the good when others do not see it.

“able to teach” – James warns that teachers are under such great responsibility that most people should not assume that role. (James 3:1)

Suggestion: Young men aspiring to the role of an overseer must learn to develop a lifestyle of personal Bible study. They must also learn how to effectively share what they have learned. Help them analyze the teachers found within the Bible and emulate the various ways Biblical heroes presented God's message.

Note: This qualification will be especially evident in the way they instruct their own family. Before ever getting married, young men must understand the importance of spiritual leadership within the home.

“not a drunkard” – Addictions indicate a lack of self-control. Elders must set the bar for a disciplined life that is totally dependent upon the Lord, not the bottle.

Suggestion: Someone said, “You will never get drunk if you never take the first drink.” The same is true of all addictions. Young men who one day hope to be elders of the Lord’s family must be able to spot addiction-causing temptations and steer far away from their influences.

“not violent but gentle” – The contrast being used here indicates the differences between a man’s reactions to conflict. This qualification is no doubt tied to the previous characteristic – “not a drunkard.”

Suggestion: Temperament is a developed habit. As potential shepherds of God’s flock, young men need to practice their reasoned responses to conflict.

“not quarrelsome” – While not all quarrels are avoidable, Titus 1:6 says that an elder must be spiritually mature enough to rebuke those who contradict God. Being quarrelsome is a pattern of behavior. Young men should prepare to handle conflict without being a facilitator of them.

Suggestion: Being “quarrelsome” is often the result of an unsettled spirit within. Teach young men to find their Center of peace and how to rest within Him when times of conflict arise.

“not a lover of money” (Titus – “greedy for gain”) – Unfortunately, many elders are appointed to their position because of an ability to collect materialistic security. This can be a great distraction to developing spiritual maturity. Young men must be taught to look beyond the allurements of this world’s wealth.

Suggestion: There is a very good reason that the Lord said, “it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” (Matthew 19:24, ESV) Young men should be given many faith building exercises and have the traps of materialism pointed out to them.

Conclusion: The list of characteristics above, describe a man’s personal character. In the next lesson, we will show how a young man must expand his personal character into acceptable applications for leading a wife.

Questions:

1. According to the original language, being hospitable is rooted in having love for who?
2. What New Testament writer warns of the awesome responsibility of being a teacher?
3. You will never get drunk if you never do what?
4. Being “quarrelsome” is often the result of what?
5. What should be done for young men in order to help them avoid the love of money?

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Lesson 3

His Wife, Part 1

1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 (ESV) The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Therefore an overseer (Titus – “elders”) must be above reproach, **the husband of one wife**, sober-minded, self-controlled (Titus – “He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered”), respectable (Titus – “upright, holy, and disciplined”), hospitable (Titus – “a lover of good”), able to teach, 3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money (Titus – “greedy for gain”). 4 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, (Titus – “his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination”) 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church? (Titus – “For an overseer, as God’s steward”) 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. (Titus – “He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.”) 7 Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

The second area of a man’s influence is over his one flesh partner in life, his wife. While all of a man’s character is somewhat tied to his interaction with his wife, there are several in the list above that are especially evident. A young man must be taught to prepare for these areas of interaction with his wife.

“the husband of one wife” – “A one woman man” is the literal translation of this qualification of elders.

For many years, this phrase has been the subject of much debate. Some say it indicates that an elder must not be divorced. Others suggest that the cultural setting might indicate polygamy, therefore an elder should only have one woman at a time.

But, what if we looked past those assumptions and sought out the actual purpose for the command being given?

When the Bible is expected to be its own best commentary, many questions can be answered without human interference. Please read the entirety of the passages above and especially take note of the reason the text gives for this command - “if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church?” and “For an overseer, as God’s steward...”

Clearly, the qualifications of an elder hinges upon a clutter-free example of family life. Regardless of whether a man has been divorced or has lived with multiple women, the example of his home life is muddled. He might be a man with many other glowing attributes, but divorce or polygamy will complicate the testimony of his life. Divorce and/or polygamy will discredit his example of family leadership and will, in turn, discredit his ability to manage God’s household.

In a world dominated by failed relationships and broken homes, God expects the leaders of His household to demonstrate a clearer, more easily followed path to success. If young Christians must navigate their way through an elaborate explanation as to why their mentor lived with more than one woman and consummated more than one family, the example will be hard to follow. God expects shepherds to have an easily mimicked pattern of life, thus the requirement to be “above reproach.”

Suggestion: Teach young men how to select a wife who is ready for the sacrifices of ministry. Teach him the importance of marriage vows being made before God and the great responsibility of being loyal to one woman. Explain to him the wonderful advantages his example of fidelity will bring to his influence over others.

Look back through Scripture and notice the number of times God's people suffered because their leaders neglected God's instructions. Holiness is intentional. Perhaps, nowhere in the church should it be more intentional than in the choosing of men who serve in the place of the Good Shepherd. Think of that assignment! They serve in the place of Jesus! See Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9.

Conclusion:

A man who has established more than one family, whether through divorce or polygamy, is not qualified to be an elder. This is especially true if, in the process of divorce and/or polygamy, he has lost children to the world. Remember, the blessing of God upon the church is directly connected to the leadership she receives. Holiness is intentional.

Questions:

1. What is the literal translation of the phrase "the husband of one wife"?
2. What is the best commentary on the Bible?
3. What is the actual reason for the command that an elder must be the husband of one wife?
4. God expects shepherds to have an easily mimicked what?
5. Before Whom do we make our wedding vows?

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Lesson 4

His Wife, Part 2

1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 (ESV) The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Therefore an overseer (Titus – “elders”) must be above reproach, **the husband** of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled (Titus – “He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered”), respectable (Titus – “upright, holy, and disciplined”), **hospitable** (Titus – “a lover of good”), able to teach, 3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, **not a lover of money** (Titus – “**greedy for gain**”). 4 **He must manage his own household well, with all dignity** keeping his children submissive, (Titus – “his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination”) 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church? (Titus – “For an overseer, as God’s steward”) 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. (Titus – “He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.”) 7 Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

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“the husband” – Unlike the teachings of the Catholic Church, God demands that a man have successful experiences as a husband in order to be a shepherd.

Suggestion: Teach young men the importance of their gender and how it fits into the God-given structure of the home. Study the following passages with them and help them make a list of the qualities they need to develop in order to fulfill their assignment.

Genesis 3:17-19 - Provider
1 Corinthians 11:3 - Overseer
1 Corinthians 14:34-35 - Teacher
Ephesians 5:25, 28-29 - Protector
Ephesians 5:25-28 - Cleanser
1 Timothy 3:4 - Manager
1 Peter 3:7 - Partner

“hospitable” – Having a wife who shares in a man’s love for strangers is essential to being an overseer of the church.

Suggestion: Since a woman is commanded to be busy at home (Titus 2:5), young men should be looking for a potential spouse who already demonstrates the traits of hospitality from her parent’s home. Observing the tendencies of a young woman’s mother will often indicate the type of wife she will become.

“not a lover of money” (Titus – “greedy for gain”) – In order to govern his own desire for money, a man must seek out a partner who will help him remain accountable.

Suggestion: Teach a young man to watch the spending habits and priorities of the one he desires to marry. Remind him of the many sacrifices that are

necessary in ministry. Point him toward a potential spouse who is already laying up treasures up in Heaven.

“He must manage his own household well” – While the man is called to be the provider (Genesis 3:17-19), overseer (1 Corinthians 11:3), teacher (1 Corinthians 14:34-35), protector (Ephesians 5:25, 28-29), cleanser (Ephesians 5:25-28), and manager (1 Timothy 3:4) of the home, he must never forget that he is also called to be his wife’s partner (1 Peter 3:7).

Suggestion: Guide young men through the list of responsibilities just mentioned and help them form a list of qualities their wife will need to have in order to help them accomplish those tasks.

“with all dignity” – As leaders of the Lord’s church, personal integrity will depend largely upon his family’s response to his leadership.

Suggestion: Help young men see the importance of their dignity when shepherding the flock of God. Help them understand that dignity and popularity are not the same things. Help them find a wife who will stand beside them when God’s dignity brings them persecution.

Conclusion:

From the beginning, men were called to find a one flesh partner who would be their helpmeet in life. Few things are more important to an elder of a home church than having a wife who is an effective partner. Young men must be taught how to find such women.

Questions:

1. What are three responsibilities a man has toward his wife?
2. What role is a woman commanded to prioritize in life? (Titus 2:5)
3. Other than the young woman, to whom should a young man look for indications of a young woman’s hospitality tendencies?
4. What are three areas of home management that benefit from a successful wife’s partnership?
5. Dignity and what are not the same things?

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Lesson 5

His Children, Part 1

1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 (ESV) The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Therefore an overseer (Titus – “elders”) must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled (Titus – “He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered”), respectable (Titus – “upright, holy, and disciplined”), hospitable (Titus – “a lover of good”), able to teach, 3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money (Titus – “greedy for gain”). 4 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity **keeping his children submissive**, (Titus – “his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination”) 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? (Titus – “For an overseer, as God's steward”) 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. (Titus – “He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.”) 7 Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

The third area of a man's influence is over his children. It cannot be emphasized enough how much a man's children reveal about his leadership abilities.

“keeping his children submissive” - It has often been argued that a man should not be held responsible for his children's behavior after they have become adults and left his home. But what does the text indicate?

Logic would suggest that the believing children mentioned here were adult children for three very obvious reasons:

1. They belong to an elderly man. Not only does the word “elder” clearly indicate a man who is older, it also designates a fullness of life experiences. It is because the man is fully experienced that there is sufficient evidence to indicate the quality of his shepherding skills. All of this points to a period of life in which a man's children are raised, yet still influenced by his patriarchal position.
2. Submission is most evidenced by what is done when the one in authority is not present. If a man's adult children abandon his teachings in his absence, it is not likely that his values had a lasting effect on the adult child. If an elder was not convincing enough in his parenting, what is the likelihood he will convince the church to follow his shepherding.
3. The primary work of an elder is to keep the flock safe and rescue them from danger. How can a man be qualified to rescue the lost sheep of the church if he has proven that he is unable to rescue his own biological children?

In 1 Samuel 2:27-36, we find the very sad story of a failed father and the devastating effect his adult children had on the family of God. No doubt, the vetting process for church elders was given by God to safeguard against failed leaders such as Eli and his rebellious sons.

Suggestion: Young men must be trained to see the responsibility of being generational in their thinking. Consider these suggestions:

- Remind them that others are always watching. They must learn early to live the life of a role model.
- Teach them how to show the advantages of their life choices without being arrogant.
- Show them how to demonstrate true love by being both tender and firm in their communications.
- Teach them that lasting respect depends upon both consistent convictions and willingness to grow.
- Help them to prioritize the spiritual instruction of the family over all other evangelistic efforts.

Questions:

1. What was the first reason given to suggest that this passage is referring to adult children?
2. What is the best evidence of submission?
3. Besides guarding the sheep, what is another primary responsibility of a shepherd?
4. What Old Testament man illustrates the need for church leaders to have children who are faithful? (1 Samuel 2:27-36)
5. What should be the primary focus of a man's evangelistic efforts?

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Lesson 6

His Children, Part 2

1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 (ESV) The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Therefore an overseer (Titus – “elders”) must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled (Titus – “He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered”), respectable (Titus – “upright, holy, and disciplined”), hospitable (Titus – “a lover of good”), able to teach, 3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money (Titus – “greedy for gain”). 4 **He must manage his own household well**, with all dignity **keeping his children submissive**, (Titus – “his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination”) 5 for **if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?** (Titus – “For an overseer, as God's steward”) 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. (Titus – “He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.”) 7 Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

The third area of a man's influence is over his children. It cannot be emphasized enough how much a man's children reveal about his leadership abilities.

“He must manage his own household well” – The physical household is both preparation and evidence of a man's ability to effectively lead the church.

Suggestion: A young man who aspires to one day be an elder of the Lord's church must first aspire to oversee his own household. He must be shown how to both desire the responsibility and do so with sober humility. His role as a father will test his patience, ingenuity and reliance upon the Lord. To prepare for this, he should be inserted into many roles where he is required to mentor others, including his peers.

“keeping his children submissive” – As mentioned in the previous lesson, submission in this context extends beyond childhood and even into adulthood. If a man's influence does not persist in the lives of his adult children, it is not likely to persist in the lives of church members he is called to shepherd.

Suggestion: It is vitally important that young men be taught how to bring others into submission to their leadership without destroying the initiative of their following. Review the suggestions in the previous lesson.

“his children are believers” – In the New Testament, the meaning of a believer goes far beyond the acknowledgement of Jehovah, it indicated one who has given their life to the Lord.

Suggestion: Young men must be trained to know the plan of salvation and how to share it effectively. They must learn how to communicate deep spiritual truths in words that even children can understand. They must understand the difference between the innocence of childhood and the time a child reaches the age of accountability. They must be shown how to emphasize the importance of maintaining belief. Study 2 Peter 1:5-10.

“and not open to the charge of debauchery” - Strong’s Concordance defines debauchery this way – “spiritual wastefulness due to excessive behavior and the dire consequences it brings.”

Suggestion: Young men who desire to one day be a shepherd must first learn to exemplify self-control. Teach them to see the consequences of living in excess of what is really needed.

“or insubordination” – Insubordination has to do with a life of unruliness.

Suggestion: Help young men realize that there will never be a time in all of their existence that they will not be in submission to another. Operating within the rules of a superior is part of life. As a father, they will be tasked with the huge responsibility of creating an atmosphere of respect for their leadership. They must learn how to lead in such a way that their children willingly choose to adopt their values.

“if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church?” – As some of the most impressionable members of a man’s physical household, his children present some of the most compelling evidence as to whether or not he is qualified to “manage” the children of God.

Suggestion: Young men must learn to be administrators. They must offset the world’s chaos by promoting organization and structure within the home. Teach them how to spot the talents of others and how to bring various talents into harmony with each other.

Questions:

1. A young man who aspires to one day be an elder of the Lord’s church must first aspire to oversee what?
2. In the New Testament, the meaning of a believer goes far beyond the acknowledgement of Jehovah to indicate what?
3. What passage was given to help a young man see the importance of maintaining belief?
4. What definition was given for the word “debauchery”?
5. Young men must be taught how to spot the talents of others and do what with all the various talents?

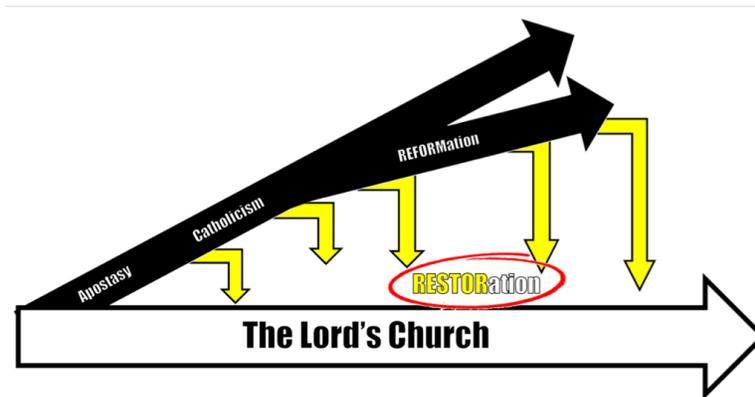
Training Young Men to Become Elders of Home Churches

Lesson 7 His Church, Part 1

1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 (ESV) The saying is trustworthy: **If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.** 2 Therefore an overseer (Titus – “elders”) must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled (Titus – “He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered”), respectable (Titus – “upright, holy, and disciplined”), hospitable (Titus – “a lover of good”), able to teach, 3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money (Titus – “greedy for gain”). 4 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, (Titus – “his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination”) 5 **for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?** (Titus – “For an overseer, as God's steward”) 6 **He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil.** (Titus – “He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.”) 7 Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

The fourth area of a man's influence is over his church. While the church ultimately belongs to the Lord, as an overseer it is important that each elder view their part of the flock as their personal responsibility.

Before continuing our examination of each phrase from the text above, let's discuss the importance of the first century church and the effectiveness of the early Christians meeting in homes.



1. We must restore the restoration moment!

The diagram above represents man's struggle since the opening days of the church. From day one, the temptation has always been great for man to settle in to what he believes is best. From temple worship, and divisions over circumcision, to the organization of qualified leaders, it was always the God-inspired apostle's doctrine that pulled the church back from the brink of apostasy.

However, once all the apostles died, the church was left with a choice, would they invent uninspired rules for themselves, or would they anchor themselves to the inspired words of the apostles as given by God? Unfortunately, most chose the first option, and the masses went off into the very dark ages of apostasy.

A few, however, held true. Throughout church history, a faithful remnant has always battled for a return to the supreme authority of Scripture. It is important to note that the Restoration Movement did not begin in the 1800's. Since the very beginning of the church, faithful Christians have struggled for fidelity and endured great persecution from the establishment. At great personal cost, they stubbornly anchored themselves to the words of God.

In other words, the difference between REFORMation and RESTORation is the difference between seeking after man and seeking after God.

What about us? What about our topic of the home church? Are we being stubbornly loyal to the Restoration priorities?

To illustrate the ease with which the church can let the treasured RESTORation priorities slip away, consider a brief overview of the history of the "Reformation Movement" in America.

As the church in America came into her own, Christian institutions like grade schools, colleges, and children's homes were established. Even though these institutions were only intended to supplement the efforts of the church, their success lured the church into an institutional mindset.

Many of the same men who served as shepherds of the church, also served as a board of directors for these institutions. The line between church elders and institutional directors became blurred.

This institutional influence led the church to organize institutionally and build institutional structures. Sunday meals, wedding showers and baby showers gradually moved from our HOMES to the fellowship halls of our institutional church buildings. Neighborhood Bible studies moved from the living room of our HOMES to the classrooms of our institutional church buildings. HOME cooked meals for the poor de-evolved into canned good giveaways from the pantry rooms of our institutional church buildings. Front porch conversations with the preacher moved from his HOME to his office at the institutional church building. In short, the institutionalism, which began as a supplement to the church, grew into the rationale of the church.

The result of that transition away from a HOME-centered church is obvious. We have appointed elders who have institutional skills, but are not Biblically qualified to lead the flock toward real spiritual maturity. We have expanded our institutionalized assemblies to include "Children's Church" and an educational system that is modeled after the public school system. We have institutionalized benevolence so much that members are content to throw money at projects, but personal involvement in real servanthood efforts has dwindled. And perhaps worst of all, we have taken such great pride in our ultra-convenient institutional structures that our missionaries are forced to beg for our scraps. There is no denying it, the institutionalization of the American church has made us just like all the other dead denominations around us!

Conclusion: God is not looking for institutional complexities. Establishing a home church requires no special blessing from a church hierarchy or legal document from a civil government. Establishing a home church is as simple as deciding that your home will be devoted to the apostle's doctrine (New Testament teaching) and centered upon the breaking of bread (Lord's Supper). See Acts 2:42-47.

It is time to restore to the home-centered priorities of the New Testament church. The early church did not get caught up in institutionalism, they met in borrowed spaces and homes. Their organization was simple and it was fully dependent upon the living example of God's influence within the home. The early Christians lived their spiritualism, they did not manufacture it. We must raise young men who have the courage to restore the "Restoration Movement!"

Questions:

1. When did the Restoration Movement begin?
2. What is the difference between REFORMATION and RESTORATION?
3. What are three examples of how institutionalism stole from the purpose of the home?
4. What does God require for the establishment of a home church? (Acts 2:42-47)
5. Can you complete the following sentence? "The early Christians lived their spiritualism, they did not _____ it."

Training Young Men to Become Elders of Home Churches

Lesson 8

His Church, Part 2

Before continuing our examination of each phrase from 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, let's discuss the importance of the first century church and the effectiveness of the early Christians meeting in homes.

2. We should restore the home church, because it is the clear example left by the first century Christians.

The only New Testament book which is dedicated entirely to the history of the early church offers a unique insight into the importance of the home church.

Read Acts 2:41-47 (ESV) and notice these words:

“three thousand souls” – Even though the early church started out as a mega-church, they continued to meet in homes.

“all who believed were together and had all things in common” - Even though the early church believed in sharing space and resources, they also believed in the importance of multiple home church gatherings throughout the city.

“attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes” - Even though the early church met together daily, they did so in homes and borrowed spaces.

“having favor with all the people” – Even though the early church grew rapidly and was popular among the people, the lack of persecution did not prompt them to build a permanent structure as an evangelistic tool.

Read Acts 4:32-35 (ESV) and notice these words:

“those who believed were of one heart and soul” - Even though the early church had great unity, they did not depend upon a church building to bring that about.

“There was not a needy person among them” - Even though the early church had a booming benevolent program, they evidently did so from their homes and public facilities.

“as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need” - Even though the apostles were fantastic fundraisers, they did not take time to raise funds for structures.

Read Acts 6:1-3 (ESV) and notice these words:

“pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.” - Even though the early church was organized with deacons and service programs, there was evidently no need for a church building.

Read Acts 14:21-23 (ESV) and notice these words:

“strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith” – Even though the early church sent out missionaries who established many churches, their gospel message evidently did not include any encouragement to build a church building.

“when they had appointed elders for them in every church” - Even though the early church was organized with elders, these men were not led to build structures to host church assemblies.

Read Acts 15:5-6 (ESV) and notice these words:

“gathered together to consider this matter.” - Even though the early church had to host such events as “The Jerusalem Council,” they found a way to do so without a church building.

Read Acts 17:22-24 (ESV) and notice these words:

“Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: ... ‘Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man’” - Even though the early church had the opportunity to validate the structures of men, they did just the opposite.

Read Acts 20:7 (ESV) and notice these words:

“On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread” - Even though the early church left us this single example of communion on Sunday, their multiple examples of home church gatherings far outnumber the Sunday communion example 15 to 1.

Read Acts 28:16 (ESV) and notice these words:

“we came into Rome” - Even though the early church spread across the known world, the idea of church buildings did not follow them.

Conclusion: In spite of the fact that the early church had the inspired apostles to organize benevolent programs, world-wide mission trips, and do prolific fundraisers, there is not a single hint that they were led by God to use His money for the construction of church buildings. Perhaps, they saw how the Jews had become distracted by the temple or, perhaps, they prophetically envisioned the structural idolatry which would come through the apostasy of Catholicism. Whatever the reason, the inspired writers of the New Testament gave zero attention to building buildings. They consistently met in homes or borrowed spaces. There is not one command, not one example, not one necessary inference to give authority to the construction of church buildings.

While it might be true that congregations have the liberty to build a functional building, good stewardship must first be applied and persistent diligence must govern that investment. One day we WILL give an account for the ways we used or abused God’s money.

Questions:

1. What was the size of the mega-church in Jerusalem?
2. What phrase suggests that the early church did not meet in homes because of persecution? (Acts 2:47)

3. What important event did the Jerusalem church of Christ evidently host without the use of a church building? (Acts 15:5-6)
4. What did Paul say about temples made by hands or by men? (Acts 17:22-24)
5. How many commands, examples, and necessary inferences does the New Testament provide for church building construction?

Training Young Men to Become Elders of Home Churches

Lesson 9

His Church, Part 3

Before continuing our examination of each phrase from 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, let's discuss the importance of the first century church and the effectiveness of the early Christians meeting in homes.

3. We should follow the original example of the churches of Christ in Jerusalem.

Acts 2:42-47 (ESV) And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Because of the inspired words of Acts 2:46, we know that the Jerusalem church of Christ began as a city-wide collection of home churches. As an expansion of that verse, God also preserved a clear snapshot of the earliest days of the church. This description is an invaluable template for those who would come after the apostolic age.

Read Acts 2:42-47 (ESV) and notice the following phrases.

"they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching" - Notice that the grand governing factor of the church was God's words. The apostles had final say, because the apostles were the ones being directed by the Holy Spirit.
Application: We have those same teachings in our New Testament.

"and the fellowship" - Being together was an essential part of their survival. While physical persecution was sporadic, attacks from Satan was daily. This demonic persecution drove them into intimate fellowship to maintain their holiness.
Application: We have the same need for spiritual companionship. The home church should be our comfort zone of support.

"to the breaking of bread" - Celebrating the Lord's Supper was central to the existence of the church. Application: Every part of a home church assembly should be anchored to the remembrance of Christ's sacrifice.

"and the prayers." - Speaking to the Father was an essential part of their daily life. Application: The home church experience should be dominated by our lifeline to Heaven.

"And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles." - They took time to marvel at the continuous validations of God. Application: Testimonies about God's movement within our lives should be common at home church assemblies.

"And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to

all, as any had need." - New Testament gatherings were so intimate that needs were known. Dependence was addressed through personal sacrifice. Application: Home church benevolence should come at a personal cost. There is no evidence of generic collections or rainy day savings accounts in the New Testament church.

"And day by day, attending the temple together" - While this phrase does not necessarily indicate that the church met in large groups, it does illustrate their use of borrowed, public spaces. Application: Home churches should gather often with other home churches. When we do, we need to utilize borrowed spaces, both as a way to demonstrate good stewardship of God's money, and as a way to publicly shine our light to others.

"and breaking bread in their homes" - If we conclude from Acts 20:7 that breaking bread refers to the Lord's Supper, we could also conclude from Acts 2:46 that communion occurred in homes, not the temple, not in church buildings. While the early Christians may have met in large groups on occasion, small, family-sized groups were clearly the most regularly used style of assemblies. Application: What size assembly group is most dominant today?

"they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God" - If these phrases are properly kept within the overall context, the food being mentioned could refer to fellowship meals and/or the food distributed because they had all things in common. Either way, the Christians were not too proud to be receivers and givers. Application: The home church can only thrive when her members keep their pride in check.

"and having favor with all the people." - While the church did experience intermittent periods of persecution, they also found much popularity among the people. Application: Too many dismiss the home church model by suggesting they had to meet in private because of persecution. Those who use such excuses should be reminded that the early church not only met in homes, they also met openly in the borrowed spaces of the temple.

"And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved." - Early Christians saw spiritual growth as the means to numeric growth. Application: An effective home church does not get distracted by numbers. Our job is to grow in the message of salvation. God's job is to do the adding.

Conclusion: The descriptions above provide an invaluable template for those of us who come after the apostolic age. Every young man should be taught the importance of this Biblical example and honor this glimpse into the workings of the early church.

Questions:

1. What was the grand governing factor of the early church?
2. Every part of a home church assembly should be anchored to what?
3. Can you complete the sentence? "There is no evidence of _____ collections or a _____ savings account in the New Testament church."
4. When multiple home churches came together, where does the early record suggest they met?

5. How do we know that home church assemblies were not simply the result of persecution?

Training Young Men to Become Elders of Home Churches

Lesson 10

His Church, Part 4

Before continuing our examination of each phrase from 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, let's discuss the importance of the first century church and the effectiveness of the early Christians meeting in homes.

4. We should follow the original example of the churches of Christ on Crete.

Titus 1:5 (ESV) This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and *appoint elders in every town* as I directed you—

Paul's instructions about the organization of churches on the island of Crete, provides a very important insight into the apostle's doctrine with regards to the home church.

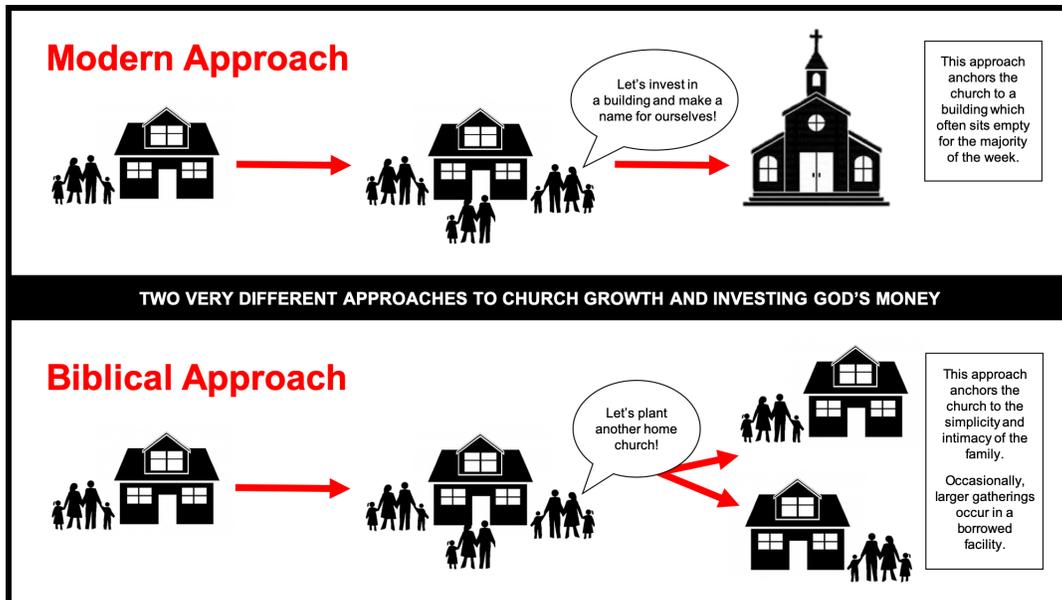
The phrase, "*appoint elders in every town*," confirms two obvious conclusions:

First Obvious Conclusion: It is not necessary to have elders before a home church can be established.

Ironically, one of the most common objections to home church is the initial lack of elders. "How can you operate without an eldership?!" The irony of this excuse is that, many of those asking the question did themselves come from well-established congregations who had no elders.

The very fact that Paul was sending Titus to Crete in order to "appoint elders" makes our conclusion obvious. These congregations were already established and operational without elders. Conclusion: It is not necessary to have an eldership before a home church can be established.

Note: To fully meet the qualifications given in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, it is very possible that a generational development must first come about before a qualified eldership can be appointed. Until that time, the Biblical pattern would suggest that churches should honor men who are proving themselves by their daily advancement in the faith. Additionally, as we will see in the second obvious conclusion, elderships were established over towns. It is very likely that not all home churches had an elder.



Second Obvious Conclusion: Elders are responsible for city groups.

As the church grew, and a single home could no longer accommodate the assembly, the early church DID NOT build a church building, they multiplied into more home churches. Remember the original model laid out by the Jerusalem church of Christ.

In the previous lesson, we noticed that the Jerusalem church of Christ began as a mega-church numbering over 3,000 members. Yet, we also noticed that they met daily in homes. How would it be possible for every assembly to involve every member, or even most of the members, by meeting in a single home? What house, even by today's standards, is capable of hosting a gathering of over 3,000 people?

Obvious Conclusion: The apostle's doctrine facilitated a unified city-church by organizing elderships who would shepherd entire towns in which there were multiple home churches.

A city-wide eldership is, no doubt, an extension of the ancient pattern of civil government. Perhaps the most familiar example of this comes from within the story of Boaz and Ruth. Read Ruth 4:1-2, 9-11 (ESV).

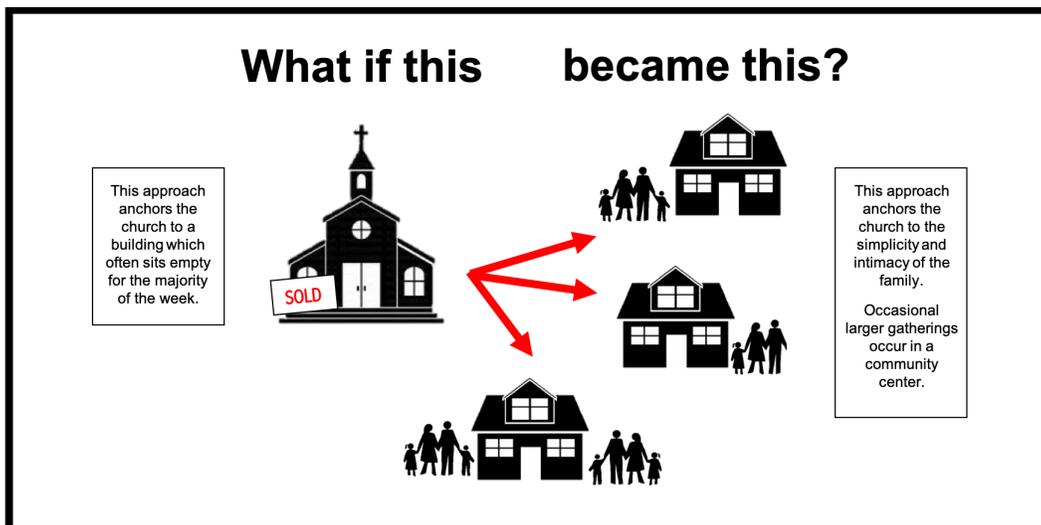
This ancient pattern of civil government would have been very familiar to the New Testament Christians. It would have been very natural for them to accept the same functional approach within the organization of the church.

While Scripture does not tell us if every home church had an elder, it does indicate that every city-church had a group of elders. The patriarchal history of Judaism would suggest that the senior most male within each home would lead that home church. Should that man meet the qualifications laid out in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, he would also take responsibility for the city-wide collection of home churches.

Conclusion: We must discard the flawed assumption that constructing a church building

is evidence of a mature congregation! The mega-church of the first century did not get caught up in the trend of institutionalized structures. They saw themselves as a city-church with multiple home churches within. Their organization was simple and it was fully dependent upon the living example of God's influence within the home.

For young men to mature into spiritual leaders, they must be shown the clear New Testament conclusions about the church of Christ on Crete.



Questions:

1. What was the first obvious conclusion drawn from Titus 1:5?
2. How long might some churches have to wait before appointing an eldership?
3. What was the second obvious conclusion drawn from Titus 1:5?
4. What Old Testament story illustrates the historic foundation for a city-wide eldership?
5. What is one very flawed assumption about the evidence of a mature congregation?

Training Young Men to Become Elders of Home Churches

Lesson 11

His Church, Part 5

Before continuing our examination of each phrase from 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, let's discuss the importance of the first century church and the effectiveness of the early Christians meeting in homes.

5. We should follow the original example of the churches of Christ in Corinth.

We know from Acts 18:5-9 that the church of Christ in Corinth was a home church. As such, the instructions Paul later gives about their assemblies (1 Corinthians 11:17-34) should be specifically applied to home church gatherings.

Paul's inspired moments with the Lord established three essential parts of a home church worship service.

Part 1 - Refocused Submission

Read 1 Corinthians 11:17 (ESV) and notice the following words.

"But in the following instructions I do not commend you" - Notice that Paul begins in the same way we should always open our worship – a call to refocus. Worship must be holy and self-examination is key to that holiness. Application: Beginning each worship with a time of confession can be cleansing.

"because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse." – Paul says that when we attempt to worship without first refocusing on submission, we make things "worse" not "better." Application: Read and apply 1 John 1:8-9.

Part 2 - Inspired Instruction

Read 1 Corinthians 11:23 (ESV) and notice the following words.

"For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you..." – Because the apostles left us a written record of what they received from the Lord, those words must be emphasized as our guide to appropriate worship. Please note that Paul's specific focus was on the anchor point of all first century worship – appreciation for the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Application: Everything in the home church worship should point to or become a living application of the Lord's Supper.

Part 3 - Convicted Application

Read 1 Corinthians 11:28 (ESV) and notice the following words.

"Let a person examine himself..." - In many ways, the applications are the most important parts of our assemblies. Every gathering should be a catalyst for change. Application: The context and teachings within the home church gatherings should climax in repentance, resolutions, and goal setting.

Conclusion: While other specifics are addressed in 1 Corinthians 11, the above overview of Paul's inspired instructions should provide a helpful guide for a typical home church worship – refocused submission, inspired instruction, and convicted application.

Young men must be trained to lead and oversee these three inspired parts of a worship service.

Questions:

1. How do we know that the church of Christ in Corinth was a home church?
2. What was part 1 of Paul's instructions on a home church worship service? (1 Corinthians 11:17)
3. What is a cleansing way to begin each home church worship service?
4. What was part 2 of Paul's instructions on a home church worship service? (1 Corinthians 11:23)
5. What was part 3 of Paul's instructions on a home church worship service? (1 Corinthians 11:28)

Training Young Men to Become Elders of Home Churches

Lesson 12

His Church, Part 6

Before continuing our examination of each phrase from 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, let's discuss the importance of the first century church and the effectiveness of the early Christians meeting in homes.

6. We should restore the home church, because large assemblies are not conducive to intimate fellowship and personal accountability.

RESTORation Christians need to return to the New Testament pattern of home churches, because we have traveled much too far away from the intimate examples of first century assemblies. The results are obvious.

Think about the following list of impersonal traditions which hinder us from finding deep levels of worship and intimate fellowship:

- Our large assemblies facilitate an acceptable escape from spiritually intimate interaction and accountability.
- Spiritual intimacy is defeated by sitting in pews facing the back of the heads of people in front of us.
- Our pre-programmed, pre-packaged elements of worship turns spiritual intimacy into sanitized robotic reactions.
- Spiritual intimacy is impeded by a single personality manipulating services off the wall or from behind a lofty, distant podium.
- Our investments become focused on maintenance projects and the construction of assembly halls which sit empty for the majority of the week.
- Attendance statistics become the treasured evidence of success rather than spiritual maturity through spiritual intimacy.
- Impersonal meeting halls lack the warmth of a home and the spiritual intimacy which can only be found when we open up our personal family space to the church family.

And the list goes on...

When confronted with the list above, those who are loyal to the traditions of large group assemblies often point to the crowd of over 3,000 in Act 2.

Acts 2:5-6, 41 (ESV) Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6 And at this sound the multitude came together ... 41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

Before we turn this passage into a standard-setting example of large group church assemblies, we need to ask a very important question - Was this event really a church assembly, or was it a crowd gathered out of curiosity? While it is

true that many in the crowd eventually gave their life to Christ, there is no conclusive indication that, after this event they, went on to meet weekly in such numbers.

But what about Acts 2:46-47?

Acts 2:46-47 (ESV) And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

It is important to note that, even though they gathered daily in the temple, it does not say how they gathered in the temple. Was it in large groups, or was it in smaller groups scattered throughout the temple compound? The only real hint we have as an answer to this question is found in the next phrase, "breaking bread in their homes." Since we can know from that phrase that the early Christians met in family size groups to break bread, it is also reasonable to conclude from that phrase that "in their homes" reflects the general size dynamic of their most intimate assemblies.

Additionally, if we conclude from Acts 20:7 that breaking bread refers to the Lord's Supper, we could also conclude from Acts 2:46 that communion occurred in homes, not the temple. When the early Christians met for temple gatherings, whether their number was large or small, they did so in observance of the Old Law. (See also Acts 21:20.) On the other hand, when they met in home gatherings, they did so in observance of the New Law. From the very beginning of the movement, small, intimate, home church gatherings were primary to the first century pattern of assembly styles. Is it possible that today's church is completely upside down in its emphasis? While the early Christians may have met in large groups on occasion, small, family-sized groups were clearly the most regularly used style of assemblies. What is most dominant today?

Conclusion: One is hard pressed to find a single example of regular large group gatherings in all of the New Testament record. While the early church definitely grew rapidly, the preponderance of evidence suggests that even the mega-church of Jerusalem divided itself into multiple home churches, so that intimate fellowship and personal accountability could be maintained. (Acts 2:46)

Young men must be challenged to lead a return to the simple effectiveness of small group assemblies within the home.

Questions:

1. Can you list three reasons that large assemblies hinder the church from finding deep levels of worship and intimate fellowship?
2. Did the crowd of Acts 2 gather because it was a church assembly?
3. Does Acts 2:46-47 say that the early Christians gathered in large groups at the temple?
4. What was a typical size of assemblies in the Jerusalem church? (Acts 2:46)
5. How many examples do we have of the early Christians gathering in large numbers to observe the Lord's Supper?

Training Young Men to Become Elders of Home Churches

Lesson 13

His World, Part 1

1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 (ESV) The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Therefore an overseer (Titus – “elders”) must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled (Titus – “He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered”), respectable (Titus – “upright, holy, and disciplined”), hospitable (Titus – “a lover of good”), able to teach, 3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money (Titus – “greedy for gain”). 4 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, (Titus – “his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination”) 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church? (Titus – “For an overseer, as God’s steward”) **6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil.** (Titus – “He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.”) 7 Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

The fifth area of a man’s influence is over his personal context within the world. An elder is not only responsible for his own character, wife, children, and the church, he must also have a proven lifestyle among “outsiders” (1 Timothy 3:7). Notice the following phrases from the passages above and how they warn about the world’s influence.

“He must not be a recent convert” – Even though a man might be older, his age does not automatically qualify him to be an elder. A man does not become a good father the moment he has his first child, and a man does not become a mature Christian the moment he comes into Christ. In order to guard the family of God from the world, a man must first have history with Christ and with the struggles of Christianity.

Suggestion: Young men should be taught to celebrate and guard their life experiences because they are the potential evidences of maturity.

“or he may become puffed up with conceit” – Too many churches fall victim to the temptation of appointing a man to the eldership in hopes that he will grow into the job. Without the struggles and trials of the spiritual journey, it is easy for the novice to make the arrogant assumption that the road is less difficult than it truly is. In order to guard the family of God from the world, an elder must first be tempered by life trials which result in humility.

Suggestion: Every young man must graduate from the school of hard knocks in order to develop humility. Help them celebrate the training and encourage them when they want to give up.

“and fall into the condemnation of the devil.” – Just as Paul prophetically warned the Ephesian elders that some of them would one day succumb to the pride-filled ways of the devil (Acts 20:28-30), young men must be warned to avoid Satan’s seduction. In order to guard the family of God from the world, a shepherd must live long enough within the values of the Great Shepherd to know the pitfalls of life so he can help the flock avoid them.

Suggestion: Help young men research the fall of Satan, and teach them how to detect the internal allurements which can lead to such arrogance.

Conclusion: Youthful inexperience is often used by Satan as a trap to destroy a young man's journey toward becoming a shepherd of God's flock. Do not allow this to happen. Remind young men that the hard knocks of life and the humility gained from being a student are essential experiences to becoming a man of God.

Questions:

1. What is the fifth area of a man's influence?
2. In order to be a qualified elder, a man must not be what? (1 Timothy 3:6)
3. Too many churches fall victim to the temptation of appointing a man to the eldership in hopes that he will what?
4. From what must a young man graduate in order to develop humility?
5. Who did Paul predict would succumb to the pride-filled ways of the devil? (Acts 20:28-30)

Training Young Men to Become Elders of Home Churches

Lesson 14

His World, Part 2

1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 (ESV) The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Therefore an overseer (Titus – “elders”) must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled (Titus – “He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered”), respectable (Titus – “upright, holy, and disciplined”), hospitable (Titus – “a lover of good”), able to teach, 3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money (Titus – “greedy for gain”). 4 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, (Titus – “his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination”) 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church? (Titus – “For an overseer, as God’s steward”) 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. (Titus – “**He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.**”) 7 Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

The fifth area of a man’s influence is over his personal context within the world. Notice the following phrases from the passages above and how they identify a man who is prepared to confront the world’s influence.

“He must hold firm to the trustworthy word” – It is essential that young men be taught the absolute authority of God’s word. They must learn to let the Bible interpret the Bible by seeking the harmony of God’s words over the commentary of mere men.

Suggestion: Assign young men a topic, then tell them they can only use Scripture to establish a conclusion. When they encounter a passage that is difficult to understand, they must use other passages from the Bible to give it clarity.

Illustration: Q: What should we do when we look up a word in the dictionary, yet find that the definition has another word we do not understand. Where do we go for clarity? A: We turn to another page within the same book. The dictionary defines the dictionary, just as the Bible should be used to define the Bible.

“as taught” – It is important that young men understand the importance of context. This phrase indicates that the proper interpretation of Scripture comes from the conditions from which it was given. Because we cannot literally sit at the feet of the inspired authors, we must take time to understand the who, what, when, where, and why of their writing.

Suggestion: Assign young men a passage from First or Second Corinthians, then tell them to use other parts of the Bible to gain understanding of the who, what, when, where, and why surrounding that instruction to the home church of Corinth.

“so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine” – Every elder must be mature enough to present untainted instruction from God’s word.

Suggestion: Teach young men to know the difference between doctrine and sound doctrine.

“and also to rebuke those who contradict it.” – Young men must understand that part of their job as an elder will be to rebuke false teachers. The eldership was not designed to

be a convenient role without conflict. Men must be so firmly rooted within the established principles of God that no wind of change or challenge of falsehood can topple their faith.

Suggestion: Teach young men how to successfully debate those who would dilute the commands of God.

Conclusion: It cannot be overemphasized how important Bible study is to the training of young men preparing for the eldership. Not only must they learn to let the Bible interpret the Bible, in so doing they must be prepared to let the Bible defend the Bible. It takes a man of great training to know how to step aside and let God speak for Himself.

Questions:

1. What illustration was used comparing the dictionary to the Bible?
2. The phrase "as taught" indicates that the proper interpretation of Scripture comes from what?
3. What 5 words can help a student establish context? (Hint: Each of the 5 words begins with the letter "w.")
4. The eldership was not designed to be a convenient role without what?
5. It takes a man of great training to know how to step aside and do what?

Training Young Men to Become Elders of Home Churches

Lesson 15

His World, Part 3

1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 (ESV) The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Therefore an overseer (Titus – “elders”) must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled (Titus – “He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered”), respectable (Titus – “upright, holy, and disciplined”), hospitable (Titus – “a lover of good”), able to teach, 3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money (Titus – “greedy for gain”). 4 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, (Titus – “his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination”) 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church? (Titus – “For an overseer, as God’s steward”) 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. (Titus – “He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.”) 7 **Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.**

The fifth area of a man’s influence is over his personal context within the world. Notice the following phrases from the passages above and how they identify a man who is prepared to confront the world’s influence.

“he must be well thought of by outsiders” – While an elder’s first responsibility is to the family of God, his image within the world is also important. It is often the outsider who shines the brightest light on a man’s character. Because they are not as invested as the insider, their objective assessment is often more accurate. When a man can be respected both inside and outside the church, he has arrived at a most influential position.

Suggestion: Train young men to know how to be respected without compromising their spiritual convictions. Too often men are selected for the eldership, because they are influential within the community. However, when deeper research takes place, it is often discovered that their influence came at the price of compromise. Teach young men that they can find respect, even from the world, without compromising with the world. Even the enemy respects a man of firm convictions.

“so that he may not fall into disgrace” – When an elder lacks honor, he brings disgrace upon the family of God. The primary responsibility of a shepherd is to draw attention to the honor of the Good Shepherd. Should an elder disgrace himself before the world, that reputation will naturally disgrace the flock as well.

Suggestion: In 1 Timothy 5:20, the apostle Paul says this about disgraceful elders, “As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.” (ESV) Young men must be taught the risk of public rebuke.

“into a snare of the devil” – The real disgrace being addressed above is that of falling into the grasp of Satan.

Suggestion: In Acts 20:28-31, Luke records this inspired warning to the elders of Ephesus, “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the

Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. 29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31 Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.”

Notice seven phrases from this passage that underscore the seriousness of an elder falling into disgrace.

“which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers” – Elders are appointed by the Holy Spirit Himself.

“to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood” – Elders are responsible for those bought by the very blood of Christ Himself.

“fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock” – Disgraceful elders are described as ravenous predators feeding on the very family of God.

“from among your own selves will arise men” – The threat actually comes from within the number of those who were appointed to protect the flock.

“speaking twisted things” – The very ones who should be giving honest clarity to life become the ones manipulating truth for their own gain.

“to draw away the disciples after them” – Shepherds who were entrusted with the Master’s sheep are actually stealing from Him.

“Therefore be alert” – Paul declares that his concern is so strong that he spent three years warning them with tears.

Conclusion: While an elder’s first responsibility is to the family of God, his image within the world is also important. Young men must be shown how to be respectable without compromising their spiritual values, because public rebuke is the fate of those who fall into disrespect.

Questions:

1. Why is an outsider’s assessment often the most accurate?
2. Can you complete the sentence, “Even the enemy respects a man of _____?”
3. When an elder lacks honor, he brings disgrace upon who?
4. What are we told to do to disgraceful elders who refuse to repent? (1 Timothy 5:20)
5. How does Paul describe elders who twist the truth and draw others after them? (Acts 20:29-30)

Training Young Men to Become Elders of Home Churches

Lesson 16

Review

1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 (ESV) The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Therefore an overseer (Titus – “elders”) must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled (Titus – “He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered”), respectable (Titus – “upright, holy, and disciplined”), hospitable (Titus – “a lover of good”), able to teach, 3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money (Titus – “greedy for gain”). 4 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, (Titus – “his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination”) 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church? (Titus – “For an overseer, as God’s steward”) 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. (Titus – “He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.”) 7 Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

The characteristics listed above fall into five areas of influence for which young men need to prepare:

1. His Character – Because the qualifications for an elder are so important, young men must be taught to begin building their character from an early age. Many of the qualifications listed are in areas life beyond childhood. However, learning to build and guard a good character can begin very young.
2. His Wife – As the most ancient of all human relationships, a man’s ability to establish and nurture his one flesh partner identifies his ability to care for the Bride of Christ. Long before marriage, young men should be taught the qualities and roles of a good woman. A deep study of Ephesians 5:22-33 should be made.
3. His Children – While a man must demonstrate that he can lead a wife, his leadership of the immature is equally telling. Every young man needs a fatherly mentor who will guide him in the ways of manhood. Learning in this way will prepare him for both raising children and dealing with the immature within the church.
4. His Church – Because family life defines an elder, there should be little wonder that the New Testament church predominantly met within the very place that family life is most evident – the home. Young men must be preparing both to lead an individual home church, and join other men as they lead a city of home churches.
5. His World – While an elder’s first responsibility is to the family of God, his image within the world is also important. A young man must be taught how to be respected by the world without compromising the values of God. Having a mature knowledge of Scripture is essential.

Conclusion: The church must have greater vision. Too often we are so busy putting out fires that we forget to work on fireproofing. To form effective home churches, we must establish a generational loyalty and maturity within the Lord’s body. We must begin training young men from the time they are small boys. We must develop within them a vision of the responsibility they will have once they are older. Essential to this task, is sheltering them from the compromised influences of those who have no credibility yet exert themselves as if they do.

While little has been said in this material about young ladies, because their role in the church is very different, training young ladies to prepare for a partnership with their shepherding husband is also very important!

It is my prayer that this material will inspire a great awakening within the church. May God grant us the self-discipline to restore both the New Testament pattern of the home church and the spiritually mature men who can lead them.

Questions:

1. When should we begin training young men to develop and protect their character?
2. Young men should make a deep study of what Scripture in order to prepare for leading a wife.
3. Who does a young man need in order to prepare to lead his children?
4. What kind of life defines an elder?
5. A young man must be taught how to be respected by the world without doing what?