

The Moral Character of a Godly Leader (Part 2)

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[0:00] Well, very good.

This is kind of part two of a lesson that we began last week in 1 Timothy chapter 3. We're going to cover verses 4 to 7 tonight.

Last time we began looking at the qualities of a godly leader. And the focus last time was the necessity of a godly leader having moral character.

And today we're going to discuss some other qualities that Paul mentions, specifically the leader's home life, spiritual maturity, and public reputation.

And here are the verses we're going to cover. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity.

[1:09] But if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God? And not a new convert so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.

And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. That's an interesting list. And probably what makes it most interesting is not what it includes but what it leaves out.

There was no mention of intelligence. Have a great outgoing personality, vision, administrative skills, courage, tact.

Now, all those might be good, and we could come up with maybe a good shot with a gun. And I'm sure there are a host of other traits.

One thing that comes to mind in my world, the police officers that tend to rise in an organization through the rank structure, which is similar to a military rank structure, really are ones that are known for their integrity.

[2:28] Those are the guys that tend to rise. We have a young officer now that we've caught in several lives, and he's through. He's through. We can't use him because he's got to go to court.

He's got to raise his hand. By sending him to court, I'm telling the judges and the prosecutors and the juries I vouch for him. I mean, you know, integrity, very important.

And it's important in the secular world, but it is absolutely essential in the spiritual leadership. Late John Stott, and I don't know where I was.

I must have been out of town that weekend. I didn't know John Stott had died. He's got some of his books. He died in 2011. But he had this to say, the sincerity of a preacher has two aspects.

He means what he says when in the pulpit, and he practices what he preaches when out of it. In fact, these things belong inevitably together since, as Richard Baxter put it, and that's the Puritan we talked about last time, he that means as he speaks will surely do as he speaks.

[3:41] Paul told Timothy and Titus, still quoting John Stott, to be models of Christian behavior. Peter similarly instructed the elders, instead of domineering, to be examples of the flock or to the flock.

The emphasis is plain. Communication is by symbol as well as speech. For a man cannot only preach, he must also live.

And the life that he lives, with all its little peculiarities, is one of the two things. Either it emasculates his preaching or it gives it flesh and blood. We cannot hide what we are.

Indeed, what we are speaks as plainly as what we say. When these two voices blend, the impact of the message is doubled. But when they contradict each other, even the positive witness of the one is negated by the other.

And then Stott goes on. This was the case with the man Spurgeon. No, this was the case with the man Spurgeon describes as a good preacher, but a bad Christian.

[4:57] And here's what Spurgeon said. It was only Spurgeon could do it. He preached so well and lived so badly that when he was in the pulpit, everybody said he ought never to come out again.

And when he was out of it, they all declared he never ought to enter it again. And Spurgeon could get away with that. I don't know if I could.

I did my graduate work on President Truman. I learned from him the goal of a leader. And it was very profound. I remember reading it in Merrill Miller's biography of Harry Truman because Merrill Miller asked him, what does a leader do?

And he said, the goal of a leader is to influence others. And that's really what I do at the police department. I influence two captains who influence four lieutenants, who influence eight sergeants, and so on.

By influencing people, we energize them to achieve their objectives in life. Now, in the Christian world, as well as the secular, influence is a direct result of teaching and living by example.

[6:11] The Bible, both Old and New Testament, has much to say about influencing people. And actually, we can find passages in both Testaments influencing people for good and for bad.

They're both in there. The goal of the godly teacher or preacher is to rightly handle the word of truth. If we are to teach the truth, whether to our class, to our children or grandchildren, we must also model it. We must model it.

Now, as I did last time, I'm going to again quote the Puritan Richard Baxter from his classic, *The Reformed Pastor*. I can highly recommend that book. I suggest you get an updated version.

I've got both. It's a difficult read in the original. It is not likely that the people will much regard the doctrine of such men when they see that they do not live as they preach.

[7:13] They will think that he doth not mean as he speaks if he do not live. That's what he said. If he do not live as he speaks. They will hardly believe a man that seemeth not to believe himself.

Integrity, then, is living what you teach and preach. It's living it out. And you may say, well, I'm not a teacher. Yeah, you're teaching somebody. Trust me. We're all teaching somebody.

That is why God uses moral character to describe men set apart by God to teach the flock.

Leading someone to Christlikeness requires that we be models of godly behavior. Now, Paul says there are four traits that must follow to achieve this.

And last week, we looked at the first one, the moral life of a man. Today, we're going to look at his home life, his spiritual maturity, and his public reputation.

[8:14] And we'll start with the home life of a godly leader. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity.

But if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God? Now, the overseer must have an exemplary life at home, at church, and actually anywhere he finds himself.

Now, there was one of the characters in *Pilgrim's Progress*, Talkative. He was described as a saint abroad and a devil at home.

That was the description that Bunyan gave him. There is one proving ground for Christian leadership, and it is not the pulpit skills or the ability to administer a church staff.

The proving ground is the family life in the home. That's the proving ground. Now, the Roman Catholics, our friends in the Church of Rome, hold that to be a spiritual leader, the man must remain celibate.

[9:30] And unfortunately, in our day, they have a very poor track record of achieving that goal. Now, I mentioned John Stott earlier.

He remains celibate his entire life. And he did say, though, that most men should not try to do so.

The Word of God assumes here that a godly leader will have a family.

That does not eliminate single men from serving as church leaders. It's not intended to do that. But most men will mature, marry, have children with a little help from their wives, and then they'll have a home.

But single men can serve as church leaders. But singleness is not the norm. If you aspire to leadership in the church, look at yourself through the lens of the leadership you exercise in the home first.

You know, when we have people who want to join this church, one of the first things the pastor wants to do is have a home visit. And you can learn a whole lot. I mean, when I have you guys over to my house, I lock doors.

[10:46] I don't want you to go into certain rooms. Pam, Pam's been in all of them. Where's John? Pam's been in all our rooms. She helps Diane clean. Look through the lens of leadership.

Look through that lens at the home. What goes on there? Paul uses the word manages, and that means in the original language, to preside over or have authority over.

It's also a word that is translated a number of times in the New Testament as rule or rule over. In the home, as in the church, it is God's plan for men to hold leadership roles.

That is not with that thumb, you know, on that wonderful, beautiful vessel we call a wife. Church leaders are not only required to manage, but to manage well.

That is a word, by the way, that can be translated excellently. In the Greek language, it is translated as something beautiful and appealing to the eyes. An elder is required to exercise leadership in the home, and such leadership should be visibly good.

[12:01] And, you know, I made myself a note, and then I forgot it, but I want to back up a little bit. In our church, the elders, we're talking about married men, single men. Two of our strongest elders are single men, James and Lee.

So, and they do a marvelous job. But this beautiful and appealing to the eyes, leadership is something that's visible, and it should be visibly good.

A number of years ago, I had a family member who engaged in a moral failure. And Mike remembers those days, and they were scary, sad days. And, upon discovery, I offered my resignation as deacon to the deacon leadership and to the pastor.

I just wasn't sure I was qualified. And they immediately turned me down. I said, no, we'll all have to step out. But I remember feeling that the failure was mine, that I had failed to do something in the home that had led to that.

And, by the way, it wasn't Diane. But, in any event, I did discuss with them the possibility that perhaps I should step out.

[13:18] So, the church leader must manage well, and the next word is manage well his household. And household would certainly include the elder's family, but it extends to all family life.

I guess we could say the extended family and extended family life. He must be a good steward of both house and finances. He should also have exercised the God-given ability to evangelize his extended family.

And I dare say every one of us in here has lost family members. I know I do. Diane does. And at the same time, we must remember when we evangelize our family, you know, God gives the increase. I have this tendency, you know, I want to manipulate them in so I feel good, you know. And that's not appropriate evangelism. Give them the word.

Let the Holy Spirit do his job. The leader must keep his children under control. And then it adds, with all dignity. This does not exclude childish men.

[14:34] But there's an assumption here that the leader, at least Paul is talking about, who was single, will also be a father. Under control is a term taken from the military, meaning lining up by rank under someone in authority.

Interesting term. Of course, Paul was always surrounded by Roman soldiers and the Roman military structure. In an ideal world, the children of an elder are to be respectful, well-disciplined, and believers.

Dignity is a word for courtesy and respect. The children of an elder should bring honor to him and to his wife. So how do we produce children who bring honor to their parents?

Certainly through the appropriate exercise of godly discipline that would be advisable for children to obey.

Disobedience should be met with immediate negative consequences. We live in a culture that has forgotten that. I can see little kids in Walmart, and I know 20 years from now my office will be dealing with them, if not sooner.

[15:52] I know that. Through the exercise of godly wisdom, making an environment that leads children to naturally obey.

Through the exercise of godly love that makes it delightful to obey. And through the father being able to convince his children of the great privileges of salvation and obedience to the word of God. Now, when I was growing up, I never heard the gospel from my dad. My mom told me about Jesus. But, you know, and I don't say this to be funny or something. I was very obedient.

And it wasn't forced on me. I wanted to. I didn't want to disappoint my parents. And my dad, I think, spanked me twice. Mom spanked me once, and I tried to cry so she wouldn't feel bad.

But, I mean, it was like, you know, a sparrow flying into you. You know, she was so little, and I was too old, really, to do that. But I didn't want to disappoint him.

[16:52] I mean, my dad, he would just look at me and say, son, you really disappoint me. And I go, oh, dad, just beat me. You know, beat the car out of me. But don't, you know, don't. Don't do that. Now, there is a reason that Paul gives, and actually he makes a parenthetical statement.

It's in parentheses. But there's a reason directly applicable to the church as to why men must have a well-managed home.

And Paul says this, and, of course, he's writing by the power, the authority of the Spirit of God. If a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God? And, boy, that just resonates. That just resonates. A man who leads his family successfully will usually lead his church successfully and vice versa.

Well, what about the spiritual maturity of a godly leader? Paul says, and not a new convert, lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.

[18:06] Very interesting language there. Very interesting language. That Greek word for new convert is used only here in the New Testament.

It was a special word. It does show up in secular Greek writings. In those writings, it refers to a newly planted tree. And you can kind of see that imagery.

A church leader is not to be a new convert. And Paul, again, writing by the Holy Spirit, gives the reason why.

He says it is to prevent conceit with the newly established leader. To do so could bring out the temptation of pride in the newly named leader.

Can you imagine some young guy? He's just getting out of the blocks. And now, all of a sudden, you know, he's going to be vice chairman of deacons or he's going to be an elder. He has no time as a saved man, no time in the word.

[19:13] He doesn't have any depth. And given the human power to be puffed up and conceited, that could be a dangerous combination for the church.

Now, there's something very interesting about all this. And there's no way that we can be dogmatic. I'm going to go from revelation to speculation. But Titus, and we'll get to that, 2016, Titus has a parallel list of requirements for church leader.

And this particular qualification goes unmentioned in Titus. You know, why did Paul leave that out? And again, let's not be dogmatic.

But it is possible that the churches on Crete were new and thus made up of new converts.

Placing those new converts in places of leadership would not have the same impact, pride, because all of them were new. You know, you have the difference between guys in a well-established church, older guys, and new converts.

[20:32] Let me use the example of my father-in-law. He got saved at 65. A product of a lot of prayers by his daughter, his son-in-law, witnessing by both.

And he and my mother-in-law immediately joined a very small Baptist church near their rural property in central Texas. Within two years, he calls me and he says, I want you to come down here.

I'm being ordained as a deacon. And I just cringed. You know, he's been a believer for 18 months or something. By the third year, he was chairman of deacons.

And he called me frequently for advice. Now, I was leery of a man being such a new convert and now leading as chairman of deacons.

And that little church, the chairman of deacons and the pastor led the church. They ran the church. But we have to remember something. They were in a setting where there was very little to choose from in that community.

[21:44] This was forced upon him by circumstance. And I have to tell you, God used my father-in-law to save that small church.

Literally saved it. And I'll tell you who he saved it from was a deacon who was very conceited and who decided that he was going to do a coup d'etat and take over the church.

And that man was voted down in his efforts by the church at my father-in-law's urging. It was a bitter struggle with a lot of hard feelings.

The man bitterly left the church and left to go infect another church and started doing that. And he fell over dead one morning. And he was removed.

An elder, in ideal circumstances, is to be drawn from among the most experienced men in the church. And, again, we remember that as a relative term.

[22:50] If it is a church of new converts, the spiritual age may be lower than the more established and older churches. Our church was birthed, I guess, over 75 years ago.

I don't know what anniversary we're coming up on now. Compared to, say, a newly planted church in the third world. And we want to protect the church from having conceited men in positions of leadership.

That's an interesting word. It means to be puffed up like a cloud of smoke. Again, Greek is very graphic. Very descriptive language. Putting a new convert in a position of leadership is tantamount to placing his head in the clouds.

Put his head up there in the clouds. And the Holy Spirit here employs interesting language. And he says, the danger is that the new inexperienced leader could himself be in grave danger of falling into the condemnation incurred by the devil.

Well, I started thinking about that. And I couldn't figure that out. So I went to the commentaries.

What was the gravest error of Lucifer that led to his downfall and eventual expulsion from heaven?

[24:11] It was the sin of pride. It was the sin of pride. Satan held the highest position for a created being in heaven.

The highest created being. And, you know, I've said that many times. People say, no, no, Jesus was. No. Jesus wasn't created. He's the eternal God. He's never. He's uncreated.

But Lucifer, who got kicked out and became Satan, had a name change and an address change. He was the sin of pride.

He said, I'm going to be like the Most High God. My throne will be over the Most High God. But he was demoted because of pride. The young leader who is appointed before he's ready can become puffed up through pride and run the risk of being demoted.

It had been better not to have served. It's like the New Testament story of don't take the seat of honor. You know, sit in the back and the host will, no, no, you can sit up here.

[25:17] You know, pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before stumbling. Proverbs 16, 18. Pride brought down Satan and it can bring down an immature Christian who finds himself suddenly elevated to leadership, to the role of an elder, a pastor, an overseer.

That is what Paul is warning Timothy about. Remember, in this setting back then, the day was coming when Paul wasn't going to be around.

Timothy was going to be on his own and Timothy will be choosing the leaders for the churches in that region. And we in the 21st century should remember that there is a strong antidote for pride and it's called humility.

That is the mark of a spiritually mature leader. But the greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.

Those are the words of the Lord Jesus. Great, great words. The greatest among you shall be your servant. As you guys know, I served for a decade at Phillips Patron Company as the global manager of corporate security.

[26:51] I was on a team there that was used to set the qualifications for future leaders in parts of the company.

And so I remember our first meeting and they were saying, well, what criteria should be brought?

And I said, well, you know, the most brilliant man, I used a capital M, but they couldn't see that.

Whoever walked among us defined management in these terms. Whoever, the greatest among you will be your servant. And they looked at me like I was from Mars.

My stars. It reminded me of the first year I was there. They weren't sure they were able to pay bonuses. And I said, well, I would give raises to the rank and file before I think any executive, all of us, should accept bonuses.

They, again, looked at me like I was from Mars. It didn't work that way in the corporate world. It would be a sad thing for the church to elevate someone whom the Lord himself would later have to remove because of pride.

[28:02] You know, may it never happen. May it never happen. May it never happen. And I must say, I think we've come close here, but we've never really done that. And then we also want to

mention the public reputation of a godly leader.

And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church so that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

And, you know, I had a thought just pop in. I had a guy. I wanted to be a chaplain. This was years ago. I wanted to be chaplain at the police department. I just, I liked him. I knew him well.

I just was a little uncomfortable. In fact, his next-door neighbors were Bill and Gloria Gaither when he lived in Indiana. Was that where they were? And it was funny. One night I was right by the church and there was a marquee.

He said, come tonight and hear Bill and Gloria Gaither. Well, I figured it was a video. They were there. About 200 people showed up. But he wanted to be a chaplain.

[29:02] And I let him ride along, but I was leery of that. He gets pulled over one evening for speeding, and he was hauling the mail. And he fires out of that car and says, I know Tom Holland, and you better not be getting that ticket book out.

And I called him. I called him up, and I said, don't be asking me to ride anymore. I said, you have set us back.

You've set our chaplain program back five years down here because most of those guys are not believers. And I said, you've really set us back here. The character of the godly leader must be reflected in his personal life, his church life, and his home life.

But it also must be reflected in his public life around the community. And reputation is interesting. It comes from the word for martyr. If we live out the appropriate reputation in a godforsaken community, we will come under a condemnation by the laws just like we're martyrs.

If we're going to be martyred, maybe not lose our lives, although believers lose them every day somewhere in the world. Our reputation in the community should be no different than our reputation in church.

[30:26] In fact, you can't live what MacArthur calls a bifurcated life, two lifestyles. You can't do it. If you leak in one area, you leak all over.

Remember, church leaders should stand for righteousness, morality, love, kindness, and goodness. That all sounds like the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians chapter 5.

Men who do these, live this kind of life, will become the irritant in the life of the unbelieving community.

And that's okay. That's part of being salt and light. Now, don't be obnoxious. I tell people, you could suffer for Jesus by being obnoxious. That doesn't get you anything.

Men who live, strive to live a holy life, will face antagonism. The city manager is my boss, Ed Gordon. He is pastor of Trinity Baptist Church on the west side.

[31:27] He has been the irritant in many a lost citizen's life as they were seeking something out of the city that was not possible. But even among his detractors, Ed has a reputation that is impeccable.

No one can bring a charge against him. They just can't do it. But we can have no impact on our community if the community does not respect us.

To try and live those separated lives, one in the church and the other in the community, can bring reproach to the name of Christ. And we've certainly not been placed here to disgrace the Lord.

We know that. Let me give you an example. Let me give you an example. And that's the nation of Israel. They were placed here to be a light to the Gentile nations of the world.

And they turned inward. They put bars on the windows and locks on the doors and said, don't come into our land. And instead of being a light to the Gentile world, they caused the Gentiles to stumble.

[32:35] Listen to Paul's stinging indictment of them in Romans chapter 2. You who boast in the law, that's the Israelites, through your breaking the law, do you dishonor God?

For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you. Boy, what a stinging indictment. Just as it is written.

You know, you have blasphemed God among the Gentiles. The word of God expects every believer's life to be a positive testimony to a watching world.

And let's all admit it, guys. The world watches us, don't they? We are under the microscope. The world watches. And that microscope is more intense, I think, for the shepherd of the church, for the pastor, for the ministers, and those in leadership roles in the church.

Paul and Peter. I did that on purpose. I didn't want to say Peter, Paul, because I was going to add Mary. Now, you young guys know what I'm talking about. You have a certain age. Levi, you remember Peter, Paul, and Mary?

[33 : 52] Never mind. They had this to say. Prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God, above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world.

Philippians 2.15. Over in Colossians 4.5. Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders. And then Peter weighs in in 1 Peter 2.12.

Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may, because of your good deeds as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Wouldn't it be great if an unbeliever came and just said, I'm here because of Mike or James or whomever, and I see something in them that I want. I see something in them that I want.

I really had a lot of this come to bear in my life a number of years ago. I was still at Phillips, and I gave a speech, and there were a lot of people in the room, a few hundred, and several, as was the practice, came up afterwards to talk.

[35 : 10] And one was a woman I knew, a real nice lady, and she was one of the executive secretaries. And I knew she was a believer, and I said something to her about the Lord, or something, how was Lord's Day, or I don't know what it was.

Her mouth, I'll never forget this, her mouth hung open. And she looked at me, and she said, I had no idea you were a Christian. That bothers me to this day.

And that was a long time ago. It bothers me to this day. I didn't even talk about it for a year or two, and then one day I saw her, and I told her about it.

And I reminded her, and I said to her, what had I done or failed to do that led you to conclude that I was not a follower of Christ?

Well, interestingly, she didn't even remember the incident. So she couldn't even comment. She had no memory of it. But it still bothers me. Having a good reputation will allow us to avoid the snare of the devil.

[36 : 23] Now, God does not set traps for his own, but Satan does. And we don't want to be snared by the devil. Let me close our time tonight with a quote from a man that I had never heard of.

But I want to know more about him. D. Edmund, and I'm going to pronounce it Hebert, unless you can do better, H-I-E-B-E-R-T.

Dr. Hebert, born in 1910 on a farm near Corn, Oklahoma. Does anybody know where Corn is? Do you?

I assume out west. No, it's down south. North by 40, but like Brown County, Matt, McGarry, and places like that. Okay. He was born into a Mennonite brethren family.

Went to school when he could, when he could afford it. He later became a Baptist preacher and attended Southern in Louisville, got his doctorate there.

[37 : 32] Then God rescued him from Baptist life and sent him back to the Mennonites. I looked on the computer. He wrote dozens of commentaries on the Bible, and I never heard of the guy.

And this is taken from his commentary on 1 Timothy. For one who has an unsavory reputation in the community, to be placed by the church into a prominent place of authority would be to draw upon himself and the church the reproach of the world.

The suspicion and censure thus arrayed against him and the church might easily weaken and discourage the elder. Thus weakened and disheartened, he might readily fall and easy prey into some skillfully laid snare of the devil, who is here vividly pictured as a hunter of souls.

Such a fall would cause great harm to his own soul and bring terrible damage to the church. The enemy's aim has always been to destroy the leaders of the church.

And he's been very successful there, hasn't he? I mean, you look at the last, I guess, 20 plus years in American life. And then Dr. Hebert, hence, great care must be exercised in the selection of its leaders.

[39 : 00] I like him. I'm going to do more. And then I wrote this sentence. Thus endeth our lesson for tonight. Thank you.