

*These notes are a reproduction of Pastor Phil's notes and are not an exact transcript of the session. For questions or comments, please email Pastor Phil at [phil.martyn@fbcholly.org](mailto:phil.martyn@fbcholly.org).*

**Main topic: How is leadership in the Church different from the domineering abusive leadership of the world? What did Jesus teach?**

**Open with Q&A**

Last week we saw the Scriptures show every Church has multiple elders/pastors. Does anyone have questions about that?

I would like to have the Church appoint a few elders by the end of two years, men who have the desire to serve, and fit the qualifications outlined in 1 Timothy. My prayer is that our Church would also desire that as well, and to work towards that end, we are studying together now, and in 2020 I'll preach through 1 Timothy in our Sunday morning services, encouraging the Church to recognize a few godly men as elders in our Church. Please be in prayer about that; I believe it will be a blessing for the entire Church and Holly.

I didn't talk much about deacons last week, but we will next week. Simply put, elders are pastors responsible for the teaching of the word and discipleship over the entire Church; they work together to shepherd the entire Church, not just from the pulpit or behind a podium, but through personal hospitality, visitation, prayer and discipleship. Every Church in the New Testament had multiple elders that were raised up from *within* the Church (Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5). Deacons lead the Church in servant ministries putting the word into practice. So, Biblically, I think our benevolence ministry, our food ministries, our buildings and grounds, all of those events and activities that put the word of God in action fall under the responsibilities of deacons.

**1 Cor. 4:18**—*everywhere in every Church*; also, notice the way the elders in Jerusalem (Acts 15) are similar to the elders in Ephesus (where Timothy serves) and in Crete (where Titus serves). There are two very different cultures there (Jewish and Gentile) and one extremely difficult city (Crete). But in every Church, Paul commands the same things.

**Two concerning things about raising up an elder board: Sexism and domineering leadership.**

**1. Sexism:** I believe men are uniquely called to serve as elders. That means there is a possibility for division between men and women and sinful neglect and even harm coming from the elders. That has happened in Churches and is a real danger. Why do I still believe that only men are called to serve as elders? There are many passages that show this, but the clearest is 1 Timothy 2:12. Does **1 Timothy 2:12-15** hold for our culture? (Note: for a detailed discussion with helpful questions please listen to the recording from session 3.) Paul says he does not permit a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man in verse 12. Is that verse for us today? I believe it is. Verse eight of chapter two begins the section, and Paul says these are instructions are for “every place,” not just to Timothy in Ephesus. Some have said the prohibition on women teaching was only in Ephesus because women there were particularly unfit for teaching, perhaps because of the cult to the goddess Diana that was so prevalent in the city. But there is scant evidence that Christian women were unfit for ministry in Ephesus; every city had pagan gods and goddesses, Ephesus was not unique in that regard. And, it would be unlike Paul to disqualify an entire class of people in a city because some of them were unfaithful. Most importantly (because it’s in the text of Scripture), Paul gives his first reason for the prohibition based on creation before the fall into sin. He says “Adam was formed first.” He’s arguing there is a burden of leadership for men that comes from how God created humanity—and this is before sin even entered the world. That means when we obey this teaching that we are being consistent with how God created us as humans; if we disobey this command we are going against God’s created order and it is wrong for the Church to go against creation in any culture.

Then Paul adds a second reason for his prohibition on women exercising authority or teaching men in the Church: he says that it was Eve who was deceived, not Adam. He’s pointing out that rather than following Adam’s leadership, Eve led the way into sin. Deviating from God’s created order had devastating consequences for all of humanity. As we look at Churches that have ordained women for the past sixty years, most of them today affirm same sex marriage (this is true of many American Baptist Churches, Anglican Churches, Presbyterian Churches, Methodist Churches and Lutheran Churches; in fact, every historic mainline denomination that led the way ordaining women in the past today has major factions that endorse same sex marriage). I think the two are closely related, because when those Churches taught that 1 Timothy 2:12 was irrelevant for our time and cultural context, they created the possibility that other commands of Scripture were a product of their time and culture, and not of the infallible inspiration of the Holy Spirit. So by allowing our modern culture to disagree with the teaching of Paul, they lowered their estimation of Scripture, which has led into sin for

every mainline denomination in America.<sup>1</sup> The result of reversing God's created order in Church leadership remains the same in modern history as it did in the garden of Eden.

So, when Paul says he does not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man, I believe that precludes women from serving as elders. That's why raising elders might cause concern in our Church. Will it promote sexism? Not if we are faithful to *how* elders are to lead, which is what I want to talk about for the bulk of this session. But the possibility of sexism is why accountability to the entire Church is so important, and it is why Paul allows for elders to be publicly accused when they are in sin (1 Tim 5:19-20).

Also, if the Bible says "no" to women being elders, does that mean they cannot serve in ministry? **NO**. The Bible is full of examples of godly women in ministry, from Lydia to Dorcus to Phoebe. What does the Bible say "yes" to? I believe women are called to serve as deacons in a wide variety of ministries, including teaching other women (see especially Titus 2) and young people. We'll talk more about that in a future session.

**2. Domineering leaders:** I believe elders are called to have authority in the Church. Hebrews says "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you." (Heb. 13:17 ESV)

That's really strong language, and probably disturbing to a lot of people. We all know stories of abusive leadership. I think the reason we struggle with God establishing authoritative leadership is that the Church is full of sinners, and God has this crazy idea that some of them should hold positions of authority. That's scary.

There are two things I want to say that address especially the second concern. The Bible clearly presents the congregation as a whole as being the final authority in the Church.

- Church discipline: See Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Cor. 5:4-5, and 1 Tim. 5:19-20. If an elder is domineering, or commits any other public sin, he needs to be publicly rebuked. The public rebuke shows that the congregation has authority over him. And I don't mean to be too repetitious, I just want to be clear.
- Appointing deacons: Acts 6:2. The rest of this time together, we need to look at servant leadership outlined in the Scripture.

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<sup>1</sup> The only exceptions to this are the Assemblies of God and Nazarene denominations.

## **Behaviors in life:**

The following passages demonstrate the type of leadership elders are called to have:

- Matthew 20:25-28: Jesus tells the disciples that the greatest in his kingdom are “Not as the lords of the gentiles.”
- John 13:12-17: Jesus washes the disciples’ feet.
- 1 Peter 5:1-5: Peter calls the elders to live as an example to the flock and not be domineering. He also commands them to defend the flock by guarding against wolves and rebuking divisive people.
- 2 Tim. 2:24-26: Paul tells Timothy to correct opponents with gentleness—this is only possible if you know the word and doctrine. Paul says “watch your doctrine!”
- Titus 3:10-11: Paul tells Titus to warn a divisive person twice and then have nothing to do with them.

## **What does this look like in real life?**

The ministry of the word for the whole Church takes priority (see **1 Tim. 4:11-16; 2 Tim. 4:2**). But not every elder has as much responsibility in preaching and teaching (1 Tim. 5:17). Other responsibilities include worshipping and fasting (see Acts 13:1-3), evangelism (2 Tim. 4:5), personal discipleship (see 1 Tim. 5:1-2, 2 Tim. 2:1-2), ministering to the sick (James 5:14-15), and hospitality (1 Tim. 3:2).

What happens when an elder doesn’t do this?

Elders are open to correction. Galatians 2:11-14 shows Paul publicly rebuking Peter, just like he talked about in 1 Timothy 5:19-20. Peter was restored to leadership in the Church—his sin did not permanently disqualify him, but he had to repent. He then went on to serve the Church, and he wrote two books of the Bible.

Two modern examples can also serve to show what happens when an elder needs to be corrected. John Piper publicly repented of pride and poor leadership and was restored to service in his church. James McDonald was publicly rebuked by his church and was dismissed from leadership.

**Future classes:** how elders relate to deacons (or ministries at our Church); how men and women are called to serve together in harmony without elders being domineering.

