

Intro:

In 1 Timothy 5:17-25, Paul gives Timothy more practical instruction on life in the local church with the focus in this section being elders and they and the church are to relate to each other.

1. In vv17-18, Paul says elders should be honored and appreciated, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.

–What are some practical ways members of a church can encourage and appreciate their leaders?

–Paul notes that the primary task of elders is laboring in preaching and teaching. Discuss why it is so important for a church to understand this priority for their elders/pastors?

2. In vv19-20, Paul wants to ensure that elders are protected and not the victims of unfounded criticism or attack, but yet he also stresses they should be held to a high standard if they do in fact sin. It is no surprise Satan targets church leaders as their sin has far reaching consequences.

–Discuss how the ministry of the gospel can be hindered in a local church when leaders are subject to undue and unjustified criticism. How can a regular member of the church help to guard against this?

–Conversely, discuss how the ministry of the gospel can be hindered if leaders are not kept accountable and they are not held to the standard Paul calls for here.

3. In v21, Paul charges Timothy to listen to his instructions and reminds him that his ultimate audience is God and his heavenly court. In other words, Timothy must remember that his ministry is first and foremost to be Godward in its orientation, not oriented towards earthly things or the opinions of man.

–While certainly churches may not set out to be man-centered, many unfortunately are. Discuss the consequences of a pastor, church, or ministry that is oriented towards attracting a crowd or focused merely on meeting felt needs of people.

–One the other hand, while Paul commends leaders be God-focused, this obviously does not mean that people are unimportant! Rather, serving God rightly means we will also serve people in the best possible way. Discuss what this may look like in a healthy church leadership that is oriented towards God for the good of the congregation.

4. Finally, Paul speaks to Timothy about being slow in forming opinions about people and potential leaders, because it often takes time to discern the fruit in their lives. So, the point of pastoral ministry is not personal success or necessarily numerical growth, but rather preparing people for the judgment to come.

–Discuss the contrast between what Paul sketches out here—slow, discerning, pastoral faithfulness—and the attraction our culture has to large and rapid growth.

–Finally, Charles Spurgeon often noted that the fruitfulness of his ministry was entirely dependent on the prayers of his congregation for him and his ministry. Take some time to pray for CrossPointe’s elders and our church as a whole.