

Welcome to Promise Land Bible Church
We're glad you're here!



An open Bible is shown from a low angle, looking up at the pages. The pages are filled with text, and the background is a bright blue sky with white clouds. The text is overlaid in a large, bold, black font.

Order in the Church, 2 Church Officers

Scripture text: 1 Timothy 5

Church Officers (1 Tim. 5:17–25)

The instructions in this section deal primarily with the elders, but the principles also apply to a pastor's relationship with any officer in his church. It is a wonderful thing when the elders and deacons (and other officers) work together in harmony and love. It is tragic when a pastor tries to become a spiritual dictator (1 Peter 5:3), or when an officer tries to be a preeminent “big shot” (3 John 9–10).

1 Peter 5:1-5 So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: **shepherd the flock of God** that is among you, exercising oversight, **not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.** And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

3 John 1:7-11 For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support people like these, that **we may be fellow workers for the truth.** I have written something to the church, **but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority.** So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, **talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church.** Beloved, do not imitate evil but **imitate good.** Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God.

Apparently Timothy was having some problems with the elders of the church at Ephesus. He was a young man and still had much to learn. **Ephesus was not an easy place to minister.** Furthermore, **Timothy had followed Paul as overseer of the church,** and Paul would not be an easy man to follow! Paul's farewell address to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20) shows how hard he had worked and how faithful he had been, and how much the elders loved Paul (Acts 20:36–38). In spite of the fact that **Paul had personally sent Timothy to Ephesus,** the young man was having a hard time.

Act 20:26-30 Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of **God**. 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**. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and **from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them**.

Act 20:31-35 Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

Act 20:36-38 And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. And **there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken**, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.

This situation may be the reason for Paul's instruction about wine (1 Tim. 5:23).

Did Timothy have stomach trouble?

Was he ill because of his many responsibilities and problems?

Or had he tried to follow the ideas of some ascetics (1 Tim. 4:1–5), only to discover that his diet was making him worse instead of better?

We do not know the answers to all these questions; we can only read between the lines. It is worth noting that Paul's mention of wine here is not an endorsement of the entire alcohol industry. Using wine for medicinal reasons is not an encouragement for social drinking. As we have seen, though the Bible does not demand total abstinence, **it does denounce drunkenness.**

1 Timothy 4:1-5 Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times **some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons**, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and **require abstinence from foods** that God created to be received with thanksgiving **by those who believe and know the truth**. For **everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.**

Paul counseled Timothy in his relationship to the elders by discussing three topics:

Paying the elders (vv. 17–18). In the early church, instead of one pastor, several elders ministered to the people. These men would devote themselves full-time to the work of the Lord, and, therefore, they deserved some kind of compensation. In most congregations today, the elders are laymen who have other vocations, but who assist in the work of the church. Usually the pastoral staff are the only full-time workers in the church. (Of course, there are also secretaries, custodians, etc., but Paul was not writing about them.)

There were **two kinds of elders** in the church: **ruling elders** who supervised the work of the congregation; and **teaching elders** who taught the Word of God.

These elders were chosen from the congregation on the basis of God's call, the Spirit's equipping, and the witness and work of the men themselves.

After they were chosen, they were ordained and set apart for this ministry (Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5).

Act 14:23 And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, **with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord** in whom they had believed.

Act 20:28 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.

Titus 1:5 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

The local church needs both ruling and teaching. The Spirit gives the gifts of “helps” and “governments” to the church (1 Cor. 12:28). **If a church is not organized, there will be wasted effort, money, and opportunities.**

If spiritually minded leaders do not supervise the various ministries of the local church, there will be chaos instead of order. **However, this supervision must not be dictatorial.** You do not manage the work of a local church in the same manner as you do a grocery store or a manufacturing plant. **While a church should follow good business principles, it is not a business.**

The ruthless way some church leaders have pushed people around **is a disgrace to the Gospel.**

But **ruling without teaching would accomplish very little.** The local church grows through the ministry of the Word of God (Eph. 4:11ff). You cannot rule over babies! **Unless the believers are fed, cleansed, and strengthened by the Word, they will be weak and useless and will only create problems.**

Paul told Timothy to be sure that the leaders were paid adequately, on the basis of their ministries. He quoted an Old Testament law to prove his point (Deut. 25:4).

Ephesians 4:11-15 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, **to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ**, until we all attain to the **unity of the faith** and of the **knowledge** of the Son of God, **to mature manhood**, to the **measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ**, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, **speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,**

Then Paul added a statement from our Lord Jesus Christ: **“The laborer deserves his wages”** (Luke 10:7). This was a common saying in that day, but Paul equated the words of Christ with Old Testament Scripture!

If pastors are faithful in feeding and leading the people, then the church ought to be faithful and pay them adequately. “Double honor” (1 Tim. 5:17) can be translated **“generous pay.”** (The word honor is used as in “honorarium.”) It is God’s plan that the needs of His servants be met by their local churches; and **He will bless churches that are faithful to His servants.**

If a church is not faithful, and its pastor's needs are not met, **it is a poor testimony**; and God has ways of dealing with the situation. He can provide through other means, but then **the church misses the blessing**; or **He may move His servant elsewhere**.

The other side of the coin is this: **A pastor must never minister simply to earn money** (see 1 Tim. 3:3). To “negotiate” with churches, or to canvass around looking for a place with a bigger salary **is not in the will of God**. Nor is it right for a pastor to bring into his sermons his own financial needs, hoping to arouse some support from the finance committee!

Disciplining the elders (vv. 19–21). Church discipline usually goes **to one of two extremes**. Either there is **no discipline at all**, and the church languishes because of disobedience and sin. Or **the church officers become evangelical policemen** who hold a kangaroo court and **violate many of the Bible's spiritual principles**.

The disciplining of church members is explained in Matthew 18:15–18; Romans 16:17–18; 1 Corinthians 5; 2 Corinthians 2:6–11; Galatians 6:1–3; 2 Thessalonians 3:6–16; 2 Timothy 2:23–26; Titus 3:10; and 2 John 9–11.

Matthew 18:15-20 "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, **between you and him alone**. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, **take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses**. If he **refuses** to listen to them, **tell it to the church**. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, **let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector**. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."

Romans 16:16-20 Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you. **I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.** For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive. For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but **I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil.** The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

2 Corinthians 2:5-11 Now if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure--not to put it too severely--to all of you. For such a one, **this punishment by the majority is enough**, so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he **may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow**. So I beg you to **reaffirm your love for him**. For this is why I wrote, **that I might test you** and know whether you are **obedient in everything**. Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, **so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs**.

Galatians 6:1-5 Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. **Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.** For if anyone thinks he is something, **when he is nothing, he deceives himself.** But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. For each will have to bear his own load.

2 Timothy 2:22-26 So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And **the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness.** God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and **they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil,** after being captured by him to do his will.

2 John 1:7-11 For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. **Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch yourselves**, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but **may win a full reward**. Everyone who goes on ahead and **does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God**. Whoever **abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son**. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, **do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works**.

Paul in this passage (1 Tim. 5:19–21) discussed the disciplining of church leaders. **It is sad when a church member must be disciplined, but it is even sadder when a spiritual leader fails and must be disciplined; for leaders, when they fall, have a way of affecting others.**

The purpose of discipline **is restoration, not revenge.** Our purpose must be **to save the offender,** not to drive him away. Our **attitude must be one of love** and tenderness (Gal. 6:1–3). In fact the verb restore that Paul used in Galatians 6:1 means **“to set a broken bone.”** Think of the patience and tenderness involved in that procedure!

Paul's first caution to Timothy was **to be sure of his facts**, and the way to do that is **to have witnesses** (1 Tim. 5:19).

This principle is also stated in Deuteronomy 19:15; Matthew 18:16; and 2 Corinthians 13:1. I think a dual application of the principle is suggested here. First, those who make any accusation against a pastor **must be able to support it with witnesses**. Rumor and suspicion are not adequate grounds for discipline.

Second, when an accusation is made, witnesses ought to be present. **In other words, the accused has the right to face his accuser in the presence of witnesses.**

A church member approached my wife and I at a church meeting one evening. He then began to accuse us of splitting the church. He had all sorts of miscellaneous bits of gossip, **none of which was true.** As soon as he started his tirade, in front of everyone, I was grateful to have witnesses when this took place, however, when people believe **a lie without proof**, it leaves **no room for God.**

It is sad when churches disobey the Word and listen to rumors, lies, and gossip. Many a godly pastor has been defeated in his life and ministry in this way, and some have even resigned from the ministry.

“Where there’s smoke, there’s fire” may be a good slogan for a volunteer fire department, but **it does not apply to local churches.**

“Where there’s smoke, there’s fire” could possibly mean that somebody’s tongue has been “set on fire of hell!” (James 3:6)

James 3:6 And the **tongue is a fire**, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, **setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell.**

Paul's second caution was that Timothy **do everything openly and aboveboard.**

The under-the-counter politics of city hall have no place in a church. "In secret have I said nothing," said Jesus (John 18:20). **If an officer is guilty, then he should be rebuked before all the other leaders** (1 Tim. 5:20).

He should be given opportunity to repent, and if he does he should be forgiven (2 Cor. 2:6–11). Once he is forgiven, **the matter is settled and should never be brought up again.**

Paul's third caution (1 Tim. 5:21) is that Timothy obey the Word no matter what his personal feelings might be.

He should act without prejudice against or partiality for the accused officer.

There are no seniority rights in a local church; each member has the same standing before God and His Word. To show either prejudice or partiality is to make the situation even worse.

Selecting and ordaining the elders (vv. 22–25).

Only God knows the hearts of everyone (Acts 1:24). **The church needs spiritual wisdom and guidance in selecting its officers.** It is dangerous to impulsively place a new Christian or a new church member in a place of spiritual responsibility. Some people's sins are clearly seen; others are able to cover their sins, though their sins pursue them (1 Tim. 5:24). The good works of dedicated believers ought to be evident, even though they do not serve in order to be seen by people (1 Tim. 5:25).

In other words, the church must carefully investigate the lives of potential leaders to make sure that there is nothing seriously wrong.

To ordain elders with sin in their lives is to partake of those sins!

If simply saying “Good-bye” (God be with you) to a heretic makes us partakers of his evil deeds (2 John 10–11), **then how much guiltier are we if we ordain people whose lives are not right with God?**

2 John 1:10-11 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, **do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting**, for whoever greets him **takes part in his wicked works**.

No pastor or church member is perfect, but **that should not hinder us from striving for perfection**. The ministry of a local church rises and falls with its leadership.

Godly leadership means God's blessing, and that is what we want and need.