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# Practical Leadership at Church

*Greg Cook*

**Introduction** Tonight, we are going to look at what Paul said in 1 Timothy 3 about leaders. Pastor Devon did an excellent job of helping us to see that this text was not only aimed at those who are in leadership in the church, but that it is aimed at all men and their leadership. It is my intent to speak to two areas in more detail, and to only make general comments on one. Again, I do not want you to think that I am the expert and that I can stand in front of you having done all of these things, or even to have done any of them well. I am passing on to you those things that I have learned in my life. Or I am passing on those things that I have read that I believe will be practical in your lives, as you seek to progress in becoming Leading Men.

Let's pray and ask God to help me and you, as we consider some practical matters in leadership, as I have outlined them tonight. <PRAY>

## Being a God-honoring Man

Pastor Devon did an excellent job this morning of helping us to understand this 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter in 1 Timothy and how it applies to all of us men. This section is not just about someone who is in a leadership position in the church. This is about every man, no matter his lot in life. If you don't believe that this section is for every man, then it would follow that a man could basically live any way that he deemed to be right in his own eyes. Then if he wanted to be in any position of leadership, especially in the church, then he should begin to work on the things spoken of here in 1 Timothy 3 to be eligible. In addition, the implication in verse 5 is that a man's family is his training ground for being given additional positions of leadership. A man's leadership at home cannot be any different than his public leadership. Paul says that he won't know how to care for the church if he can't care for his home.

Devon focused this morning on one of the critical elements of leadership and that is Character. There is no way that anyone will be a God-honoring leader without having and developing the character traits that are given here. Yes, these qualities are in the context of leadership in the church, but they apply to leadership in all areas of life. Is there anyone here who would be willing to wholeheartedly follow someone in leadership who was a liar, who was dishonest, who was a hypocrite, who was angry, loud, boastful, proud, harsh, allowed themselves to get out-of-control over issues and actions, and all kinds of others descriptions of leaders that we know? Of course not. Why? Because leaders must have these qualities in order to lead well. So a man must be a God-honoring man in his character. And this starts at home.

## Being a God-honoring Manager

As Pastor Devon said this morning, ALL men are to manage their homes; church leaders must possess and demonstrate their ability to manage their homes WELL. So each man sitting here tonight is to be a God-honoring manager of his home. What is a God-honoring manager? Lou Priolo says, "He manages his family in accordance with biblical principles. A manager doesn't do everything himself. A manager sees to it that each member of his household fulfills his or her biblical responsibilities. He is not a micro-manager, meaning

that he must have his hand in every project. However, he is aware of everything that's going on in his home. He knows what needs to be done, but he also knows how to delegate responsibilities to those who are capable and responsible to fulfill them." (Lou Priolo, *The Complete Husband*, page 218).

When we talk about leadership, there can be a tendency to believe in a leadership that is not biblical. The Scriptures are clear that the husband is to be a servant-leader, just as Christ was. Wayne Mack, in his book, *Strengthening Your Marriage*, made this comment on being a servant-leader, "... a leader is first and foremost a servant. His concern is not for himself; his concern is not to give orders, to boss other people around, to have his own way. His concern is to meet the needs of others. Indeed, if the best interests of others are not on his heart, if he is not willing to sacrifice himself – his personal needs, wants, desires, aspirations, time, money – if the needs of others are not more important than his own, he is not qualified to lead." (page 27). That is strong language. Does that describe you and me?

I would like to make some brief comments on areas where men are to lead and manage their homes.

### **Leading in Financial Provision, Direction, and Decisions**

The first area is in the arena of the finances of the family. There are at least three issues that need to be discussed under this heading of finances.

#### **Financial Provision**

The Scriptures give clear direction that the man is to be the primary financial support for the family. In 1 Timothy 5:8 Paul has these words,

"But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."

Paul also gives this warning in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-10,

"Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. 7For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, 8nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. 9It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. 10For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat."

Richard Baxter, in his monumental work, *A Christian Directory*, says that the "husband must be specially careful, that wife and children want nothing that is fit for them, as far as he can procure it". (page 439) It is his responsibility to make sure that his wife and children do not go without. When we look at a family's finances, it is the husband's income that should be the main support for the family. He should be working either at his full potential, or working toward achieving his full potential in producing an income for his family. If a wife works, she should not be the one who provides the most to the support of the family.

Now, as soon as I say that, there are circumstances that bring about exceptions to these directives. In God's Providential care, a husband may have physical limitations

that make it impossible to provide for his family. He may have suffered an injury, or has a disease that makes employment nearly impossible. Or, because of a lack of training or education, he is under-employed and not able to provide adequately for his family. He is working hard, but he is not in a job that pays sufficiently for the support of his family.

However, having said that, a husband must be careful that he doesn't excuse his employment, or lack thereof, because he is not willing to make the hard choices of working hard toward becoming better employed, or of being too concerned with his own enjoyment of other activities that interfere with having employment that would potentially provide adequate support for his family. There are many men who are more concerned about sporting activities like golf, fishing, hunting, bowling, softball, or any number of other activities that make having adequate employment nearly impossible. As I said earlier, the man is to be a servant-leader, and this is an area where it will be most observed. Is he willing to sacrifice his own enjoyment to provide for his family.

Now, I understand that it is a fearful thing to step outside your comfort zone to train for, or look for employment that can be adequate for your family. Starting over, or changing careers, is not a fun thought to entertain. But, God is the One Who will help you as you seek to please Him in this area of servant-leadership – providing adequately for your family financially.

### **Financial Direction**

Not only is the man to be the provider for his family, he is to be the one who determines the financial direction of his family. He should be looking to the future and making short-term and long-term goals for his family. Are you going to provide a private elementary and secondary education for the children? Are you going to provide a college education for the children? What are you going to do about family vacations, where are you going to live, and what amount of debt are you going to incur.

This direction is not something that he determines without consulting with his wife. Remember, the manager doesn't do everything himself, nor does he make all of the decisions without input from others. He is wise in his dealings with those under his leadership.

### **Financial Decisions**

And lastly in this area of finances, the husband makes the final decisions in the area of finances. Now, please do not hear me say that the man must handle the finances. That is not what I am saying. Remember, he is the manager and makes the final decisions. Let's face the facts, there are some men who couldn't balance a checkbook if their lives depended on it. It's a major accomplishment when they remember to keep the ATM and credit card receipts.

What I have found in this area is that normally, each spouse is the opposite of the other. One of them is the spender, and the other is the saver. One is a math wiz and the other can't add, subtract, or understand a checkbook ledger no matter how many times it is explained to them. It is the rare home that has two spouses who are both savers. It is a disaster where both spouses are spenders.

But as the manager of his home, the husband will look at his own abilities and the abilities of his spouse, and have the one most qualified do the financial details for the family. If your wife is a CPA, you are certainly going to let her pay the bills and balance the checkbook. Remember, a manager uses and develops the resources that God has placed under his care for the good of the family and for the glory of God.

However, if the wife handles the finances, she must make sure that her husband knows the situation at all times and allows him to make the final decisions. It is the wise husband who will ask for and consider seriously the input of his wife when it comes to financial decisions. That does not mean that he follows her opinion all of the time. There may be times when he must go against her input in making a financial decision. The buck stops on his desk.

Just as a side note, the credit card industry has given some statistics for credit card use and debt in general. In 95% of families, the majority of the debt comes from husbands. In general, women have a fear of debt. As a result, women take families into debt in little increments; men take families into debt in giant leaps. Remember, this is the general way that things happen. There are families where it is exactly the opposite. What to take away from this is – men you need to be extra careful as you make decisions on family finances, especially when it comes to incurring debt. (Stuart Scott, *The Exemplary Husband*, page 347)

### **Leading in Problem Solving**

How many times has a wife come to her husband with a problem and he has said to her, “That’s your problem – solve it?” As the manager of the home, the husband must be the one who solves problems. Of course, he will get input from those who are involved in order to make a wise choice. But there is no situation in a man’s home that is not his responsibility. He is the one who leads the way in solving problems. He is the one who follows biblical principles in peacemaking. He is the one who teaches others the principles of peacemaking. He is the one who teaches others the principles of making wise choices.

A resource for help in this area is *Peacemaking for Families: A Biblical Guide to Managing Conflict in Your Home* by Ken Sande with Tom Raabe.

### **Leading in Child Rearing**

Another component in managing his home well involves the rearing of children.

Child rearing is not something that is done on the fly. At the moment of disobedience or conflict is not the time to begin thinking about what to do. The wise manager will have taken the time to read about this subject and discussed it with his wife before the baby ever arrives. They will have talked and decided on how they are going to discipline and instruct before the time comes when it is needed. They will be on the same page when it comes to rearing their children.

A study showed that fathers spent minutes each day with their children. And the wives, who are working in their careers are getting less and less time with the children as the years pass. How can we expect to raise God-honoring children when we don’t take the time to build into their lives.

Again, it is the man who must make this a reality in his home. He is the one who is ultimately responsible for the rearing of his children. This doesn't mean he is the only one involved, or even the one who is involved the most, but he is the one who oversees and sets the pace for the rearing of his children.

May I recommend three books for your instruction in biblical child rearing:

*Shepherding a Child's Heart* by Tedd Tripp along with the companion book *Shepherding a Child's Heart: Parent's Handbook*, also by Tedd Tripp.

*Age of Opportunity: A Biblical Guide to Parenting Teens* by Paul David Tripp

*The Heart of Anger: Practical Help for the Prevention and Cure of Anger in Children* by Lou Priolo.

### **Leading in Tone-setting**

Also involved in being a God-honoring manager in your home is the fact that you are to be the one who sets the tone in your home.

#### **Loving their Mother**

A tone of love in the family is set when children see the public and frequent words and actions of parents who love each other. They should see gentle, loving pats, embraces, holding of hands, exchanges of smiles, kisses, and other outward expressions of love and affection. They should hear tender words, restrained tones even when angry, and the seeking and granting of forgiveness when there has been offense. The best way to help foster affection and love in the home is for the children to know they are loved, but that their mother is loved even more.

#### **Being an Example**

People don't learn as well by lecturing as they do by observing. The husband must be one who is gentle, patient, seeking the best in others, unselfish, honest, and self-controlled. He should be one who is growing in his relationship with God and in his ability to lead. If the tone of your home is not what you think is God-honoring, then look at the example you are giving.

### **Being a God-honoring Minister**

The final area that I want to consider is the area of being a God-honoring minister. John Calvin said in his *Institutes*, that the husband is the pastor of his home. He is the minister responsible for the spiritual development of his family.

#### **Leading in Family Worship**

Now, this section of ministering is one that I confess was not something that I did in my home. And that is to lead in family worship. I have been greatly challenged in my reading of several chapters in the books by Donald Whitney, to which I referred in my message two weeks ago. And as I looked at his website, he had released a new booklet entitled, *Family Worship: In the Bible, in History, & in Your Home*. It is only 64 pages and I recommend it highly to those men who want to please God by leading their families in family worship.

One of the excuses that I have heard from many men who do not consider themselves very educated, is that they cannot lead a family in worship because they don't know enough to be the teacher. In fact, one of the most frequent problems I hear in counseling is the whine of a wife who wants her husband to lead, and the husband who responds that his wife knows 10 times more than he does. It's better to let her do it, since he doesn't want to look stupid before his whole family. Again, I cannot speak by experience with what I am going to suggest, since I did not practice it in my own home, but I trust Don Whitney, that what he suggests is both doable and practical enough for any man of any understanding of Scripture. He spends the first 23 pages making a case from the Bible and from history, that this is not only commanded in Scripture, but it has been practiced since the beginning of time. He teaches that there are three elements involved in family worship – reading, praying, and singing. He takes his cue from Matthew Henry and Charles Spurgeon. Matthew Henry said, “They that pray in the family do well; they that pray and read the Scriptures do better; but they that pray, and read, and sing do best of all.”

### Reading

The suggested book to read is the Bible. Read it chapter-by-chapter, and read entire books. Choose passages appropriate for children's ages. Read for shorter periods of time and short sections when they are young. Have the children read as part of their learning to read. Have older children read as they are able. Read enthusiastically and interpretively. Explain words the children may not understand. Clarify the meaning of key verses. Ask the children to explain what they have heard. In order to have variety, another good book could be used in addition. Kevin Cyrus, my son-in-law, remembers with fondness his father reading *The Chronicles of Narnia*, by C.S. Lewis. Others have told me they remember their father reading *Pilgrim's Progress* to them. This isn't necessarily about being a scholar and knowing it all. It is about passing on to your children your love for God and His Word.

### Praying

The second part of family worship involves prayer. This is also a time for variety. The situation of your family – their ages and the amount of time that is dedicated to family worship – will dictate how this is done. Praying is caught as much as it is taught. Remember a couple of weeks ago I talked about using the Psalms for prayer. This would be a good time to use that technique.

### Singing

And then, singing. I know, I can hear you now, “I can't carry a tune in a 55 gallon barrel.” That's not the issue. God instructs us all to make a joyful song to the Lord. Your home should have CDs or tapes of worship songs that you use in your singing. If your children are involved in learning to play the piano, this would be a great time for them to use their skills for God's glory by accompanying this time of singing.

Family worship does not have to be something that takes a lot of preparation. Granted, some preparation will enhance the time, but preparation should not be a hindrance to doing it. Just sit down and read, pray, and sing.

Don Whitney gives three more guidelines for this time: 1) be brief so the experience doesn't become tedious, 2) do it regularly, and 3) be flexible. It is best done when the family is normally together anyway, such as after meal time.

Don's last chapter is entitled "*Isn't this what you really want to do?*" He gives 9 motivations to encourage you to do it. But he also gives these reasons why we don't do it:

We feel embarrassed to begin. We have failed for so long, we are ashamed and embarrassed to start.

We fear the attitudes and remarks by some family members when we suggest starting.

We don't think we are capable of leading family worship.

We are ashamed because we tried it earlier and didn't stick with it. There is the fear of this happening again and the dislike for what family members will say if we don't carry through this time.

We don't know what to say to our wives and children to get it started.

His encouragement, as well as the instruction from Scripture and the example from history, is to repent and to get started now. Ask your family to join you in doing what is right. And may I add, wives, kids, make it easier on Dad by letting him know that you would be willing to have him do this, if that's what he wants to do. And just as I said 2 weeks ago, please do not criticize his early efforts. Encourage him so he will not become discouraged and will be excited to continue.

## **Leading in Church Involvement**

The God-honoring minister of his family is one who takes church involvement seriously. He sets the tone for the spiritual involvement of his family. It starts with the discipline and belief of the man about church.

### **Being Prepared for Church**

The God-honoring family minister is the one who makes sure that all of the children's clothes are laid out on Saturday evening before going to bed. Everyone knows what is going to be worn the next day. No looking for pants, shirts, dresses, slacks, socks, and all the other necessities of life at the last minute before leaving for church.

He is also the first one up. He makes it his job to get his family up, fed, and dressed in adequate time to have a leisurely drive to church. None of this being the last one up. None of this only being concerned about getting himself up and ready. None of this making his wife get everyone, including herself, ready as he waits at the front door, or worse, in the car. He leads in getting it done.

### **Regular Attendance**

The God-honoring minister of his family makes sure that he and his family are at every service of the church, unless providentially hindered. I know that I am probably preaching to the choir, but what that looks like at the Chapel is Sunday at 9:15 and 10:30 AM, 6:00 PM, and flock on Wednesday evening.

## Membership and Baptism

The family minister will be a member of a local church and will have been Scripturally baptized. He will instruct and encourage his children to make the commitment to baptism and church membership as appropriate. And he will make sure that he participates in church business meetings and at the Lord's Table when served.

## Proportional Giving

He will have the heart of giving proportionally as God provides. And he will teach and encourage his children to do the same.

## Participation

He will participate in the ministries of the church as God has enabled and gifted him for. He realizes that God has given every believer at least one gift that is for ministry to the body of Christ. He will help his wife and children serve as they have opportunity.

He will be actively engaged in corporate worship by singing, praying, and being attentive to the teaching of God's Word.

## Submission to and Encouragement of Leadership

He will pray for, both privately and with his family, for the leadership of their church. He will talk positively to his family about leadership and will keep criticism out of his discussions. He will help his family to get conflict with other church members and leaders resolved in a God-honoring way.

This God-honoring minister of his family will be the example to his entire family of what being a disciple of Jesus Christ is. He will show his concern for his family and their spiritual development by making sure they see in him the priority that faithfulness to the church has in his life.

## Ministering through the Family

And finally, under this heading of God-honoring Minister, there is his leadership in ministering through his family. Ministry is not done outside of family, it is done through family. The outside world needs to see what a Christian family looks like. And the family is that vehicle for ministry.

Kent Hughes, in his book *Disciplines of a Godly Family* lists 6 ways a family ministers to a lost world:

The family keeps an open house. Everyone is welcomed at any time. This is a place where others can observe first hand. There is always an open place at the table, a place in the car, extra equipment for participation by others.

Parents get to know and like their children's friends. Their friends will know whether you really like them, or if you just put up with them.

You pray for other people and their children. Common sense dictates that if we desire to have a family ministry, we must pray for those families with whom we have contact.

Be a source of neighborhood fun. This doesn't have to be elaborate or expensive. Just simple things make for the most fun.

Being kind to your neighbors. Have them over for a cookout. Bake some cookies and take them over. Volunteer to baby-sit their children. Help them cut their grass, paint their house.

Becoming involved in the community. What about coaching, getting involved in a project sponsored by the city or township.

The philosophy of the Master's Mission is that missionaries minister out of their families. The watching world looks at the family and they need to see a family that lives life according to Biblical principles and for the glory of God. It is no different in this lost culture in which we live. We need to minister out of our families. The watching world needs to see families who are led by men who are God-honoring.

**Conclusion** May I wrap up tonight with these thoughts:

Leadership involves being a God-honoring man, who is constantly working on the character qualities that are required for leadership.

Leadership involves being a God-honoring manager, who is growing in his ability to manage by being that servant-leader who is concerned more about those he is leading than he is about himself.

Leadership involves being a God-honoring minister, who is growing in his ability to minister to and through his family for the glory of God.

As we come to the conclusion of this series on Leading Men, we have seen much that is required of us as men. Please do not get so overwhelmed with the changes that are needed that you don't begin. As I mentioned during my last message, you can't make all of the changes you need at one time. The old saying, "How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time." is very fitting for us here. Please do not leave here tonight saying, "Whew, I'm glad this series is over. Now we can get back to something that is not so convicting." Take the time to talk to someone that can help. See your pastor. Whatever it is going to take to help you change and grow in your God-given role as leader, do it. Start tonight. For the glory of God, for the good of your family, and for the ministry of Clearcreek Chapel.