



Biblical Principles Notable Directives

by Chuck Gianotti

Studies in 1 Timothy (NASB)—Part 17 (final)

Timothy must have been a remarkable young man to gain Paul's trust and confidence. However, it is clear that Paul let him go out from under his immediate tutelage. Personal training can only go so far and then a young protégé has to go it alone. Maybe it was the immensity of the task of evangelizing the world that led to Timothy separating physically from Paul or maybe Paul saw it as the next effective step in Timothy's training. It is obvious that Paul held on lightly, in order to give Timothy maximum responsibility and freedom.

Yet Paul continued to mentor Timothy from afar, as can be seen from the many instructions given in the book. A brief survey of some notable directives can be helpful to keep in mind:

Remain on (1:3)

Serving the Lord requires staying power. There is opposition at every turn, so the faint of heart need not apply. We are in this for the long haul, so let's not give up. Practical tip: Don't make any decision to step down as an elder while you are in the midst of a difficult time. Wait until the pressure is off, so you can think clearly and rationally.

Prayer (2:1)

As elders we must be people of prayer! This is a primary ministry of shepherding. Through prayer we affect people's lives, not only for salvation, but also for growth in knowledge of the truth (2:4). Nothing can be done without a conscious dependence on the Lord. While it is true the Lord can use us despite our shortcomings, we dare not presume that we can shepherd without God's power and enabling. As elders we must give much time to prayer, both as a group and as individuals. Practical tip: Divide the church phone book into seven sections, and pray for 1/7 of the people each day, bringing them before the throne of grace each week. (Obviously, you can adjust this number as you see fit).

Conduct yourself (3:15)

How we behave affects others, who are taking their cues from the elders. Much of the Christian life is application of the truth in day to day living. People look to those who are

spiritually mature to see how faith works out in the humdrum of life. As elders, our conduct is a primary teaching tool! Practical tip: Ask yourself this question, Would I be comfortable telling a new believer to follow my example as I interact with life and people?

Give attention to reading Scripture (4:13)

I can not say enough about the place of Scripture in the elder's lives. We should be saturating ourselves in Scripture—and not just for preparation to teach or preach. We need it for our own, ongoing personal growth! Memorize it, listen to it, read it, meditate on it. Sounds like a lot, and it is.

Make a list in the back of your Bible of topics and verse references so you can quickly

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find relevant passages when needed. People need to see and hear us using Scripture in our conversation and the challenges of life. This is just as "public" as the "public reading of Scripture" during meeting times. TIP: Plan a reading schedule so that you get a constant, steady and broad diet of Scripture. Consider also a public reading plan for the church meetings.

Honor (5:3,17)

Elders should set the example for showing honor to others. Two groups in particular are pointed out by Paul: widows and elders. The first because widows are often overlooked, and the second because who honors the elders if they don't honor each other. Practical tip: Make a practice of complimenting one or two other people each Sunday, catch them in the act of serving and encourage them. Don't be stingy with honoring others.

Maintain without bias (5:21)

One of the hardest things for a leader is to refrain from biased decisions and attitudes. This is especially difficult when it comes to favoring family or friends. Nothing erodes trust faster than favoring one person over another without just cause. This, of course, does not mean we let the pendulum swing too far in either direction. That is, we ought not act unfavorably to our family members either. Practical tip: Actively listen to any hints others make about your being biased. Ask a

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Leadership Principles

On Elders' Meetings

by Jack Spender

Anyone who serves as a church elder has probably come to understand God's wisdom in providing a plurality of men to share the workload. Biblical church leadership does not refer to several individuals each "doing their own thing," but rather the development of a team that works together while respecting one another's different gifts and abilities. And this process of team building is not just something that happens inevitably because men are laboring in the same church. Paul's well known words to the elders of the church at Ephesus: "Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock of God..." (Acts 20:28 KJV) remind us that elders must care for one another as a brotherhood before they can effectively shepherd God's people. This means spending quality time together, often in the form of the elder's meeting, occasionally referred to as "the oversight."

People Needs and Time Pressures

Scripture tells us to redeem the time because the days are evil (Eph. 5:16). It is not a stretch to conclude that as the days become more evil, time pressures will increase. Paul captured the thought well when he wrote: "For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now" (Ro 8:22). The needs of people and families today are staggering. How can a man keep up with the demands of his own family life, his employment, the need for proper exercise and rest, and still have time to care for the flock of God? Obviously, good stewardship of time is critical. Time is a precious resource; a gift of God's grace; too precious to waste. Thus when elders meet together to address the needs of the church, it will be important to make best use of the time.

Respecting the Differences

At the outset, we must recognize that local churches differ greatly in size and shape. Some are located in cities, some in rural settings. Some are large; others are small. Some exist in countries

that are hostile to the gospel; others can worship in peace. There are great differences in age makeup, opportunities for ministry and outreach, and a variety of available gifts and resources. In addition, there are widely differing leadership styles. Some men like an informal approach; others prefer a very business-like model. Obviously, the Scriptures do not provide detailed instructions on *how* elders must meet or *how* they must address the needs of their particular flock. But we can discern some principles in the New Testament that will commend themselves to the thoughtful believer as clearly important for leaders.

In all our decisions, we should desire to say, "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us ..." (Acts 15:28).

Priorities for the Elders Meeting

Looking at the big picture, there are at least three time priorities for a good elders' meeting; time with the Lord, time for the team, and time for the flock. The earliest church leaders – the apostles were careful to devote time to all three, and there is a priority of importance discernable in the record.

First, time with the Lord

It is easy to see the connection between the tremendous growth of the early church, and the prime place given by the apostles to fellowship with the Lord as Head of the church. Who has not pondered the words in Acts 6, "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word" (vs. 4)? Or the record in Acts 13:2. "As they ministered to the Lord and fasted..." Clearly, the apostles lived and worked with a strong sense of the presence of the risen Lord in their midst, and they evidently depended on Him for guidance and direction in everything.

Elders today would do well to take note of this. Too often the elders' meeting is "opened in prayer," and then the business at hand consumes the rest of the time. Those who have devoted substantial time to prayer and meditation in

the Word can attest to the wonderful way in which the Head is still able to direct the meeting and guide His church! In all our decisions, we should desire to say "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us..." (Acts 15:28). But the Lord, as a true Gentleman, will never force His way into the preeminent place. It is our responsibility and privilege to give Him that place each time we meet.

Second, time for the team

There must be time for the brothers who make up the leadership team to minister to one another. This is not time wasted! Any brother who is weighed

down by troubles and discouraged in heart will not be an effective elder no matter how pressing the agenda. Bearing one another's burdens is not an option. It is the only way in which we can fulfill the law of

Christ (Gal. 6:2). How can this be practical?

Spending time together in the Word and prayer not only allows the Lord to disclose His mind about our many decisions in the church, but it also opens the way for Him to make us more transparent with regard to our walk and relationships. Perhaps for this reason some are uneasy with such "opening exercises" as they call them. But wise elders will do just as written, namely, "take heed" to the brothers who meet together to see if prayer or the ministry of comfort or exhortation or perhaps just listening is needed.

In any case, this is a precious opportunity to follow the example of the Lord Jesus in the upper room as He ministered to the needs of His own before He went to the cross. Having cared for one another, we can now turn our attention to the needs of the church.

Third, time for the flock

How much might be written here! The needs seem endless. We no more get one problem resolved than the devil throws a dozen more in our way. But the Word is our faithful resource. For the sake of brevity, let me simply list a few items that have brought blessing.

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More Than A Guest

by Mary Gianotti

Summer is a great time to consider getting to know some of the people in your fellowship a bit better. We enjoy barbeques on our back deck or using a local park to picnic and play games with families that have children. I love this more relaxed form of hospitality. Welcoming these people into our lives is part of assisting my husband in shepherding the flock God has entrusted to him and the other elders.

Recently I was thinking about Martha and how she "welcomed Jesus as a guest." We all know Martha's story. Even though she was hospitable to Jesus, it was not good enough. In my own life when Jesus is just a guest, like Martha I easily become distracted. Distractions prevent an intimate relationship with Jesus. So often I hear Martha's voice echoing my own. "Lord, don't you care?" Don't you care about the stresses of being an elder's wife, the criticisms, the lack of growth and so many things

I'm constantly faced with?

When Martha felt Jesus didn't care several feelings must have arisen. She felt abandoned and overworked. She felt this was an injustice. Now that is a pretty good description of how I feel at times in this ministry of an elder's wife. What was Jesus evaluation of Martha?

Choosing to trust that Jesus will always be with me dispels troubled thoughts.

corded for us in Matt. 6 and John 14. Matthew writes, "... do not worry about your life...food...clothing...people of little faith... your Father knows you need them... pursue his kingdom and righteousness." Jesus invites us to replace worry with faith, faith that He will provide all we need, at any time, in any circumstance. Then John recalls Jesus' words "... do not be troubled... believe in God, believe also in me..." Choosing to trust that Jesus will always be with me dispels troubled thoughts.

Developing an intimate daily walk with Jesus promises to replace worry with the confidence that He is my provider. Troubled thoughts are exchanged for a settled assurance that my Lord is in control and will never leave me.

This summer chose the best thing. Make Jesus more than just a "guest" in your life. Take time daily to sit at His feet.



On Elders' Meetings (cont.)

- *Rely on your deacons.* To keep elders from becoming primarily business managers and decision makers, the Lord has given the blessing of deacons. According to the proto-type of Acts 6 these are men who can relieve the elders by being their assistants in temporal matters, especially finances.

- *Consider a men's meeting.* Some assemblies have found blessing in regular times for the men of the assembly to meet and work together on some of the decisions of the church.

- *Remember the old saying:* "work with your Timothys." It is too easy to be fighting small fires and pouring great amounts of time into troubled people and families and neglect the servants. Younger men must be disciplined and encouraged to take on responsibilities.

- *Keep the emphasis on the positive* as much as possible. What good things has the Lord done recently? Where are opportunities and open doors? In which areas can we move ahead?

- *Devote quality time to feeding the flock* and shepherding the families of the

church. Never allow business items to compromise this important work.

- *Deal with difficult matters as quickly as possible;* do not let them fester and harm the church.

- *Take advantage of the help available* in the different gifts within the church. Wise elders will not expect all needs to be met by elders alone; other men, sisters, and young people have much to offer.

In Conclusion

Over the past year, I'm sure I have heard the expression: "As leadership goes, so goes the church" at least 10 times. The Scriptures expound it, experience affirms it, the people know it (and talk about it); why should we not accept the truth of it and ask the Lord to help us in our meetings about the overseeing of His church? What joy it must bring to the Lord to see His servants dedicate one of their greatest assets to Him: the wise use of time with Himself presiding!



From the Q-Files

Don't tell people how to do things, tell them what to do and let them surprise you with their results. *George S. Patton*

The very essence of leadership is that you have to have vision. You can't blow an uncertain trumpet. *Theodore M. Hesburgh*

Do you wish to rise? Begin by descending. You plan a tower that will pierce the clouds? Lay first the foundation of humility. *Augustine of Hippo*

It is a terrible thing to look over your shoulder when you are trying to lead -- and find no one there. *Franklin D. Roosevelt.*

The question, 'Who ought to be boss?' is like asking, 'Who ought to be the tenor in the quartet?' Obviously, the man who can sing tenor. *Henry Ford.*

Notable Directives (cont.)

trusted mentor or friend if any such criticism has a kernel of truth to them.

Flee evil (6:11)

As you know, elders don't have a free pass when it comes to temptation. In fact, sometimes the pressure is more. How much more do we need to be vigilant in fleeing evil. A wise man recognizes his own weakness. Practical tip: Find a spiritual accountability partner and give each other the freedom to ask the hard questions and honestly interact with each other.

Fight well (6:12)

Eldering is definitely a spiritual battle. You are not fighting temptation and a host of other things for yourself, but you are engaging in the battle for and with other people. Any successful fighter stud-


ies and practices in order to fight better. Fighting is the "hand to hand" combat of a specific situation. The battle involves more people. The war is the big picture. Yes, we may lose some battles at times, but the war is as good as won, because of the promises of God! Tip: Consult with other elders and read widely about other Spiritual leaders and how they have handled different situations in ministry.

Instruct on stewardship (6:17-19)

Don't shy away from talking about money. However, Paul never tells Timothy about capital campaigns or fundraising. He instructs Timothy to speak to the wealthy about using their money for Godly purposes. The apostle never shied away from asking people to give liber-

ally to the Lord (though he never asked for any money for himself and his own particular ministry). Practical tip: Commit at least one Sunday sermon per year on the subject of stewardship.

Guard your charge (6:20)

Elders are charged by God, gifted and enabled to carry out the charge, to shepherd the people of God. Don't let anything hinder that most important of ministries. The "success" of the local church, in the most spiritual sense, is dependent upon godly elders doing their work of shepherding. This is more important than preaching or teaching by themselves. The people of God need shepherds who care for them. As one brother put it, "We need broad shoulders and big hearts." Broad shoulders to bear the burden, and big hearts to show the love. 

Leadership Principles

The Heart of a Shepherd

by Chuck Gianotti

The heart of a shepherd beats for the sheep. He is willing to sacrifice greatly for them (see John 10:11). The "what" of shepherding is laid out in Scripture in many places, but the "how" is not always clear. For example, regularly scheduled elders' meeting is not Biblically mandated, but in our busy day it is a wise thing. That's a "how" of being an elder.


There is no job description that can adequately cover the task. It is a colossal misjudgment for a man to become an elder based on whether or not he can fulfill a detailed list of responsibilities. Being an elder is something inner-driven. Unlike secular leadership, this is

not a matter of personal character, charisma or strength. The only biblical inner-driven entity is the Holy Spirit.

I am increasingly aware that any leadership that is not energized by the heart of God working through the Holy Spirit, is not true spiritual leadership.

To be sure many churches are led by pastors, elders or deacons who are great leaders utilizing very effective means for organizing and administering the church affairs. However, I remember from my early days of new life in Christ an older brother and teacher of the Word emphasizing *ad infinitum* (and at the time I naively thought, *ad nauseum*) that the church is not an or-

ganization, but an organism. That is much more apparent to me now than when I was younger. The church is not just a parallel to what the world does in corporations, charities, volunteers groups—nor is it just a big "self-help" institution.

So our ministry is not simply to give people tools or "how to's" for living. It is to help them connect with an infinite God, a loving Shepherd who continuously and supernaturally changes our lives. As shepherds our task is to continue leading the flock to the life-giving waters and to help them drink deeply. That's the heart of a Spiritual shepherd! That's not a "how," but a "what." O, Lord, give me the heart of a true shepherd! 

ELDERS' SHOPNOTES

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