

Small Group Guide

Caring for Elders, Caring for the Church

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. Bart Box

September 25, 2011

1 Timothy 5:17–25

This guide is a tool to help you lead your group into spiritual transformation. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering, owning, and applying the truths of God’s Word. There may be aspects you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on an aspect of their relationship with God. Your role is to help facilitate this encounter with God in His Word through His Body, not just to complete the guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid group task list.

Relate . . .

Begin your group time by engaging in relational conversations and prayer that may include the following elements:

Welcome—a simple, brief time to greet one another (especially new friends), enjoy refreshments, and make announcements.

Review—a time to review the truths discussed last week and report on how members have had success or frustrations in applying those truths during the week. The leader will want to provide encouragement and shepherding during this time. Periodically, the leader will also want to review the gospel and allow members to share reports about opportunities they’ve had to share the gospel. Occasionally, the leader will want to revisit the vision for the group and discuss ways to accomplish that vision better.

Prayer—a time of general prayer with the whole group praying for struggles regarding the application of truths, for those with whom the group is sharing the gospel, and for understanding of today’s truths.

Reflect . . .

Use the following summary and questions to review this week’s message and reflect on its implications in our lives:

Sermon Outline

Caring for Elders, Caring for the Church 1 Timothy 5:17-25

The Ways We Care...

- Honor faithful elders with generous provision. (vv. 17-18)
 - The command of double honor...
 - Double honor involves respect.
 - Double honor includes pay.
 - The conditions of double honor...
 - They must rule well in the church.
 - They must labor diligently in the Word.
- Protect all elders from unfounded accusations. (v. 19)
 - We should not be surprised when elders are accused.
 - We should be cautious when elders are accused.

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- Rebuke unrepentant elders in the presence of all. (vv. 20-21)
 - We should rebuke as a witness to truth.
 - We should rebuke as a warning to others.
- Appoint each elder with great care. (vv. 22-25)
 - Careful selection is for the benefit of those choosing.
 - Careful selection is for the protection of the church.

The Keys to Care...

- We remind ourselves of the glory of God in the church.
 - Sense the gravity of casually ignoring God's Word.
 - See the glory of rightly ordering Christ's church.

We remind ourselves of the kindness of God in the gospel.

Message Summary

Dr. Box placed these instructions to elders and the church within the context of 1 Timothy 3:14–16. The gospel determines how we are to behave in the church body.

Elders must rule well and labor diligently for Christ's sake in the church. We are to honor faithful elders with generous provision, including both respect and payment. We must protect elders from unfounded accusations; yet also rebuke any unrepentant elders in the presence of all. It is important to appoint elders with great care.

God's instructions for His church should remind us that the church exists to show forth His glory. We cannot ignore His Word. These passages should also cause us to remember the kindness of God toward us in Christ.

Discuss

Use the following questions to review the Head (What does God want me to know?), Heart (What does God want me to value?), and Hands (What does God want me to do?) aspects of the message.

- **Why is 1 Timothy 3:14–16 foundational for understanding 1 Timothy 5:17–25?**
- **To whom does the church belong? What truth or truths should ultimately govern our actions and attitudes in the church?**
- **Why should we be concerned about church organization or governance? Why does it matter? Why does the church exist?**
- **Who has the authority and wisdom to determine the ordering of the church? What aspects of church order do you think are unchanging across time and what aspects might be OK to determine according to culture or efficiency or practicality?**
- **According to the Word, what kinds of qualities should an elder possess? According to the world, what qualities should leaders have? How are they similar? How do they differ?**
- **Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12–13; 1 Timothy 6:1, 16; and 1 Timothy 5:18. What does *honor* mean? What does honoring our elders include?**
- **If a church body treats its elders poorly, what does that say about the congregation's values? If we speak badly of or gossip about our elders, whom are we ultimately dishonoring?**
- **What must elders do to deserve double honor? What does ruling well mean? (See 1 Timothy 3:4–5, 12) How could elders misuse their authority? In what must elders diligently labor?**

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- **By whose standards must we judge “ruling well”? What standards does God set forth in the Word for church leaders? How can the world’s standards creep into our view of our elders? What are some examples of worldly or church-culture “success” not found in God’s Word? How can we align or realign our mind-set to be in tune with God’s Word?**
- **How can we protect our elders against unfounded accusations? How do we need to discipline our own tongues?**
- **Why is it important to rebuke an elder caught in persistent unrepentant sin? How would that rebuke be a warning to others?**
- **Why should elders be appointed with great care? Whose reputation is at stake in the choosing of elders? How should 1 Timothy 5:17–25 affect our approach to the elder nomination process?**
- **How can the church best deal with any tension between the need for more elders and the need for caution in appointing elders?**
- **How would you describe a proper relationship between pastors and the church body? If you’ve experienced broken relationships in the past, what do you think were the root causes?**
- **How does a biblical, caring relationship between pastors and the congregation glorify God? How might that kind of relationship differ from relationships in secular business and government?**
- **How do God’s instructions to the church show us His kindness and love? How can these instructions encourage us to value the church and love Christ even more?**

Respond . . .

Encourage your group to break out into smaller, same-gender groups where they will respond to the truths of the message. These groups will share with one another based on the following questions and then close in prayer:

- What are some of the main truths that God wants you to know from the message?
- How do your thoughts need to adjust to align with these truths?
- According to the truths from the message, what does God want you to desire and value?
- How do your desires need to change to align with His values?
- What actions does God want you to take according to the truths of this message?
- What is an action that you can start to implement today or tomorrow?

Close this time by praying for each other, specifically for strength in the application of these truths and for the lost people with whom you are seeking to share the gospel.

Weekly Prayer Focus ...

- **Lives and Church:** *Pray that God would protect our elders’ personal holiness and the purity of their doctrine. Pray that God would protect their families and that He would give them wisdom to know how to lead and protect the sheep at Brook Hills.*
- **Local:** *This week we are praying for the Brook Hills ESL (English as a Second Language) ministry. This ministry exists to share the gospel and disciple Spanish-speaking individuals by meeting spiritual and relational needs while attending to their need for English-language learning. We are also praying for Riverchase Presbyterian, Rick Atkerson, pastor.*
- **Global:** *This week we are praying for our partner Neverthirst. We are also praying for Brook Hills short-term teams serving in the Middle East and India.*