



1 TIMOTHY 5:17-25

Part 11 of 1 Timothy

Pastor Mark Driscoll | 1 Timothy 5:17-25 | March 14, 2004

It's good to see you guys. We are in 1 Timothy. We go through books of the Bible. We're finishing 1 Timothy in the next few weeks. Then we're gonna do 2 Timothy, and I will pray, and we'll get into chapter 5 tonight, which is a great chapter. It should be fun.

So Father God, we love you. We thank you for an opportunity to gather together and study your Word. Holy Spirit, I thank you for inspiring the writing of these sacred Scriptures. I pray that would come now and enlighten our understanding of them, that you would give to each of us that insight or conviction or admonishment that you know that we need.

God, I pray you would use your Word tonight to open eyes, to transform hearts, to encourage those who need it, to change them who desperately need your touch. And Father God, I pray as we study this text that the Lord Jesus would always be the Senior Pastor in this church, that the elders who serve under him would be faithful undershepherds and that, Lord God, people here would be loved and well cared for.

That this would be a church where people would be encouraged, that they would grow, that when their life ends, it would not be anything like it would've looked had you not intersected their life. God, I pray for wisdom to speak tonight. I pray for words to speak, and I pray you would give us as a people ears to hear your Word. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

As we get into 1 Timothy, we've been looking at the church. It's dealing with the church. And what we've learned is that God appoints leaders to oversee the church. And we looked in 1 Timothy chapter 3 that those are called elders or pastors, synonyms, and deacons. And as we revisit this issue of elders tonight in chapter 5, what we're learning is about your obligations as a congregation to your leadership.

In 1 Timothy 3, it really stressed our obligations to you, and it says in Hebrews chapter 13 that we serve as men who must give an account for you before God, and so we must live our lives in an exemplary way and pour ourselves out so that you would be blessed. But then you need to treat us in a certain way so that our job isn't painful and arduous and feel like a roofing hammer through our frontal lobe.

So that's really what we're dealing with tonight, how you guys could be a good church and how we can be good pastors, and we can work together for God's purposes. So we're dealing with elders, also pastors. I'll start here at chapter 5, verse 17. "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well," I'll just stop right there. Pastors are supposed to oversee the direction of the church. That's what we're supposed to do. And they're supposed to do it well. Not all pastors do it well. Not all churches are healthy. Not all churches teach the Bible. Not all churches are going well.

My question to you is this: As elders in the church, have we overseen and directed the affairs of the church well?

Yes? I appreciate the enthusiasm. Calm down. I'll walk out of here all arrogant. One person, yeah. Tell me the joke. Where's the joke? Where's that guy who was singing? Where's that guy?

The elders who direct the affairs of the church well, that pastors are supposed to oversee the church. Now, you look at it: facilities, people programs, the staff, the membership, the instruction, the families. There is a lot that we do as a church. There's a great deal that we do as a church. We have 2,000 people a week that come. We run this enormous facility. Our budget this year will be about \$2 million. We're dealing with thousands of lives. We're helping plant lots of churches. We help start, through an organization we helped cofound, over 100 churches in 8 nations in the last three years.

There's a big influence. We're trying to do all that we can, and we want to do everything well. We wanna spend our money well. We wanna teach our Bible well. We wanna love our people well. We wanna oversee the affairs of the church well.

I can say this in all confidence, not to brag or boast, but we do direct the affairs of the church well. Your money is spent well. Your resources are invested well. Your theology is precise and taught well. These here, quite frankly, are going very well, very, very well. And it's by God's grace. It's not that God works through people apart from grace, but God grace through people enables things to be done very well.

So those leaders, those pastors in churches like ours who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor. Now, the honor here is respect, and it's also finances. We'll get into that in a minute. But the honor here is respect. If the pastors in the church give you instruction, give you correction, give you insight, give you time, you need to honor them. You need to respect them.

But when we tell you something, it's not that we don't love you. It's that we do. It's not that we disagree with you perhaps because we're trying to be contentious, but 'cause we believe you are in error. And there needs to be an honor. There needs to be a respect for those leaders.

And what I would simply say is this: For those of you that may disagree with leadership in this church, pull back and ask yourself, "Well, are they directing the affairs of the church well? Does it look like the people that are leading here have any idea what they're doing?"

And I would submit to you that it certainly does. We've in every way been a very healthy, very successful, thriving church. Because of that, you should look around, and in many ways what we've done is our resume. It's my resume. How do we know Mark? Well, look around. Look what happens here. Things are going well. This started from an idea on paper to the present-day reality that it is.

What he says is that if they've done a good job leading and managing well, then give them honor. Give them respect. If you – how many of you come from a church where you had a great pastor that taught you the Bible? You loved that pastor. That pastor took good care of you. You should – when you go home, you should send him a nice letter. You should honor them. "Thank you. I love you. I appreciate you. Things are going well. You know, I'm still walking with the Lord. Your time wasn't in vain. I know when you were working with me, it looked like I was Judas Iscariot headed for Hell. You'll never guess what. You know, I actually am doing okay. Thank you so much."

I have my first pastor in college. I got saved at the age of 19. I send him a letter every now and then just to say thanks and I love him and I appreciate it. Just honor. It's respect. We started the church. I didn't get a lot of honor. I was saved at 19. I started gathering the core group of the church at 25. For the first year, only one guy called me Pastor, and he did so in mockery. "Hi, Pastor." He'd do it like that, like he was – like a drunk redneck just to mock me.

Nobody. I had no respect at all. It was like I would ask people, you know, "Hey, could you please not, you know, cheat on your wife?" "Who do you think you are?" "I'm your pastor." "Ahh." They'd just laugh at me and stuff. It's hard to do your job. It's really hard to do your job when people don't honor you. "No, I love you. I have verses." "Ahh, you're 25." Like, "Well, yeah, but I still have verses, and they're good verses. Do you wanna hear 'em?" "Nah." You know, if there's no honor, it's hard to get anything done, right?

'Cause it's not like a police officer. I can't carry a gun, right? I can't like enforce. I can't enforce too well. Now, I'd like to, but I can't enforce, so the only way I can really enforce or we as pastors can enforce is if you honor us, is if you respect us. It's just like in a family, you know, if there's a dad who loves his kid and the kid just doesn't listen, there's not a ton that the father can do if the child doesn't respect the parent.

And I'll say this too: Pastors need honor. All men need honor. That's why it says in Ephesians 5 "wives, respect your husbands." Men need respect. You don't respect a man, bad things happen. Men need respect. Men live in respect like fish live in water. And it's especially true for pastors. It's a respect issue. It's an honor issue.

And this honor comes out especially for those whose work is preaching and teaching. Okay, in a church there are elders. Some elders are more public and prominent in preaching and teaching. It says in 1 Timothy 3 that all elders need to be able to teach. It says that as well in Titus 1, that elders need to be able to teach.

But like me, I get to teach in a large preaching capacity, so in many ways, for better or for worse – we could vote on it – I'm the mouthpiece of this church. I'm the one who gets to speak. And it says here that they should work in preaching and teaching. Some translations will say labor. They labor in preaching and teaching, writing curriculum, preaching, teaching classes, training other teachers, making sure that there is sound, healthy doctrine, that the Bible is the issue in the church.

Those who labor at that – and it is a labor. It is a labor. We're moving my library right now to my house. It's about 3,000 volumes. I've read them all, okay? I mean, I study. I study hard. Paul shows, "Study to show yourself a workman approved unto God who rightly handles the Word of truth." Studying, learning, knowing, it's work. In addition, I oversee the affairs the church. This last week was a typical week, six 12-hour days. I worked six days a week, about 12 hours a day.

I'm a husband. I'm a student. I'm a father. I'm an author. I travel a week a month. I'm a conference speaker. I got a lot going on. We plant a great deal of churches. I mentor other pastors. I don't have hobbies. I don't have free time. I work, and I spend time with my wife and kids because, as I read the text, if I'm gonna preach and teach, I gotta be working. I gotta be working.

And if you're not a person that can work, you shouldn't be a person who's preaching and teaching. You shouldn't be. You shouldn't be. And a lot of churches have guys who preach and teach, but they don't work. That's why some of you guys wanna be pastors. It's like, hey, it's indoors, and you don't have to lift anything. That looks like a great job.

And it's not a bad job. This is a good job if God's called you to do it, but it is work. It's labor. When we started the church, it was 80 to 100 hours a week for the first four years. Period. Period. I mean it was seven days a week oftentimes, and it's work.

A good pastor works. Because of their work, the church is well organized, and it's moving forward, and it's healthy. Because of that, there should be a respect. And it's not just one person. It's the elders. It's plural. It's the team of pastors that I'm a part of that are responsible for the success and the health and the vitality and the forward progress of the church.

It's a team. I'm one of the pastors on the team. I don't always get my way. In fact the last two things I proposed I got shot down on, so I'm starting to play like the Sonics. I'm really in a tailspin all of the sudden. I can't take it to the hole is what's going on, but I keep proposing stuff and getting shot down 'cause I'm filled with dumb ideas apparently. And it's good 'cause the elders who direct the affairs of the church, not just one guy who always gets his way.

We said it repeatedly here. We do have a Senior Pastor. His name's...

Response: Jesus.

Jesus, thank you very much. 1 Peter 5, Chief Shepherd is what he is. The rest of us are pastors, and we bring ideas and we vote. The elders are a team that votes and works and leads and serves together in unison. And those who direct well are worthy of double honor, double honor, okay? And we'll talk about it as well. Part of that is financial for the Scripture says – he quotes Deuteronomy – “Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain.”

Okay, what that means is this: At Mars Hill, I'm your ox, okay? That's why I'm so hairy. Prophetic. I swear, I'm half Wookiee. I could pass as an ox. I am your ox. What does an ox do? An ox is not a – a lot of guys think that the pastor's this sexy job. It's not. You're an ox. You're a beast of burden. You just pull a lot of weight in a straight line, not particularly attractive, little hairy, little stinky, but you can pull a lot of weight. You're pretty functional. That's me. That's what I am.

I'm glad it doesn't say, you know, a cat or something. It says an ox, and I like that. That's sort of manly. That's a nice metaphor. I'm the Mars Hill ox. We put things behind me, and I pull. That's what I do. That's what I do. And I'm cool with that. I love being the ox. I love responsibility. I love working hard. I love plowing new ground. I love seeing new opportunity.

But what it says is don't muzzle the ox while he's treading out the grain. And this is in the Old Testament where God cares about the feeding of the animal. You mean to an animal if you work a beast super hard, and that beast is plowing a field, and out of that field comes a harvest that then feeds the master, but there's a muzzle over the mouth of the animal so that the animal can't even eat the food that it's helping to produce. God says that's a wicked thing. It's a wicked thing to beat your animal so that it'll feed you and then not feed your animal.

And the analogy here is simple. If you think God cares about your ox, do you think he cares about your pastor? If your pastor works hard and he's pulling a lot of weight, well, shouldn't you feed that guy? I mean, you'd feed your ox. Wouldn't you feed your pastor? He goes on and he quotes again, “As the Scripture says, do not muzzle the ox while it's treading out the grain.” And then he quotes another one from Jesus in the Gospel of Luke, “And the worker deserves his wages,” okay.

It's interesting where it says that Luke is Scripture. I want you to catch that. Some people say, “Oh, when the Bible was written, they didn't think that the other books of the Bible were Scripture.” They sure do. Paul says that Luke is Scripture, and he quotes Jesus. “The worker deserves his wage.”

Some of you come from churches where if they pay the pastor, they feel like, “Oh, wasn't that nice? We did a little favor for him. We let him have breakfast. Oh, we should get a button. We're so nice.”

No, the worker deserves his wages. In every other job, if you go to work, they pay you. And if they don't, you don't go to work, right? Like the guys in the DOT with the vests and the shovels and the hardhats. It's like if you don't pay them, they're not digging. And they shouldn't, I mean, unless the shovel wacked them in the head, and they're having a little bit of an issue. You don't go to work unless they pay you. But in the church with leadership and with pastors that are pulling their weight and doing a lot of work, oftentimes churches don't pay their pastors. That's the point.

Now, occasionally, Paul in the New Testament doesn't get paid because he's doing church planting, new work. There's not a church yet, so he's starting from nothing. But in 1 Corinthians 9 and Philippians 4 he talks about how a pastor deserves a wage, so here's what we're gonna talk about.

We go through the Bible. We deal with everything as it comes up. We're gonna talk about you and me. We're gonna talk about you and me. First thing I'll say is no, you can't go back. I'm gonna be here for awhile. We'll have breakfast in a minute. Don't muzzle your ox, okay?

When we started this church, I didn't get paid anything. First year, nothing. 'Cause we had no people, we had no money. If you called the church, the church office was at my house, and I would answer the phone in my underwear and pretend like we were a high-powered organization. “Hi, thanks for calling Mars Hill.” “Is Mark there?” “Yeah, let me get him.” So I'd, you know, “Hi, how you doing?” I'd pretend like I had a secretary. I'd pretend like we were legit. I would, seriously. And I'm sitting there in my underwear just like the short guy in the Wizard of Oz, just pulling the levers, maintaining the illusion of this tremendous empire. Woo hoo.

There's nothing, man. No money, no people, no nothing. The first year we put a box in the back, and I said, “Hey, if anybody feels led to give, feel free to give.” Nobody apparent felt led. God didn't move in anybody's heart. The first year we brought in \$90,000.00, first year, which wasn't that great. It's a nice SUV, but it's not a great budget, and that first year I didn't have any money. My wife was working full time. I was working full time while we were starting the church.

My wife started having major health complications from work, stress related. I told her, I said, “Honey, I Timothy says that, you know, I gotta make the money. If I don't provide for the needs of my family, I've denied the faith. I'm worse than an unbeliever. Quit your job. It's my responsibility. I'll figure it out. I don't know how we're gonna pay the bills. We're not getting any money at the church.”

And I was thinking about it, too. I started getting a little scared 'cause I wanted to live in the city, do a church in the city, the least church'd city in the country. I wanted to have a big family. I wanted to be able to pay my bills. I wanted to be able to have a nice church, and I'm going after 20-year-old Indie Rockers that are committed to poverty and anarchy. Thinking, “This is not real liquid. This is not a brilliant business plan really. You know, teenage kids who take scooters to church tend not to be huge donor bases, you know?”

But I felt like that's what God said. “Go to Seattle and...” You know, we lived in Seattle. I grew up in Seattle. I love this city. This is my home, so it was like I knew God told me to do that. I'm like, “Lord God, I mean, I'm cool with not eating, but I gotta get food for the kids. I gotta get shoes on the

wife. What am I gonna do here?"

So I went to Antioch Bible Church and I said, "They're not, you know, we're not generating any revenue." Antioch Bible Church, where I'd been the college director for a year and a half, they gave me \$30,000.00 the first year as my salary. Praise God, they gave me money, so that's what we lived off. My wife and I and my daughter Ashley, family of three, living in Wallingford on \$30,000.00 a year. No medical, no dental, no retirement, nothing. Had to pay all of that. And then we tithed out of that, and then we gave above and beyond that for hospitality and wedding presents and food 'cause all the Bible studies and all the meetings were in our home, so we'd feed everybody and have everybody over and do all that kind of stuff.

And so when you subtracted it all out just from the tithes, I mean, we're living off of about \$24,000 that first year. And then out of that, you've gotta pay medical, dental, retirement, food, rent, car, the whole thing. Family of three living in Wallingford, not a lot of bling. Didn't have the huge amount of extra the first couple of years.

Second year the church comes. Antioch kicks in again, gives me \$30,000.00. Third year Mars Hill still wasn't able to really cover a full salary for me, so I went out and raised some additional dollars from another church, Spanish River Church, in Boca Raton. They gave me about half of my salary.

The church has been growing, starting to get its feet under it. God works a wonderful deal where we get a \$1 million building given to us after six months of negotiation. It's a nice pickup for an asset. We start to get our feet under us. The church starts to mature, and then the church at about Year 4 starts paying my salary, but the first three years, I work for free. I worked 80 to 100 hours a week for free, nothing. And I was totally cool with that because when you start something, somebody's gotta make a sacrifice. Somebody's gotta get the thing going.

But as soon as the church started getting going, then I started getting a paycheck about Year 4. Jamie, who was up here, Tim, who was up here – these guys have worked for free for a year. They've worked for free for a year. Our goal is to make sure that no one is a lover of money. It says in 1 Timothy 3 that an elder should not be a lover of money, and I'll tell you what. The best way to make sure your pastor is not a lover of money is to pay him. A guy who doesn't eat, right? What's he thinking about? Food. A guy who doesn't drink is thinking about water. A guy who doesn't get paid is thinking about money.

If you want your pastor – some people think, "We don't want our pastor to be a lover of money. We won't give him any. Ha, ha, ha! That'll fix it." That guys sitting around going, "I'm broke. I'm broke. I'm broke. I'm really skinny. My wife's skinny." And that's all he's thinking about is money, and so what it says is that the worker deserves his wage.

Now, we get into _____ and what should a pastor be paid? What's a pastor worth? In the United States of America, the average Protestant congregation has 90 people, 90 people. We have 2,000. We're not normal. Those churches, Protestant churches, average about \$115,000.00 a year as a budget. We average about \$2 million a year this year. Our budget is gonna be in that ballpark.

The pastors in that average church make about \$40,000.00 a year. Oftentimes the rural churches may also have a parsonage, which is a house that the church owns so the guy lives rent free and gets \$40,000.00 a year. That's pretty typical.

The salary increases to almost \$60,000.00 a year as an average for a lead pastor in churches that are 250 people or more on Sunday. The amount of money that a pastor makes increases with a couple variables: 1) How long have they been at the church? 2) How big is the church? And 3) Is that church in or near a city? It costs a lot more to live in Seattle than it does in Eastern Washington. A guy in Ephrata could own all of Ephrata for \$40,000.00. Here, for \$40,000.00, you get to live in a honey bucket all by yourself, right? That's what happens. So it depends on how long you been there, how big the church is.

Now, when it comes to church size, only 2 percent of churches in the United States of America are 800 or more. There's only 847 churches in the United States of America that are 2,000 people a week or more on a Sunday. Mars Hill just went through that threshold, and that's what we are. We're in that 847. I'm not sure. I'm doing my research. I think I'm the youngest lead pastor of any church of that size in the United States of America.

So what happens is the bigger the church gets, what happens then there are fewer and fewer guys who could preach and teach and be the ox that pulls a lot of weight in that size church. In a smaller church, people love the pastor. They may not be there as much for the preaching. They're there for the relation. In a larger church, they're there for the preaching, not so much for the relationship 'cause you can't have as much intimacy with thousands of people.

I've seen good and bad. I've seen churches that underpay. I've seen churches that overpay. One of the worst examples I've seen is a buddy of mine who's on staff at a church where church got planted, and this is in the great nation of Texas. Everything in Texas is bigger. Went to a steakhouse there. It sat like 500 people. It had like four-story ceiling, and you sit in this huge wooden booths, and they bring out a full animal. I mean, it's unbelievable. Everything in Texas is bigger.

But what happens is in the larger churches there's a competition over the pastors. This one guy started a church, took it to 1,000. A tragedy hit his church, and some people died. And right in the middle of that tragedy, he left the church to go work at another church because they offered him \$100,000.00 signing bonus just like an athlete.

And my buddy went up to this pastor and said, "Hey, how can you leave us?" He says, "I have 100,000 reasons to leave." What a great guy, right? It's like Judas's own little disciple. Hand in the cookie jar. Great guy. He got \$125,000.00 a year salary plus medical, dental, retirement, car. He was there for about 12 to 14 months. Then they fired him. He made \$250,000.00 in a year, okay.

There is such a vacuum in leadership, particularly for big churches, and guys who can preach and teach and keep their pants on – it's a huge problem –

that there's this feeding frenzy for pastors of large churches, okay?

Here's my thing: I'm paid fine. All this time to say I'm not overpaid. I'm not underpaid. Your elders are not overpaid. They're not underpaid. We pay fair. We pay reasonable. That's what we do.

We don't have a lot of pastors. The average church in the United States of America has between 100 and 150 people for every pastor. We have 400 to 500 for every pastor. What that tells you is that our pastors do about four times more work than the average pastor, and so we pay them a decent wage. We don't overpay them. It's not ridiculous. It's not Pastor Diddy or anything like that. We're not all driving around in Escalades.

But my wife drives a five-year-old car. I drive a 26-year-old truck. I mean, you know, we live in a nice house, and my wife gets to stay home and raise our children, and we're very happy. My wife and I are very content here. We could get paid a lot more money, but we would hate the church. That's why they'd have to pay us more. It's pain and suffering money is what it is.

The reason why we're here – the reason why I'm here is because honestly I could say with a sincere heart I totally love you. This is a special place, and I think that things are going extraordinarily well because this is what God wants done at this time. And I believe if I took a job at another place that God's hand would not be on me and that things would not happen as they have happened here. I don't think this is replicable. I don't think we can do this over and over and over. I'm not arrogant enough to think that if I just go to somewhere and get my \$100,000.00 signing bonus that Mars Hill will happen again.

Mars Hill is a miracle of God, and I know that, and I'm a kite in a hurricane having a great ride. And I just wanna love my wife and be a guy who works at preaching and teaching. And I wanna thank you on behalf of my wife and kids. You guys pay me a livable wage. My wife stays home, raises our kids. We're totally happy. We're gonna be here till we die. I'll give you 50 years more if I can keep on the treadmill, and we're just gonna see how far God can take it.

But I would say this too. Part of the reason why I'm even at the place that me as a pastor am worth more is because you guys have allowed me to grow into being a pastor. When we started, I'd never even been a member of another church. I'll start my own. You know, it's kind of weird really. I'd never preached and I remember listening – I went recently, and my wife said, "Do you ever listen to your old sermons?" No. "Why?" They're awful. They're terrible. I mean, it is – I don't even wanna be a Christian after listening to one of my first sermons.

You know and the reason why the church is where it is is 'cause you guys have been patient to allow me as a pastor and a preacher and a teacher to grow with you as a church, and I appreciate that. And again, I believe Mars Hill is a very special place. And I believe that pastors who work hard should be compensated, and on behalf of the pastors and on behalf of my family, I just wanna say thank you. We have good workers, and they're paid earned wages. We do, and so I just wanna say thank you.

And it's good, too, 'cause usually this where the pastor gives you the squeeze. "Giving sucks. You know, Judas took all the money. Don't be Judas. Pass the plate again and again and again. And now one for me." You know and it's just – we've made budget. Our bills are paid. Our guys are paid fine. We're happy as can be. This is not a financial squeeze. This is actually a "hey, thanks." This a great season for us. Best season of my whole life.

First thing an elder needs, honor, respect and a paycheck. I'm honored. I'm respected. Some of you don't. Some of you on Monday send me the e-mail with the attachment of your middle finger 'cause you didn't like the sermon, but for the most part, for the most part, I'm honored and I'm paid and things are good.

Here's what else needs to happen for an elder in a church, pastor. Pastors sin. Some pastors don't sin, but people say they do. Pastors need protection from false accusation. They also need accountability for legitimate sin. First thing, "do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses."

People get so ticked off at the preacher. Man, I wish I was Tim. I wish I could just have a goatee and play my guitar and everybody love me. That's just never gonna happen. You all love – you know, it's like the dysfunctional father and the loving mother. That's what we go going on up here. We hate him. We love him. He just sings and plays guitar. That other one, he yells us, tells us to repent, and sometimes he says terrible things.

And so what happens is a lot of people don't like the preacher, especially the preacher who preaches the Bible, says, "You're a wicked sinner. You need Jesus. Repent. You're gonna be, you know, meat on God's grill in the end, I promise. Don't do that." People go, "I don't like him." And so what happens is people say things about their pastor. People say things. How many of you have heard crazy, ridiculous things about me. How many of you have? And if you haven't, you will, okay?

I had one not too long ago. I had a pastor, an older pastor, who should know better. I got really ticked at him. He called me up. He says, "We need to get together. I have serious concerns about how you're conducting yourself." I'm thinking, "What did I do?" I'm going to the principal's office. I'm not sure what I did. I got meet with him, and he says, "I've heard that you're drinking with high school kids, and you're encouraging people that aren't married to have sex. Is that true?"

Yeah, we have a huge steel pole in the middle of the sanctuary, and all the ladies dance around it. What is wrong with you? What is wrong with you? No. I don't drink with high school kids, you know? And I don't tell 'em all to have sex. Like I'd have to tell 'em. You know, like if I don't bring it up, they'll never think of it. No. So you know, this is insulting. This is dumb. I took him to this verse, said, "Do you have two or three witnesses? Do you have anybody?"

He said, "No but this one guy, he knows this other guy that's related to this other guy, who sat next to this other guy on a bus, you know, on the way to the homeless shelter told this other guy that you do, so obviously that's what it is."

It's like what did you take a tire iron to your head? Like how come you can't see that just 'cause you hear something, doesn't mean it's true. Two or three witnesses, right? Couple people say, "This guy's cheating on his wife. This guy is stealing money. This guy is abusing his kids. This guy is a heretic. This guy is an alcoholic. This guy is a drug addict." Okay, fine, but it's gotta be a legitimate charge. He says if not, don't entertain it. Just let it go.

You'll hear crazy things about leadership at this church. I don't have a keg in my office. I've never taught a Bible study without pants on. I mean, whatever it is, just ... I'm serious. I mean, you wouldn't believe the calls I get. I mean, it's like how do you ... Good knight, you know. It's like if I had a drinking problem, I couldn't come up with that. You know, I just don't know how. People say that weirdest things, and you know, it's good to ask have you ever been to the church. Did you see that? Is it a – "well, no, but this one..." Argh, I love that. Says don't entertain it. Just let it go.

Now, what if it's legitimate? What if there's a pastor who's in sin. What if there are two or three witnesses that come forward and they say, "He's alcoholic. He's got a wife and a girlfriend. He's stealing money. He's..." whatever it is. Those who sin – okay, so what happens is it has to be a formal charge brought to the elders. The elders convene like the Supreme Court, and then they look at the charge. We look at this for each other.

Your pastors are very boring. We're very dull. We go to work. We go home. We kiss our wife. We read our Bible. We go to bed. We get up. We go to work. It's a terrible testimony. No rehab. You know, no E True Hollywood Story. It's just very dull, so there hasn't been a lot to talk about.

How are you? Fine. How are you? Fine. I know, very dull. Our goal is to have a terrible testimony. That's our goal. Nothing exciting. Nothing at all. We're dull. We're boring. There's never been an issue. I pray there never is, but if there is an issue, and we look into it, and there's actual witnesses, and it's a credible charge, those who sin are to be rebuked publically so that others may take warning.

We'll bring that pastor up and say, "This pastor has sinned in this way. They are not living up to the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3." We'll rebuke them publically to warn the rest of you, and if it's severe, we'll fire them. We'll let them go. That'll be it. They're not gonna be a pastor anymore 'cause they need to be above reproach. And if they've disqualified themselves, then they're not fit for that office, and it's so the church would take warning.

If I don't love my wife, the women in this church will suffer. If I don't love my children, the children in this church will suffer. And it goes true for all the elders in the church because as we lead, we set an example, and those of you who are in the church will follow our example. And so if an elder sins, they're a public leader. They need to have a public discipline to publically warn others not to follow the example of their errant pastor.

This is incredibly important. How many of you come from churches where pastors should've been fired because they were not conducting themselves godly, and the church suffered and nobody did anything about it. This happens too frequently, happens too frequently.

I'll tell you this. I'm one of the elders. My sex life, my finances, my schedule, my everything, I submit to them. They're welcome to discipline me, censor me. I'm one man among many. I'm one vote among many, and if the elders ever bring me up – I pray never they do – but if they ever bring me up and say, "Mark has sinned," and I disagree, who should you believe? Believe the elders. If you love me, I appreciate it, but believe the elders.

There was a situation at a church over on the East Side a few years ago where the pastor had something like 40 charges of homosexuality and pedophilia against him, and the elders said, "Well, we don't have two or three witnesses." No. What happens then is that the reputation of Jesus Christ suffers. That's what he talks about. "I charge you in the sight of God, Jesus Christ and the elect angels to keep these instructions without partiality. Do nothing out of favoritism."

Just 'cause the guy's a big ox and he can preach and he can raise money and he can winsomely convince people and he can gather a crowd and he founded a church and he makes things happen, he doesn't get any shortcut for holiness, okay.

At Mars Hill, who's the most likely person that would be treated with favoritism and partiality? Me. Let's just be honest about that. I founded the church. I preach on Sundays. I wrote the majority of the curriculum. Me. Me. It starts with me. No partiality. No favoritism. That means I need to tow a tight, hard line, and the other elders need to tow that line with me. We need to be mutually accountable. There can be no partiality or no favoritism.

And oftentimes in churches there is. "Well, we love that guy. He's our buddy. He means well. He's worked so hard. Five years ago, you know, he really turned things around." Look, a pastor needs to be a holy, godly man, not perfect. There is no such thing as a sinless guy other than Jesus, but he needs to be qualified. And if he's not, there can be no partiality or favoritism, okay?

I promise you before the Lord Jesus Christ I'm not a perfect man, but I'm a qualified man. I don't have any secret thing going on. But should there ever be, do not – if we ever have to discipline an elder – do not ever see it as a bad thing because you know what? God the Father, Lord Jesus Christ and the holy angels are watching because the reputation of God is at stake.

And if a leader in the church should be unfit and disqualified, to allow them to remain in their position dishonors the Lord Jesus and stains and stanches everyone's reputation of them, and there's something far more important than one guy in a church, and that's the city's opinion of Jesus. That is the most important thing, and God forbid that any of us would stain his reputation with our conduct.

Okay so pray for us. Pray for us for holiness. Pray for us for accountability. Pray for us as we co-labor together. It's been good. I pray it always would be good. But I preach hard words to you guys. This is hard word to me. And I believe that hard words produce soft people.

Next thing an elder needs, "Do not be hasty in laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourselves pure." This is about the

installation of an elder. The reason we install a new pastor is because that's what the New Testament says to do. In the Old Testament, you would lay hands on a sacrificial animal to identify yourself with the animal. In the Old Testament as well to commission leaders they would lay hands on and pray over that leader, identifying themselves with that leader.

In the New Testament it's the same thing, lay hands on the leader to commission them in the ministry. There is no such thing as ordination in the New Testament. There is no such thing as you gotta go to seminary. You gotta get a degree. Need to go before a tribunal. You need to pass a certain rigorous examination. That's not it. Elders approve elders. Pastors train and approve other pastors through character and doctrine and the qualifications of the Bible.

And when a person is ready, we all lay hands on them. We identify with them. We know what we're saying is that God has already placed his hand on this person, and now we are confirming what God has already done. It's God who makes people pastors. It's pastors who confirm that they're qualified. That's where it says to be tested and approved. It's our testing of that person's approval that's already been given them by God.

And he says don't be too hasty in that. Oftentimes, people are called pastor, put into ministry, without sufficient testing. They're not exactly ready. Don't be hasty. He says otherwise what'll happen is that you'll be responsible for their sin.

We have a long process to become a pastor at this church. Takes years. Takes a lot of qualifying. And at the end of that, you're still not gonna get paid. You're still gonna work as a volunteer for further testing before we make you a pastor. We feel that your guys' time and energy and money is overseen and led by the elders, so we need to make sure that everybody that we put in a position of authority is a qualified, good, godly, capable, competent person.

And I know some of you men, you really wanna be elders. Paul says, "If anyone desires the office of overseer, it's a noble thing he desires." It's a good thing. I would encourage you in that. But don't hurry yourself along. If you're a year or two late, that's okay. If you're a year or two early, that's devastating, okay. Don't be hasty in even requesting that hands be laid upon you.

Since an elder is one who should be honored, the first thing you should do, young men, is to work toward being an honorable man so that the rest of us see, as Paul says to Timothy, your progress. That we see your progress so that we reach the point where we consider you a peer.

I won't lay hands on any man until I consider him a peer. What that means is would I go to him for counsel? Will I go to him for accountability? Do I see him as a peer, not as a young man that I'm try to encourage, but as a peer that I can co-labor with?

My other question is if I die, do I want my sons to follow this guy around and be just like him? If not, I don't want him to be a pastor. I don't want anybody else to follow him around and be just like him.

And my third question is if my daughter brought home a man just like this, would I welcome him? If not, I won't lay hands on the guy. Won't lay hands on the guy.

In addition to all the biblical criteria, if someone in my opinion is not good enough to be my pastor, to be an example for my sons and the kind of man that my daughter marries, that person's not good enough to be your pastor. They're just not. As Paul says, be careful. Keep yourself pure. Don't be hasty. Check him out. Look into it.

A pastor needs respect, needs a paycheck. A pastor needs accountability when they're in sin. They also need protection when they're not in sin from liars and people who are jealous or making false accusations. They need patience and a testing period. They also need, next verse, a glass of wine. I have a verse. Isn't that great? Here it is. Here's my good verse. "Stop drinking only water, thus sayeth the Lord." We say... amen.

Response: Amen.

And use a little wine, not a lot of wine. Too much wine, you're sitting around in your Barcalounger, watching wrestling in your underwear, mumbling to yourself. So don't use a lot of wine. Use a little wine, red wine like Jesus, not white wine. White wine goes with fish. I don't like fish. I don't like white wine.

Jesus' first miracle was making wine, red wine, good wine, nice wine, holy wine, godly wine. Drink that wine, "a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illness." Now we'll talk about wine 'cause I like to. I'll go on a few rabbit trails 'cause I can.

My first is I'm leaving on Tuesday for Napa Valley. Praise the Lord. It's 82 degrees I saw online today. And I'm going down to a vineyard because it's a pre-site trip. I'm going down to teach there in October at harvest time, and I'm bringing my lovely wife, and we're gonna stay at a vineyard, and I'm teaching a Bible study in a winery for a week.

I swear to God, I got this gig. Best gig. I mean, you guys are great, and I love being here. But that's the best gig I ever had right there. And we get to drink wine and stay at the bed and breakfast, and I'm supposed to ... And the Bible has a lot of metaphors about the vine and the branches and harvest and all this stuff, so I got verses. I'm locked, loaded and ready to throw. I'm good.

So they called me up. They said, "We need a pastor to teach a Bible study on wine, and we heard you're good at that." I'm like, I know Ecclesiastes, "drink your wine with a joyful heart." Now God favors what you do. "God gave wine to gladden the heart of man." I know all the verses. I'm ready to go, you know.

So I get to go do this little deal. Now, I'm not saying get drunk. And don't cause anybody to stumble. If you're under 21, don't drink. I'm not advocating any sin, but it's okay for the pastor now and then to have a glass of wine.

And I'll tell you my other wine story. I was sitting in bed on Thursday night with my lovely wife, and I have a big stack of commentaries in my bed, and I'm sitting up, and I have a glass of Cabernet, and I'm reading the commentaries, drinking the Cabernet. And I hit this verse – my wife had gotten up to go do something. And it's a good Bible commentator, usually does a pretty good job, and he says, "Well, obviously, this doesn't mean wine." I'm thinking what the ... what does that mean? Hubcap? Like what is that? "Obviously, that's not wine." Like what ... ?

And he keeps going. He says 'cause obviously no godly pastor would ever drink wine – that's just obvious. I have a sip. I'm thinking, "Obvious to who? You know, who's this obvious to?" And so I start laughing. I think this is funny, so I laugh so hard, I spill wine all over my bed. So my wife walks in. She's like, "What are you doing? You got wine all over the bed." I said, "This commentator cracks me up. He's funnier than Eddie Murphy. Look at this. It's like look what he has to say. This is funny."

You know, 'cause it's what it says. Paul tells Timothy have a glass of wine. All the commentators say, "That's not what he said."

Now, I never had a drink till I was 30, okay? I have never been drunk, so don't send me "you're an alcoholic" e-mail. Don't send me link to Alcoholics Anonymous. I'm not. I don't abuse wine, but sometimes I do like a nice glass of Cabernet in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

And that's what Paul tells Timothy. It's a hard job. You got an ulcer. Apparently, Timothy's a young guy, and he's stressed out. Paul says, "God has not given us a spirit of timidity and fear." Apparently, he's timid and fearful. "Fight the good fight." Apparently, he's not fighting very hard. Apparently, Timothy's stressed out over this. He's the kind of guy who's internalizing. He's got an ulcer. He's stressed out. And Paul says, "Man, you're giving yourself an ulcer here. Have a glass of wine. Calm down. Calm down."

And I hope he didn't drink the wine from Ephesus. I hope he imported the wine 'cause in Ephesus – this is how freakish your pastor is. I actually know this. In Ephesus they had the worst wine in antiquity because they made it from saltwater. Sea water. That's why they needed the gospel. It's a godless place is what it is. I hope Timothy didn't drink that wine. I hope he had imported wine from somewhere where the gospel had spread, and they'd straightened this whole thing out. That's what an elder needs. He needs sometimes a glass of wine.

Now, if you're an alcoholic, don't drink. We love you. When you come forward for communion, we have juice and wine. We don't want you to stumble. We're not gonna cause anyone to stumble. If you and I go out to dinner, I'm not gonna drink in your presence, but sometimes, laying in bed at night, cuddled up with my wife, after a long, hard, terrible day, a glass of Cabernet and a backrub from my wife is therapy. I would encourage you all tonight, go home and try. Have a glass. Kiss your wife. Read a commentary. Go to bed. It's beautiful. Would encourage it to you all.

And now it's gonna leave here, and somebody's gonna say, "Oh, it's just a big orgy cult, and they're all getting drunk," and I'll get an e-mail and just turn a deaf ear. That's not what I'm talking about.

Last thing, most important thing. Here's what an elder does. Of all things that an elder does, a pastor, all things that we do, this is the most important part of our job. This is the bedrock. This is the bottom line. An elder has to deal with sin. If you can't deal with sin, you're not much of a pastor. You're not pastor at all.

People get sinned against. You've been sinned against. Some of you are bitter, angry, scarred. You've been hurt. You interpret everything in your life through that experience that was negative. It's overtaken your whole life. You don't know what to do with sin that's been committed against you.

Some of you, you're dealing with the consequences of your own sin. You have a life of folly. You have a life of rebellion. You have a life of arrogance, and it's starting to show up. If you come to a church and the elders there don't know what to do with sin, you are hopeless. There's nothing that they can do for you. All problems come out of one problem. That's sin. If a pastor doesn't know what to do with sin, they say, "I'll pray for you. I'll read a greeting card. I'll, I'm sorry." Well, I don't need empathy. I need help if I'm suffering from sin.

In the same way, if I walk into an emergency room and say, "I'm bleeding out." They say, "Oh, we'll pray for you. Sorry to hear that. You know, here's a fortune cookie. Think happy thoughts." It's like, "No, you gotta stop the bleeding. I'm bleeding out here."

People walk into the church dealing with sin that's been committed against them, sin that they've committed. They're bleeding out, and it is our job to do the work of the gospel, which is dealing with their sins. Here's what he says. The sins of some men are obvious. You go, "Oh, that's me. That's me. Even my non-Christian friends laugh at me." Some people, your sins are obvious. We could see it coming. We could smell it on your breath, right? We could just see it in your life. It's obvious you don't know what you're doing. It's obvious.

And they reach the place of judgment ahead of them. Your sins are out ahead of you. Before you even show up, people are already talking about you. "Oh, he's coming. Oh gosh. Oh boy. Amen." The sins of others trail behind them.

Some of you are sinning, but it hasn't caught up with you yet. It doesn't show up. You're not divorced yet. Your kids haven't committed a felony yet. They haven't repossessed your car or your home yet. You haven't died and gone to Hell yet, but it's right on your heels, and you're trying to stay ahead of it.

We all sin. Some of our sins are out in front. Some of our sins are trailing behind. In the same way, good deeds are obvious, and even those that are not cannot be hidden. What he says is this. Who you are comes out in how you live. You're all sinners. I'm a sinner. For some of us, our sins are obvious, and we are in an urgent crisis. For some of us, we're out ahead of our sin. We haven't died and gone to Hell yet, so we're a little too comfortable, a little

too apathetic and a little too indifferent.

How do you deal with sin? That's the issue. I know sin isn't popular. I know it's not popular. If you're a Buddhist, you say there is no sin. Everything's a non-reality. This is all an illusion. We don't have sin. If you're a Hindu, you say, well, you'll die and come back in another life, and you'll pay off your sin. But the problem is in your next life you sin while paying off your sin, so you never really catch up on your sins, so the thing doesn't work. If you're a Muslim, you're told, "Work hard. Pay back God for your sin. You can do it. Pull yourself up by your bootstraps." But we don't have boots, and you can't make up for what you've done. You can't say, "Oh, I murdered four people. I'll walk two ladies across the street, and it's even."

You can't make up for sin. It's silly. It's dumb. It just doesn't make any practical sense. I punched you in the mouth, and I helped a kitty out of a tree. Even. What has that got to do with anything?

Only, only, only Christianity has any answer for sin. It doesn't deny sin. It actually embraces it as a very important cornerstone of all belief systems. We are sinners. That's what we are. Some of us right here now think, "I'm not a sinner. I'm a good person." Pride and autonomy from God are the worst of all sins, so you are the chief of sinners. Aww, c'mon! That's what got Satan kicked out of Heaven. It wasn't drinking and driving. It wasn't listening to Judas Priest. It wasn't being a country western fan or thinking that wrestling is real.

He got kicked out of Heaven because he's proud. He's arrogant. He's self-righteous. He's independent. He's autonomous. He doesn't need God. And so we're sinners, and we need God, and here's the beautiful thing. We don't need to reincarnate. We don't need to pay God back. We don't need to deny that sin is an illusion as reality is an illusion. We need Jesus. That's all we need, and that by God's grace is what we have.

At the bottom of it all, a pastor's job is to take sinners and to point them to Jesus so that Jesus can do what only Jesus can do. I'm not Jesus Christ. My job? Introduce you to the guy that is alive and well and has changed my life so that he can change your life.

Let me tell you about Jesus. Jesus is God. We don't need speculation and philosophy and religion. We have revelation. God came to us. Jesus. He was tempted in every way as you are, yet without sin. He knows what you're going through. He knows how hard it is to be tempted by sin. He was tempted by sin, but he never sinned. We murdered him. That's what we did.

He called us to repentance. Rather than repenting, we decided to silence him, and so we murdered God. Interesting thing happened on the cross, though. God died, but we only die because of sin. The wage for sin is death. When Jesus died, he didn't die for his sin 'cause he committed no sin. He died for my sin. He died for our sin.

2 Corinthians 5:21 says that something amazing happened on the cross, that God made him, Jesus, who knew no sin, to become sin – that would be my sin and our sin – so that in him we might become the righteousness of God, that my sin was placed on Jesus. Jesus suffered in my place. Jesus died in my place. Jesus stood as a substitute for me.

He gives me his life. He gives me his perfect life. He gives me his sinless life. He gives me his forgiveness. He gives me his eternity. He gives me his friendship. He gives me his intimacy with the Father. He takes all that I am that separates me from God, and then he gives me all that he is so that I might be near to God.

And a transference takes place on the cross where all of the sudden I am in Christ and Christ is in me. That old things have passed away, that old things have been made new, that I am a new creation in Christ. I have a new start and a new life and a new future, that God has taken away my sin, so I am no longer a sinner. I'm a saint, not perfect but loved and forgiven and continually healed and cleansed from the sins that I commit and the sins that others commit against me. We deal with sin. We deal with it through Jesus. And it is his good deed, it is his good deed that is the answer to all sin.

Now, I know some of you are Christians, and you're saying, "I love the Lord, but I just don't see it." You know what? For some of you, your good deeds are out ahead of you. Your life's got momentum. It's going well. For some of you, your good deeds are still trailing behind. Keep going. Your good deeds will catch up. Keep reading your Bible, confessing your sin, loving your spouse, being sexually pure, trusting in God, walking by faith, enabling the holiness and the grace of God to empower you to new life. Know that it will catch up.

We started this church. The good deeds were way behind. All of the sudden the good deeds have caught up and things are rolling, and that's how God works.

Some of you are here today, and you're not Christians, and you're dealing with effects and not causes. You're trying to get control of your marriage or your sex life or your finances or your mouth or your temper or your attitude or your diet. You're trying to maintain control. You're trying to be a good person. You're trying to have good deeds. You're chasing effects. You're not bending the cause, and that's Christ.

Jesus will give you a new heart, new life. He'll take away your sin. He'll make you a new creation, and out of that new sinner that he gives you will come a totally new life. He loves you very, very dearly. And as a pastor, the most important thing I can every week is tell you how to deal with sin. It's Jesus. You give him your sin. He'll give you his life. You give him your condemnation. He'll give you his forgiveness. You give him your death. He'll give you his eternal life. You give him your sinful life. He'll give you his sinless life. You give him your bitterness. He'll give you his love. You give him your pride. He'll give you his humility. It's amazing what he does.

We're a miracle, Mars Hill. We're here for one, for one cause only. The tomb is empty. Jesus is alive. It's all true, and he's changing people. That's what we do. I invite you tonight to Jesus. For some of you that have strayed, I invite you back to Jesus to deal with your sin right there. Give it to Jesus. Receive his forgiveness. Partake of communion, which is remembering Jesus' body and blood shed for you.

God reconciles us to himself. As Christians, God reconciles us to each other as the church. As a leader in the church, it's then my admonition to you to be a person that gets connected, gets into Bible study, takes a class, grows, as Paul says, so that we could see your progress, so that your good deeds will start to stack one upon the other and that out of your faith eventually your good deeds will be out ahead of you.

And Ephesians 2:10 says a marvelous promise, that he has good works that he has prepared in advance for you to do. You've got a whole life of adventure with the Lord Jesus laid out before you, and we want you to get on top of that, and we want you to get after that, and we want those good deeds to be out ahead of you. That's what we want. But it starts with his good deed, and that's what we invite you to.

Lord Jesus, as we come to a moment of repentance, as we come to a moment of reflection, as we come to a moment of communion and of prayer and of tithes and offerings and worship, as we go to get our children so that they can join us for song and for communion, Lord Jesus, first of all, we thank you for the church, that indeed as you promised, you have built your church.

And Lord God, we are a miracle in the least church city and the United States of America. We are seeing lives changed. We are seeing sinners become saints. We are seeing spiritually dead people be made alive. We know, God, we know that the tomb is empty, that Jesus is real, that life in him is available, and I pray, God, that none of us would leave here without bending our knee, embracing his love and being transformed by his good deed on the cross and his good deed through the empty tomb.

God, we come to sing and celebrate 'cause you are a wonderful and good God. We thank you that in dealing with our problem of sin, you have enabled us to partner with you by grace and deal with all of our other sins.

God, I thank you that I get to be an elder in this church. God, I love this church. This church is incredible. It's an honor to labor here as a preacher and as a teacher. I thank you for the kind people who give me the honor of being their pastor. God, I pray that me as a leader and that the other men as leaders, that, God, you would by grace keep us qualified to love these people, to honor you, to do a good job, to work hard, to execute, to produce results because you are a living God, and there is work to be done.

God, I pray for us all that we would be a church that would be marked by respect for leadership, that we would be marked by an accountability, that we would be marked by a zeal for the gospel and that we would know what to do with sin. Repent, be forgiven, move on.

Jesus, you're the best. We love you, and we thank you for what you do. Amen.