

The Church-Planter's Home¹

I. INTRODUCTION

A. 1 Timothy 3:2–5

“Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?”

B. The Church-Planter Equation

The Converted Candidate + Character + Capabilities + Conduct of the Home + Communication + Confirmation = Church Planter

II. DISCOVERING THE GRACE TO LEAD

A. Introducing the Home as Evidence

1. The fruit of contemporary failings

“The divisions and distractions of the Church have, in every age, been greatly owing to the conduct of her overseers and guardians.”²

2. To Paul, a man's leadership in the home reveals and validates his calling to leadership in the church. The home is *the first evidence of a vocational calling*.

B. Restoring Integrity to the Home

1. Reasons that Scripture centers leadership validation in the home:

a. The home is the hardest place in which to live the Christian life.

¹ This outline by Dave Harvey was presented at the Pastors College of Sovereign Grace Ministries, February 20–22, 2007. © 2007 Sovereign Grace Ministries. Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

² Thomas M'Crie, *The Unity of the Church* (Dallas, TX: Presbyterian Heritage, 1989) p 59

“I will ponder the way that is blameless. Oh when will you come to me? I will walk with integrity of heart within my house.” (Psalm 101:2)

- b. The home is the primary context for character development.
 - c. The home is the laboratory where the leader creates what he will export.
2. The primary areas for home evaluation:
- a. The husband of one wife (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6)
 - b. Not lover of money or pursuing dishonest gain (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7)
 - c. Manage family well (1 Timothy 3:4)
 - d. Obedient children (1 Timothy 3:4)
 - e. Respectful children (1 Timothy 3:4)
 - f. Good reputation with outsiders (1 Timothy 3:7)
 - g. Upright (Titus 1:8)
 - h. Children who believe; not open to charge of being wild or disobedient (Titus 1:6)
 - i. Exemplary lifestyle (1 Timothy 4:12; 1 Peter 4:3)
 - j. Hospitable (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8)
3. The quickest way to determine whether a man is qualified to lead a church plant is to assess how effectively he is leading his chief member (his wife) and his principal congregation (his kids).

III. SUMMARIZING THE CONDUCT OF THE HOME

A. An Exemplary Marriage

- 1. The disturbing consistency of divorce rates for both Christians and unbelievers

“The divorce rate among clergy is increasing faster than in any other profession.”³

2. Marriage is designed to make a unique statement about Christ and his church. What is the quality of our statement?
3. The biblical goal for a leader's marriage:
 - a. “*Above reproach*” (1 Timothy 3:2)
 - (1) Paul proceeds immediately from “above reproach” to “marriage” (1 Timothy 3:2).
 - b. “*Husband of one wife*” (1 Timothy 3:2) captures two ideas:
 - (1) Monogamy
 - (2) Disentangled by an unbiblical divorce

“In this view the **overseer** is required to live an exemplary married life...faithful to his **one wife** in a culture in which marital infidelity was common, and at times assumed.”⁴
 - c. “*Manage his own household well*” (1 Timothy 3:5)
 - d. “*Being examples*” (1 Peter 5:3)
 - e. “*Tested*” (1 Timothy 3:10)

B. A Supportive and Accountable Wife

1. Not simply a tolerant wife, but a *supportive* wife.
 - a. An elder must be “*hospitable*” (1 Timothy 3:2)

“A fourth threat to undermine a man's ministry is a nonsupportive wife. It could also extend to the children, but particularly a nonsupportive wife, one who nags and battles a pastor as he tries to be faithful and loyal to the Lord and the church. If she is negative on the church or the people in it, or if she is spiritually out of sorts or materialistic and self-indulgent or a little too controlling, she will cease to be that support that her husband so desperately needs to serve his people with joy. A fully supportive, loving, trusting wife who will be honest but who will stand

³ Charles Colson, *The Body: Being Light in Darkness* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1992) p 304

⁴ Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988) p 80 (emphasis his)

with her husband to the very end frees a man up to do with all his heart what God has called him to do.”⁵

2. Also an accountable wife (1 Timothy 3:11)
 - a. Worthy of respect
 - b. Not malicious talkers
 - c. Temperate
 - d. Trustworthy
3. The compelling example of Priscilla and Aquila
4. Single Men: CHOOSE WISELY

“How momentous therefore is the responsibility of the Minister’s married choice.”⁶

5. Leadership and the manipulated man

“What are the secrets of staying power for a pastor who has been in the same church for twenty-six years?”

“At the heart of endurance is one’s relationship to the Lord and the belief that you are in the place of His will. Then comes family support. It would cut my heart out if my family lost heart for the church. If they love my church and ministry, then they keep my heart loving it. A lot of times family members, even a wife, will turn a man’s heart away from his beloved church because she is unhappy with certain things.”⁷

C. Obedient and Respectful Children

1. Paul sharpens the meaning of this phrase (above) by calling elders to cultivate respect and obedience as habits of family life.
 - a. *“...with all dignity keeping his children submissive.”* (1 Timothy 3:4b)
 - b. *“If anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.”* (Titus 1:6)

⁵ John MacArthur, Jr., “Answering Frequently Asked Questions,” *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry: Shaping Contemporary Ministry with Biblical Mandates*, ed. John MacArthur, Jr. (Dallas, TX: Word, 1995) p 371

⁶ Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry: With an Inquiry into the Causes of Its Inefficiency* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1991) p 169

⁷ MacArthur, “Answering Frequently Asked Questions,” p 379

“How can a pastor lead people to faith in Christ and holiness unless he can show them the power of his faith in his life? One of the principal missions of the pastor is to teach the church how to raise a godly generation. How can he teach this if he cannot do it himself?”⁸

2. Scriptural assumption: Disrespectful and disobedient children usually reveal leadership deficiencies in the father.
 - a. The father can't regenerate the heart, but he can build a home where respect and obedience are the standards.
 - b. Principle: An orderly home testifies to the leader's ability to courageously discern and apply truth (1 Timothy 3:9).

“For most men, however, the family is the arena in which spiritual leadership can be evaluated. If a man has children who believe and who are not involved in dissipation and rebellion, they will not bring scandal upon his good name and the integrity of God's church. Imagine the shame if a man stood in the pulpit and said, ‘Thus says the Lord: This is how to live; this is God's high standard; this is what God expects of you; this is how to pass godliness from one generation to the next,’ but people could look at his life and say, ‘Wait a minute, you've got wild, uncontrolled children who live in rebellion and reject the gospel. Why are *you* telling us how to please God?’ It questions the integrity of his message. It minimizes the credibility of his ministry and thus reduces its impact.”⁹

3. God has designed Christian ministry so that it is most effective and most God-exalting when our ministry *springs from* and *testifies to* our private lives.

D. Reputable in His Community

“Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.” (1 Timothy 3:7)

1. Question: Would our neighbors or coworkers say we are qualified for leadership?
 - a. The church's choice testifies something about Jesus and his bride.

“What he means is that in order to be an effective overseer a brother must be known even to worldly people with whom he is (or has been) in

⁸ John MacArthur, Jr., “The Character of a Pastor,” *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry*, p 93

⁹ *Ibid.*, 92.

contact *as a man of character*, a man against whom it is not possible to level any *just* charges of *moral turpitude*.”¹⁰

2. “Devil’s trap” may mean that he brings *accusations* and *condemnation* against the church.

“It is a **trap** set by the **devil** when the behavior of the church’s leaders is such that outsiders will be disinclined to hear the gospel.”¹¹

3. Right now you are erecting the “platform of credibility” for future ministry.
 - a. Paul’s fundamental point: Called men don’t remain hidden. *They become revealed by character and reputation.*

IV. CONCLUSION

“If you want to know whether a man lives an exemplary life, whether he is consistent, whether he can teach and model the truth, and whether he can lead people to salvation, to holiness, and to serve God, then look at the most intimate relationships in his life and see if he can do it there. Look at his family and you will find the people who know him best, who scrutinize him most closely. Ask them about the kind of man he is.”¹²

¹⁰ William Hendriksen, *Thessalonians, Timothy, and Titus*, New Testament Commentary (1989 reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979) p 129

¹¹ Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus* p 83 (emphasis his)

¹² MacArthur, “The Character of a Pastor,” *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry*, p 91.