

THE LAWS OF LEADERSHIP

1 Timothy 5:17-25

LAW #12 Prejudice and Partiality Have No Place in Leadership

Stephen Covey in the book *Principle-Centered Leadership* addresses something that is very important for us in today's study:

“In recent years, since the publication of my book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, I have worked with many wonderful individuals who are seeking to improve the quality of their lives and the quality of their products, services, and organizations.

But, sadly, I have seen that many use a variety of ill-advised approaches in sincere attempts to improve their relationships and achieve desired results.

Often these approaches reflect the inverse of the habits of effective people. In fact, my brother, John Covey, who is a teacher, sometimes refers to them as the seven habits of ineffective people:

- ***Be reactive: doubt yourself and blame others.***
- ***Work without any clear end in mind.***
- ***Do the urgent thing first.***
- ***Think win/lose.***
- ***Seek first to be understood.***
- ***If you can't win, compromise.***
- ***Fear change and put off improvement.”***

(p. 14)

Of course, the things that these laws of leadership do for us is motivate us in directions where we are in need of improvement.

Abraham Lincoln, as he was addressing the Continental Congress in his annual message on December 1, 1862, said:

Still the question recurs “can we do better?” The dogmas of the quiet past, are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew.

(p. 137, Lincoln on Leadership: Executive Strategies for Tough Times By Donald T. Phillips)

Apparently, Timothy is really having some problems with the elders in the Ephesian church. Can you imagine walking in the shoes of the apostle Paul? And here's a guy who's been a minister in this congregation for 3 years and now he's turning the full responsibility of the church over to Timothy. Now Timothy has youth and he's also a person who's walking into a big man's shoes. And obviously there were some problems.

In chapter 3, we studied law #6, and talked about the fact that "character is essential to leadership" and there was a list of what qualifications these elders should have. Now we're coming back to that today.

Let's begin with verse 17.

V. 17 "Let the elders that are ruling well be deemed worthy of double honor, especially those who are working hard in preaching and teaching."

Paul starts out with a job description in that 17th verse and the job description has 3 points:

1. He's "*ruling well*"
2. He's doing a good job in his "*preaching*"
3. He's doing a good job in his "*teaching.*"

So these are the three main points in the elder's job description.

What does Paul mean when he says, "*deemed worthy of double honor*"?

Most scholars will tell you that Paul is talking about money.

The word "*honor*" is the word "honorarium."

And when a guy is worth it he should be getting a double honorarium, he should be well cared for because he is worthy of that honor. So it's twice the remuneration.

It's *double honor* because he's being a good leader.

He is a person who is *ruling well*, and he's a person who is *teaching*, and he's a person who's *preaching*.

Steve Brown in his book, *Jumping Hurdles, Hitting Glitches, Overcoming Setbacks* says:

At the entrance to a small inn in a town in Vermont, there's a regulation-size post office box. But, instead of having posted the usual hours of collection notice, the following message has been posted: "Neither rain nor snow nor gloom of night shall stay us from delivering this mail to the post office across the street at least once a day . . . weather permitting and providing there is enough mail in this box to make the trip worthwhile."

(p. 249)

You know, really we do that. We come to God and say, "*Boy, God, I'll go anywhere, I'll do anything.*"

And then when it comes time for you to put your money where your mouth is, you know people start to scatter. And then it's going to be serving the Lord when it's convenient.

I'm just asking you today, what is the level of your personal commitment to Jesus Christ?

Now there are 8 commands in the study today and these 8 commands just fall out of the text before us so it'll be easy for you to track.

We've already looked at command #1: "*Let the elders that are ruling well be deemed worthy of double honor, especially those who are working hard in preaching and teaching.*"

Verse 18

V. 18, "*For [reason] the scripture is saying, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it is threshing the grain," and "The worker is worthy of his pay."*

What Paul does here, is he takes two verses and he puts them together.

Both of these verses are Old Testament concepts.

But they also come over into the New Testament.

The first part of it, "*you shall not muzzle an ox while it is threshing [out] the grain*" comes from the book of Deuteronomy.

It's in Deuteronomy 25:4 and 1 Corinthians 9:9.

Then "*The worker is worthy of his pay*" comes from Luke 10:7. Jesus quotes that from Leviticus 19:13 and Deuteronomy 24:15 and Jesus also referred to it in Matthew 10:10.

So the reason for why the elders are worthy of double honor, is because “*you don’t muzzle the ox who is threshing out the grain*” and “*the worker is worthy of his pay.*”

Verse 19, Command #2, “*Do not entertain a charge against an elder unless it be confirmed by two or three witnesses.*”

Paul moves from a positive command, now to a negative one. He says, “*Don’t be entertaining a charge*” unless you have at least “*two or three witnesses*” before you make an accusation against the leader.

That comes out of Deuteronomy 19:15:

“*One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offense [that] he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.*”

Let’s go to Verse 20

V. 20 “*Those who are sinning, be rebuking in the presence of all, in order that the rest may be having fear.*” Command #3

You see, this is a hard thing for Timothy.

He's a young man. And he is probably intimidated by some of the gray heads that are leaders in the congregation.

And to actually confront some guy with sin who's older than he is, has to be terribly intimidating.

And Paul's saying in essence, you know, just be sure you have two or three witnesses before you do anything Timothy, but don't neglect to do it.

And then he says, *"Those who are sinning, be rebuking them in the presence of all."*

What does he mean by the word *"all?"*

Well, he could mean the other elders or he could mean before the congregation.

Because the congregation is being affected by this person and his leadership.

Therefore the elder needs to be rebuked publicly so that the *rest may be having fear* [that is respect] toward God and the consequences of sin.

That is a hard thing to do for a younger guy and yet, he cannot fail in his leadership to take that responsibility to see to it that there is health in the flock in Ephesus.

Now what do you do when you have a situation like this, where the leader has failed?

Does this mean that it's all over for him?

You know, people have a tendency to write off individuals totally and completely, when they fail in leadership.

As a leader we need to recognize that sin must be dealt with and disciplined but we also need, like Paul told the folks in Corinth, to turn around and comfort a person and encourage him once the forgiveness has taken place and the healing has fallen into line.

Let's go to our key verse for today's study. Verse 21

V. 21a "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and the elect angels,"

Wow! What a trio.

God the Father, God the Son and the elect angels and it is a *solemn charge* to young Timothy.

So this is serious stuff that we're getting ready to look at.

"That these things"

What? This discipline of elders, this not being intimidated by them.

And rewarding them when they do what is right with double honor.

V. 21b *“These things you are to guard without showing prejudice, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality.”*

V. 21a *“I solemn charge”* That is in a present tense.

I am charging you right now, that you do this and I’m doing it, in the presence *“of God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the elect angels.”*

And the 4th command is: *“that these things you are to guard without showing prejudice, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality.”*

Now what is he saying?

Paul is saying basically to Timothy, that rank and leadership do not have exemptions.

Every one is to be treated the same.

You don’t have exceptions to the rule.

No one is exempt.

I think one of the hardest things in the ministry, is to have a wealthy person in your congregation who gets involved in something that isn't pleasing to the Lord but you know if you make any waves that guy is going to quit giving and he's going to stop being involved.

That is the greatest temptation of the ministry to make exceptions.

Law #12 says: Prejudice and partiality have no place in leadership.

It's taking disciplinary action with integrity and doing it *without showing prejudice.*

That means prejudging somebody.

And "*doing nothing in a spirit of partiality*" or showing favor to someone.

Those two words *prejudice* and *partiality* only occur here in the New Testament.

When we speak of somebody who's *prejudiced*, you also speak of someone showing *partiality*. So they're kind of like synonyms, very close.

But now, “in the presence of God and the presence of Jesus Christ and the elect angels”, Paul tells Timothy, *treat everyone in the church alike, every officer, every wealthy person, every poor person, treat them all the same.*

Don't make distinctions in the body of Christ.

Now let me give you another passage to show you the seriousness of this.

You see, partiality is sin.

When is the last time you went before the Lord and you said, “*Search me O God for my prejudices and my partiality?*”

When we come honestly before the Lord that is something we have to do. And deal with, if they're there.

Listen to James 2:1-4

My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, “You sit here in a good place,” and you say to the poor man, “You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,” have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives?

Let's skip down to verse 9:

V. 9 *“But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as [a] transgressor.”*

***Prejudice* and *partiality* have no place in leadership.**

Let's study the words for just a minute.

First of all, *prejudice*. The word means to prejudge.

It's a word for discrimination.

It's used primarily legally, a judge can't be prejudiced in a situation. And it's only used here.

Now the word in the English dictionary means:

bent; it means favoritism; it means leaning; and a synonym is partiality (which we're going to look at in a minute); it's presuppositions; it's intolerance; twist; an opinion, judgment, or evaluation favorable, or more often unfavorable; conceived without proof or competent evidence but based on what seems valid in one's own mind; it is a bias; it's holding of such feelings; it's hasty and incorrect notions; it is to injure by an act of judgment; it has in it hurt, damage, or impairment.

Now, let's flop it over and take the word *partiality* for just a minute. In Webster's dictionary it means inclination, used only in an unfavorable sense, and it's only used that way here. Again, biased, partisan, fractional, fragmentary, biased favoritism, a special liking or fondness.

Because those words are so close together, here are some valid distinctions.

First of all prejudice has to do with my attitudes.

You don't know my *prejudices* because that is in my head.

But, *partiality* has to do with my action.

You see, I reveal my *prejudices* that are in my head through my behavior and my *partiality* toward individuals.

Prejudice has to do with that which is inward.

Partiality is more outward.

As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.

So I think it in my *prejudices*; I act it in my *partiality*.

Prejudice is more passive, and *partiality* is more active.

Prejudice has to do with my thoughts;

Partiality has to do with my deeds.

So then prejudice is the attitude; partiality is the action.

When you think of your *prejudices*, what are some of them?

Just be honest as you reflect before the Spirit of God.

What do you think of?

The Press.

Or do you think of skin color?

Or you think of status levels of society

when you think of *prejudice*.

The minute your heart is filled with *prejudice* or *partiality*, you have surrendered the use of good judgment and to be fair in making a sound decision.

There needs to be the ability to listen.

And to listen requires restraint, respect and reverence.

And the ability to put yourself in a neutral position in order to make effective and wise decisions that are not affected by *prejudice* or *partiality*.

Hudson Armerding wrote a book, *The Heart of Godly Leadership*. Hudson Armerding was the president of Wheaton College for a lot of years. In it he admits that in the sixties, when he was president of Wheaton College during all the turmoil of the Vietnam War, he had some prejudice and some partialities. And his vulnerability and transparency in what he says here shows you the effect of that in a beautiful way. Listen to this.

We had some young men on campus whose hair was longer than I thought it should have been. They also began to dress in a manner more like the counterculture, which I deplored because to me the counterculture represented unpatriotic draft-resisters, flag-burners, and such like. When I read of their acts as they rioted and demonstrated, my blood pressure rose because I remembered fighting for the country they seemed to despise. Though I had fought for all citizens to have the liberty to disagree, I resented the way the counterculture went about disagreeing.

One day I was scheduled to speak in chapel. Just before the service, we gathered for prayer to ask the Lord's blessing. As we were about to pray, in walked a young man who had a beard and long hair, was wearing a sash around his waist,

and had on sandals. As I looked at him, I was sorry he had come. Worse yet, he sat down right beside me.

When we went to prayer, I did not enter into the praying with a very good attitude. Then the young man began to pray, and his prayer went something like this: “Dear Lord, you know how much I admire Dr. Armerding, how I appreciate his walk with You. I am grateful for what a man of God he is, and how he loves You and loves Your people. Lord, bless him today. Give him liberty in the Holy Spirit, and make him a real blessing to all of us in the student body. Help us to have open hearts to hear what he has to say, and may we just do what You want us to do.”

As I walked down the steps to go into the chapel, the Lord spoke to me about my attitude. After giving my message, I asked the young man to come to the platform. Later I learned that one of the students turned to another at that point and remarked that I was probably about to dismiss the young man from school as an example to the rest of the student body. Thus everyone, including the young man, was surprised when I put my arms around him and embraced him as a brother in Christ. That dramatically ended the chapel service. Students stood and applauded; they cried and embraced each other.

The situation was unprecedented and, under God, seemed to change the mood on campus to one of greater love and acceptance of one another.

I was informed later that the young man in question had adopted his appearance in order to be able to reach some of his generation who were alienated. Whether or not this was the case, I needed to learn not to reject someone whom God had cleansed. If God had accepted another believer, I should do so as well. I should not reject him simply because of his style of life.

pp. 189-90

You know, what about you?

What is it that is there as *prejudice* that causes *partiality*, that keeps you excluding the love that ought to flow out of your life toward people who desperately need you.

Could it be that we are hitting the nerves today?

May God cause us to realize that Law #12 says,

“Prejudice and partiality have no place in leadership.”

Let's go to verse 22.

v.22 *Lay hands [of ordination] on no one hastily; neither be a partner in other's sins; keep yourself pure.*

**You have commands 5, 6, and 7 there;
and they're all in the present tense.**

Command #5: “*Be laying your hands [of ordination] on no one hastily.*” In other words, don't get in a hurry.

Command #6: “*Neither be a partner in other's sins.*”

Command #7: “*Be keeping yourself pure.*”

Let me just summarize:

- 1. Don't get in a hurry**
- 2. Condemn rather than condone sin.**
- 3. Confess your own sins.**

Now having looked at those things, we'll go on to verse 23.

V. 23 “*No longer drink only water, but be using a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.*”

That is Command #8

The reason is medicinal at this point in what Paul is talking about.

What you do with alcoholic beverages is your business.

That is Romans 14:5 “*Let everyone be convinced in his own mind.*”

That is a personal, private matter between you and your Lord, and that is not anything for us to be involved in.

But let’s say this: Timothy probably did not drink wine.

And he was drinking only water. And to maintain his purity, he probably needed Paul to tell him that for

medicinal purposes, this might really help him a lot if he would take a little, loosen up, have a little for the sake of these physical problems that he was having.

So that is the reason that verse is there.

Chuck Colson, in the book *The Body*, quotes C. S. Lewis:

I didn’t go to religion to make me happy. I always knew a bottle of Port would do that. If you want a religion to make you feel really comfortable, I certainly don’t recommend Christianity.

It will not make you comfortable. It will convict you and call you to a commitment that is going to cost you everything ultimately.

Let's look at verse 24

“The sins of some men are known to all (conspicuous), going ahead to judgment; and in the case of certain individuals, they are following after.”

In verse 24, “*the sins of some men are known to all.*”

“They are conspicuous, going ahead to judgment.”

“And in the case of certain individuals, they are following after.”

The certainty of God's judgment is very clear here at this point; and he says, “*The sins of some are obvious and conspicuous*” that is, to everybody else but to themselves.

Proverbs 28:13 “*He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.*”

Probably the hardest thing about sin among believers is believers living in denial.

In verse 24 Paul is talking about sin;

in verse 25 he is talking about good works.

And it's interesting in both of them he talks about sins that are public, that everybody knows about; and then sins that are hidden.

And when he gets to good works, he talks about good works that are seen and good works that are hidden in the next verse.

The last verse, verse 25:

V. 25 "Likewise also, the good works are known to all (conspicuous), and those that are otherwise not able to be hidden."

Ultimately it won't be. Those good things that are done by so many that are the unsung heroes now you'll know about them later.

There are 10 lessons that come out of this study.

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

Lesson #1: The three-fold ministry of the elder is to be:

1) ruling well, 2) preaching, 3) and teaching.

Lesson #2: There is a double honor for the elder in that he is to be honored here and ultimately to be honored over there.

Lesson #3: The elder is to be cared for physically in order that he might be free to minister spiritually.

Lesson #4: Witnesses are necessary before a charge can be entertained.

Lesson #5: Public review is necessary so that the fear of sin's consequences might fall upon those who are witnesses.

Lesson #6: Prejudice and partiality have no place in leadership.

Lesson #7: Do not be hasty in making decisions about leadership.

Lesson #8: We become partners in crime when we bind ourselves together with those who have unjudged sin in their lives.

Lesson #9: Our physical condition ought to be a concern to us because it affects the ministry.

Lesson #10: Some sins are conspicuous and others are only revealed after examination.

STUDIES IN THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

PART II - 1 TIMOTHY 4-6

"The Laws of Leadership"

Key verse 4:12: *"Let no one look down on you (think little of) because you are young; but keep on becoming an example of the believers in word, in behavior, in love, in faith, in purity."*

LAW NUMBER Twelve - Prejudice and Partiality Have No Place in Leadership

1 Timothy 5:17-25

Key verse 5:21

Notes

v. 17 Let the elders that are ruling well be deemed worthy of double honor, especially those who are working hard in preaching and teaching.

v. 18 For the scripture is saying, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it is threshing the grain," and "The worker is worthy of his pay."

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v. 23 No longer drink only water, but be using a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.

v. 24 The sins of some men are known to all (conspicuous), going ahead to judgment; and in the case of certain individuals, they are following after.

v. 25 Likewise also, the good works are known to all (conspicuous), and those that are otherwise not able to be hidden.

QUESTIONS:

- 1. Read 1 Timothy 5:17-25 and summarize in your own words what Paul is saying in this section.**
- 2. What is Paul's wish for the leaders who are "ruling well," according to verse 17?**
- 3. What does the Scripture say, according to verse 18?**
- 4. What are the rules for accountability, according to verse 19?**
- 5. How are the leaders to be disciplined, according to verse 20?**
- 6. Summarize Paul's charge to Timothy in verse 21.**
- 7. What is Paul's warning to Timothy in verse 22?**
- 8. Why does Paul prescribe a "little wine" for Timothy, according to verse 23?**
- 9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?**
- 10. What lesson have you learned from this study?**