

Honouring Our Leaders

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[0 : 00] Good, well good morning folks, it's lovely to see you today. Thank you so much for coming. Let me encourage you to turn back to 1st Timothy chapter 5 and the first few bit of chapter 6 is where we'll be today.

As you're turning there, let me just encourage you to come along tonight. So I'll mention the evening service which is at half past six. Just every now and often we do something a little bit different in the evening.

So we're just going to do a three-part series, in fact four-part series I think, up until Christmas in the evenings. And it's just going to be in the Psalms and it's going to be called, What Would God Say to the Dot Dot Dot?

And we're going to just think about some of the things that affect us as we see them in the Psalms. So we're going to think about things like depression and anxiety and grief and how those things impact us.

And it's one of the wonderful things about the Bible. I think somebody once called it the most real book that ever has existed. And I think that's true what you see in the Psalms. So we're just going to be doing that in the evening, slightly different.

[0 : 59] But maybe just in response to everything that Esther's been saying, we thought that would be good for us as a church family to do that. So that's going to be this evening and over the next four evenings.

So please come out at half past six tonight. It would be lovely to see you. So 1 Timothy chapter 5 in front of us. If you were here last week, you'll remember this call that Paul made to Timothy, this young pastor in Ephesus.

He had to realize and start cultivating this community of honor as it existed in the church family amongst the different relationships between them. So if you remember, if you come with me to the opening verses of chapter 5, this is what he's to see.

He's to look at the older men in the church as fathers. He's to look at the older women in the church as mothers. He's to look at the younger women in the church as sisters. And presumably there as well, he's to look at the younger men as brothers.

And so what you've got there is this community of honor that should exist amongst the relationships of the people in the church that Timothy is being called to realize and cultivate.

[2 : 05] And so that theme of honor runs right the way through this section that we're going to look at today. This community of honor that is the church. And I reckon that God this morning, as we look at what we're going to look at, is going to put his finger on something that I think all of us find naturally very hard to do.

And it's got all to do with how we instinctively respond to our leaders. Right? Those, if you want to extend it just a little bit, those who are in authority over us in our life.

So if you want to think about your school, think about your teachers, your head teacher maybe in particular. You think about our politicians. You think about the people who are in maybe authority of us in the workplace.

If you think about those relationships in your life, here's a question for you. What do you think comes more naturally to each of us? Is it honor or is it dishonor? Right?

Is it respect or is it disrespect? What do you think comes more naturally to us? Now maybe just to illustrate the point, let me tell you about something that happened to me I remember at university.

[3 : 16] Okay? I remember going to visit the bathroom, went to wash my hands, went to dry my hands. Now remember those kind of hair dryers that you press, the kind of old-fashioned ones that have the big button right on the front.

You're meant to hit it and it's meant to blow at you. Okay? So I went to hit the button and somebody had graffitied on it and it simply said, press here for a message from the prime minister.

Let you work it out. Okay? Press here for a message from the prime minister. Now that was circa 2004. So you can probably work out who the prime minister was of our country then.

But here's the thing. While the person who's in Downing Street will change as the years go on. See the joke about hot air coming from their mouths.

It will be told for many years to come. And I guarantee that will never go out of fashion. Whoever's in charge. Because here's the thing. We live in a culture today, and you see this and recognize it in your own heart, that our natural tendency is to dishonor those who are in authority over our lives.

[4 : 22] Would that be true? You know that in your own heart? You know that temptation? I remember there was a really popular band back in the day. They were called Rage Against the Machine. Don't even remember them. Rage Against the Machine.

And I just remember some of their songs, the titles of their songs, were things like, I wrote them down. Take the power back. Settle for nothing. These were the songs. It was almost an anthem of a generation.

Songs that could easily be the soundtrack of the human heart, could they not? That exists in all of us. Rage Against the Machine. Hate Authority. And if you want to trace that crack in their hearts back, you trace it all the way back to Genesis 3.

Adam and Eve effectively saying, God, we don't want you in authority over us. We want to be in charge of our own lives. Exists in all of our hearts.

And that's the attitude I think that God would challenge in each of our hearts today. Because as followers, as disciples of Jesus, friends, we're called to do it differently.

[5 : 21] Called to do it differently. And be a community that's marked by radical honour. Radical honour. And we thought about the widows last week. Those in our church family who are most in need.

And Paul's called to honour those in our church family. Care for them. Esther was talking about it. Love them. Provide for them. Those who are most in need. And we're going to see two more areas today in this passage that Paul probably knows are places where dishonour might so easily breed in this church.

So there are two particular temptations I think that they'll face. But if they can get it right. They can kick it into gear. It has such explosive potential to showcase the transforming power of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the lives of human beings to the watching world.

Now there are two areas linked by that one word that we keep saying again and again in this section. Verse 17 and verse of chapter 5 and verse 1 of chapter 6.

Do you see it? It's the word honour. Honour. It's the same word we saw last week with the widows. Honour. Or respect. It's the same Greek word.

[6 : 34] At its core it just means to place a value on something. Place a value on something. Now here's the first area then that he talks about. And we're in at verse 17 of chapter 5.

Where have they to place this honour? Well I think there's two messages here. Number one. Timothy you've got to create a culture of honour in the church.

Right? And the focus here is how you view and treat the elders in this church. Right? Those men who are leading the congregation.

And I think the word there it carries with it the connotation of someone who's older in age. I think that's what an elder would be. I don't know about a specific number. Again it might have been younger in this culture.

But that's the connotation there. And if that's the case do you see how it links back into the instruction at verse 1. How he's to honour older men and treat them as fathers. So this is a practical case of how that's going to work out in Timothy's life and in the lives of the people of the church.

[7 : 40] Honour those who are your elders. Now why was this an issue in Ephesus? Well could it be that with all the false teaching that's going on about things to avoid.

And about super spirituality and how you reach it. Which presumably is by the way just why Timothy's encouraged there to take a little wine. I imagine if you just think that's a random verse chucked in there.

I don't think it is. I think it's the false teachers have been teaching the fact that you can show your super spirituality by abstaining from taking certain created foods and drinks.

I think Paul's saying that's nonsense. And show them that you can do it in a way which glorifies God and maintains self-control. Just because it's created isn't why it's bad.

I think that's what's going on there. You can have that for free. But could it be that the false teaching in this church and all the burdensome shenanigans that are going on at a leadership level. Could it just be the case that people in this church have just got sick of leaders.

[8 : 42] Right. Hot air. Elders. Could it be that. Simple as that. Just got sick of it. Right. Maybe those who could step up and be leaders in this church were staying well clear because of all the bad mouthing and all the unfair criticism that came with stepping up to leadership in Ephesus.

Right. You can imagine the thing. We've got this phrase, don't we, in Scotland. And I hate it. We've got that phrase, tall poppy syndrome. You ever heard of that? Tall poppy syndrome. So this idea of if one poppy just gets slightly above the rest, what we're going to do is we're going to take a sickle and cut it down.

Right. It's what we do as a society. And it's one of these things that's become really culturally acceptable that we do. Right. Don't let somebody get too big for their boots. Don't let them get ahead of themselves.

And if we do, we're going to bring them back down to size. It's what we do as a society. It's one of those culturally acceptable things. I think it's the most hideous thing in the human heart. I'm not saying that's true. That thing that exists inside of us that doesn't want other people to get it.

It's horrible. Let me ask you, if you're a non-Christian here today, how do you explain that? Where does that come from? It's funny, isn't it? When Jesus would come along in the Gospels and say, it's out of the heart that the mouth speaks.

[9 : 59] Friends, what's going on in our hearts when we talk like that? They say, maybe there's an unhelpful culture of dishonoring your elders that's brewing in Ephesus.

Now, here's the thing. Churches up and down this land, this nation, friends, we long for, and I hope this is your prayer individually, it's our prayer as a church, that churches up and down this land would be led by people who are burning hot in terms of their love for Jesus.

And who are encouraged in their work and who are seeking him seriously in prayer. Now, let me just say, we all win when that happens.

We all win when that happens. We all want that to be true for our leaders up and down this country of the church of Jesus. That they would just be leading out of a zeal for him. But here's the reality I think this passage also tells you about that job.

It's a hard shift being an elder. It is a hard shift. I heard somebody once compare the role of an elders team to that of a football game. 22 people running around, killing themselves in the pitch while 50,000 people watch, shout and critique from the stands.

[11 : 14] Maybe a bit harsh, but you get what they're saying. It's just a hard shift. And it's largely unseen work. And it's a never ending yet glorious task.

And added to that, it is to step into the front line of the spiritual battle. And I certainly know it's my experience that in the hardest of times the devil would whisper in your ears, is it really worth it?

I think of so many other things you could be doing with your time. Think about your free weeknights. Think about all this, the emotional energy you could be saving. Is it really worth it?

Let's just get a little insight here into the life of an elder. I even feel awkward talking about it, if I'm honest. But how do you do it? Let the text speak. How do you honor your elders, Timothy? Here's what he says.

He says two things. He says, provide for them. You see it? Provide for them. The Old Testament principle there of not muzzling the ox as it's treading the grain. Right? So you wouldn't set an animal to work and expect it to keep going in the field on an empty stomach.

[12 : 24] That's the principle. You feed it. And much more so with Christian leaders, especially those who work hard in terms of their preaching and teaching of the Bible.

And I take it this is more than just simply financial remuneration for those who are set aside to do this role. Or I imagine that that's perhaps what's going on in this double honor thing. So the honor of being an elder, but maybe the added honor of being set aside financially to be able to do this with the best hours of your life.

It's a holistic care. I think he's speaking about here. Encouragement for your leaders. Holidays for your leaders. Prayer that goes on for your leaders. I must say last week somebody came up to me after the service and said, we never cease to pray for you as a team.

Honestly, it made my week. As we want the leaders in churches up and down this land to be leading out of a love and a passionate zeal for Jesus and to be encouraged in their work as they do that.

So, Timothy, this culture you're creating in the church. Love your leaders. Provide for your elders and protect them. You know, maybe there was a lawsuit culture growing in Ephesus.

[13:34] You know, we talk about, my wife's a doctor, she laughs at this. And we talk about ambulance chasers. Okay, maybe in this culture, in Ephesus, it was elders chasers.

I don't know. Right? People going out their way to bring allegations. And maybe that's why Paul says, make sure that any allegations against an elder can be substantiated.

That there's something to it. That it's not just gossip. That two or three people can back up the same story. I think that's what's going on there. Protect your leaders. But on that note, do you see how Paul's very quick to tell Timothy not to hesitate to rebuke leaders who've gone rogue?

I take it in terms of their life and their doctrine. Because if there's a serious allegation against an elder, even if there's the slightest whiff of truth coming from it, there's any question marks, there's any even amber flags.

Timothy, you can't just sweep it under the carpet. Don't do that. Never do that. You cannot. You must not do that. You see how Paul tells him at verse 21, what does he tell him not to do?

[14:44] Not to show, there's two words, favoritism. And not to show partiality. No inner rings, no jobs for the boys, no secret handshakes which would cause you to overlook something serious that's going on in someone's life at a leadership level.

Here's the principle. Sin stinks in God's eyes. And the repetitive thing that comes all the way through scripture, he particularly hates it in the lives of those who are meant to be caring for his people.

It stinks in his eyes. And friends, that's why I love that you're praying for us, friends. You need to keep us accountable as leaders as well. If you see something that's off in a leader's life that doesn't quite match up, you ought to tell us.

You've got responsibility. Because this is how people get seriously hurt. And this is how people lose confidence in the leaders of the church. And let me just say, pastorally, maybe there's some of you here today who know the pain of this all too well.

And friends, if that's you here today, I'm so sorry that has been your experience. This is how the gospel loses credibility in the eyes of the world.

[15:58] And let me just say, maybe you know some of this, maybe you don't. But the evangelical world right now is awash with cases coming to light. Leaders just failing.

And things have been exposed. And that's what, I take it, that's what God does. God will not be mocked. Things will come to light. And his name will be honored. If there's stuff festering at a leadership level, friends, we need to root it out.

Now, in the text, how can Timothy particularly guard against this? One way that Paul mentions is at verse 22. And it's not to be hasty in appointing elders.

So don't be wowed by the new kid on the block. Don't be, your life seems to have it together. Can you start a Monday kind of thing? Don't do that. Pick elders whose lives have stood the test of time. And it just, this is again, it just, it just makes sense. Paul's blend here of compassion and wisdom. It just makes sense that you would watch somebody over a course of time and see, that's when you see their character.

[17:06] Right? I don't know about you, but I do that all the time when I'm buying something on Amazon. Right? I look at how many stars the product has got. But more than that, I look for more than just the fact that a product has got more than four and a half stars.

I'm interested in the number of people that have given it four and a half stars. I don't want something with five reviews. I want something that's got 500 reviews. Yeah, you do this as well? Because it's a product that's lasted the length of time. That is still going strong six years later. It's not just got five reviews. It's only been out for a month. You don't really know what's going to be. No, something that's lasted the length of time. How much more when it comes to appointing elders? Friends, this is, in the generations to come, this is what to look for. Someone who's proven to you their love for the Lord Jesus.

Somebody who you can say, we know that person. We've seen what they're made of. We've seen inside their homes. We've seen what makes them tick. We know their children. We know their

faults.

[18:06] We know their struggles. But we know their gifts. And we know who they are. Those are the kind of people that you want to appoint. People who love the Lord and who love their church. And in the hardest moments of our lives, they will be there.

It's got to be all about character. Now, here's the thing. Just a cultural observation. Do you know what? I found it really interesting watching the public's reaction when the news of Matt Hancock's affair hit the news back in June.

Do you remember that? If you were around at the time? I remember being, I remember that it was strikingly clear that people that were commenting on it were way more concerned about his public failings.

And that he'd broken social distancing rules. Way more concerned about that than they were the fact about his private failings. In other words, if the guy can do the job, then we don't care what his life is like at home.

Friends, let me just say in the church, it's the other way around. You can be as gifted as you want up here. You can be the most gifted musician, the most gifted Bible handler.

[19:15] But if your life does not match up at home, you should not be up here. You should not be an elder. That is what Paul is saying here. Someone who you know has stood the test of time.

Someone who you know loves the flock and who will give his life for the flock. Look, my friends, how gloriously different is this going to look? People that we rub shoulders with every day, hugely skeptical of leaders.

I had a lady, we were coming back from holidays, sitting in a queue, trying to get through passport control. Lady just standing there, spoke to her literally for a minute. And she gave me both barrels about Boris.

Just want to get home, please. Give me both barrels about Boris. Hate the guy, hate the guy. Like, friends, how different is it going to be if we as a church speak of our leaders in here?

And we say, yeah, they're not perfect, but you know what? We're rooting for them. And we love them. And you know what? They love us. How different is that going to look? The way that we speak of one another than it is how our world relates to its leaders.

[20:21] Timothy's got to create a culture of honor in the church. And the second thing he's got to do, he's got to encourage others in the church to model a mindset of honor at work.

And with this, as we hit chapter six. Now, remember, the word slavery probably jumped off the page to do there. Remember, slavery, as Paul talks about it here, isn't the same thing as kind of 18th, 19th century will before slavery.

Right? The hideous thing. It's a very different thing here. Paul's writing, at the time of his writing, you've got a whole Roman economy that's largely based on these kind of relationships.

So you've got lawyers could be slaves. Doctors could be slaves. Sometimes they lived with their masters. So it's not quite the same thing. And it's certainly not the same thing what we would call today employment.

Right? That kind of relationship. But it's close enough that I think the principles that he talks about here are very much applicable. And this is another area that Paul knows people in this church could be tempted towards dishonor.

[21:27] How does that work? Well, perhaps it was Christian believers finding themselves working for a non-believing boss. Right? Somebody who's hostile to the things of Jesus. Thinking to themselves, why should I work hard for them?

Or could it be there's people in this church and you've got a slave and a master who are both Christians. And the slave thinks to himself, well, listen, because we're kind of go to church together, we're kind of equal in the church.

Maybe he'll cut me a little bit of slack and I can kind of slack off my duties. It's those kind of things. Right? Both temptations towards dishonoring that relationship.

And Paul says don't. Model a mindset of honor at work. And here's what I want you to know, because I know many of us friends are in different jobs doing different things.

And some of us are finding it really hard. You've maybe been in the same place of work for years and years and years. And you think, is it really worth it? Here's what I want you to see from this passage. Honoring.

[22 : 30] Modeling a mindset of honor at work. Showing honor, friends, will have an evangelistic impact. Respect. That's what he's saying. As you go to work tomorrow, God says your boss is fully worthy of full honor and respect.

That doesn't mean you're a doormat. Don't hear what I'm not saying. It doesn't mean that you're there to two o'clock in the morning. Don't hear what I'm not saying. But it does mean that our bosses, friends, they should see us as straight shooters.

As people who will be reliable, honest, trustworthy, doing their best, showing. And let me just say, showing honor to your boss will draw the questions.

Why do they do that? What's going on? Let me just say that the flip of the relationship is also true for Christian masters. Someone who's doing some work for you temporarily.

Come to your home to do an odd job. Friend, the way that we show honor. And that kind of relationships matters as well. I remember asking my friend if he knew of a good builder in the city.

[23 : 35] And he gave me a guy's number. And he just said, you know what? That guy loves working for Christians. And you know why? Because Christians pay on time. But they don't have a good reputation to have.

Is that not how honor kind of just works itself out in daily relationships? That is a good reputation to have. And think about it as well.

As a result of their common Christian faith, if the world can see a slave serving a master, verse 2, even better. And if they can see in turn a Christian master who is devoted to the welfare of their slaves.

As people view that working relationship, working out. Friends, what a powerful witness to the transforming power of Jesus in people's lives. The compelling witness of a community that is continually formed by the word of God.

A community where the gospel brings people together. And a community where Jesus is transforming people by his grace.

[24 : 43] And so friends, as we wrap this up this morning, the challenge is to think about how we're known. How are we doing at showing honor to one another?

How are we doing at showing honor to those outside the church? And just as we close, some of you might know there's a... I listened to an interview recently.

A guy down south, down in... I think he's Brighton, Eastbourne. He's an evangelist called Glenn Scrivener. And what he does, he just... So often part of his job is just to go to different churches and do some training on evangelism.

Right? How people are going to witness for Jesus as they go out into the world. Now here's what he said he does with training. The first question he asks is never have you got a clear understanding on Christian apologetics.

It's not have you mastered two ways to live. It's not have you got a wonderful gospel articulation ready to go on your lips. Friends, what he does is people get together.

[25 : 44] He says 10 minutes on the clock, turn to your neighbor, just the two of you. And all I want you to talk about is finish this sentence. The thing I love about Jesus is...

That's a conversation I'd love to hear. That's a conversation I'd encourage you to have with people after you finish. Isn't it not true so often, friends, that we overcomplicate evangelism?

That we put so much pressure on ourselves to get it right. What is evangelism if it's not just one beggar telling another beggar this is where you find bread? The thing I love about Jesus is...

Let me ask you, if you're a Christian here, what is it that first drew you to Jesus? Irresistible grace. I know, but you know what I mean. Okay, what first drew you to Jesus? You know, for me, what it was, it was just reading through the Gospels and just seeing how Jesus treated people with honor. Yeah? The woman at the well, John 4. The blind men on the way to Jerusalem. The woman caught in adultery.

[26 : 49] Tax collectors, fishermen, widows. How he treated them with honor. I was reading in my own times this morning, end of Matthew's Gospel. He goes to the cross.

The one who deserved all honor, treated with dishonor. They spat in his face. They slapped him. Put up false witnesses against him. I could not get my head around the fact that the one who was perfect, sinless, was the one who would give his lives for the people who deserved dishonor.

And I saw myself there. I was a sinner. I was guilty. I deserved dishonor. And Jesus showed me honor and took my place. Friends, the thing that drew me to Jesus is the fact that he showed honor.

And I take it that as we thought about this community of honor that we want to cultivate as a church, I take it as disciples, his fingerprints, the fingerprints of the king of honor, should be all over our relationships.

So you see, we've seen that last week. We've seen it this week. The widows, our elders, and the people who we work for. Paul would say to Timothy in the church, cultivate a community of honor. [28 : 02] Let me just close with this Mark Dever quote. He said this, Christian proclamation might make the gospel audible, but Christians living together in local congregations make the gospel visible.

Friends, that's the call we've got as we finish this little section. We've got two more to go in 1 Timothy, but as we finish this little section, cultivating a community that shows radical honor. Let's pray.

Amen. Father, we just thank you so much, Lord, for Jesus. And we thank you, Father, for the honor which he has shown us, dying in our place on the cross for our sin, taking the anger that we deserved on himself.

Father, thank you for the wonderful grace that you've shown us. And so, Father, we pray that you would help us by your spirit to be a community that outdoes one another in showing honor.

Oh, Father, would you transform our hearts? Would you focus our minds? Would our community here at Brunsfield, would it exist for your glory?

[29 : 12] And Father, we thank you so much for today. Thank you that you have heard us, Lord, and you have spoken to us through your word. And so, Father, we just commit ourselves to you in Jesus' worthy and in his precious name we pray.

Amen.