

## Preface

These notes are to serve as a blessing and help to those studying the word with Pastor Neil Spencer. Pastor Neil does not claim to fully agree with all the thoughts, beliefs, writings, or teachings of every named source/person in these notes. The Bible is the ultimate authority & ALL believers are to be Bereans (Acts 17.10-11).

### INTRODUCTION:

1. Well, today is one of those Sundays where I get to preach about how you should honor your pastors, protect them, & even—wait for it—pay them well!
  1. Now, before you start whispering, ‘*Oh great, the pastor’s preaching on giving himself a raise,*’ — I didn’t pick this passage—it picked me!
  2. We are going through 1 Timothy verse by verse, & this is where we are today.
  3. So, if you have a problem with it, take it up with the Holy Spirit—He inspired it!
2. In all seriousness, this text remind us that leadership is both a privilege + responsibility.
  1. Leaders should be honored, but they should also be held accountable.
  2. Today, we’re going to talk about how to build a church culture that values godly leadership—one that supports them & ensures that they walk in integrity.
  3. Because let’s be real—while there are some faithful, hardworking pastors, there are also some that make you say, ‘*Hmm... not so sure about that guy!*’
3. We are **ENCOURAGED/EXHORTED** to **HOLD FAST** through the book of 1st Timothy
  1. **HOLD FAST**... as a phrase/term... **synonymous** — *to stay strong, to do what is right, to see it through, no surrender...* as a **verb** it means *to bear down, to stay the course; to continue to believe in or adhere to an idea or principle*
  2. **HOLD FAST** (nautical origins) for a sailor... not a SUGGESTION, but an ORDER to grip onto something **secure**; to avoid losing **stability** or being **swept** overboard.
4. As Paul writes to his protégé Timothy... there was a STORM
  1. Misinformation/misunderstanding of TRUTH was rampant (False Teaching)
  2. False teaching leads to **diffusion** of the truth, **distraction, deception, & division** w/in the church
  3. Now & then ... there’s a **CONSTANT & CONSISTENT** need to **HOLD FAST**:
    1. To **Guard** — against False Teaching
    2. To **Grow** — in Truth, Love, Grace, Wisdom, Faith, Patience...
5. 1 Timothy has at least 3 interwoven themes from Paul to Timothy... **HOLD FAST** to **TRUTH** to **INTEGRITY** & to **LEADERSHIP** — we’ll see all 3 in the text today, with a focus on leadership!
  1. Leadership in the church is both a high calling & a weighty responsibility.
  2. Paul, writing to Timothy, gives instructions on how to:
    1. Honor faithful leaders
    2. Protect them from false accusations
    3. Hold them accountable when necessary
    4. And appoint them wisely
6. Leadership scandals & church hurt are all too common. How can we, as the body of Christ, ensure that we are holding fast to godly leadership—both in honoring those who serve well & ensuring integrity among those who lead?
7. Let’s pray!

### TEACHING: 1 Timothy 5.17-25

*17 Elders who do their work well should be respected and paid well, especially those who work hard at both preaching and teaching. 18 For the Scripture says, “You must not muzzle an ox to keep it from eating as it treads out the grain.” And in another place, “Those who work deserve their pay!”*

**1. Hold Fast to RESPECT** — Honor Faithful Leaders

1. Paul speaks of “*double honor*” for elders, which refers to both respect & financial support, particularly for those who labor in preaching & teaching.
  2. In Jewish tradition, rabbis were cared for by the community, allowing them to focus on their teaching.
  3. Paul cites Deuteronomy 25:4, “*Do not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,*” to illustrate that those who work hard in the church should be properly supported.
2. Imagine a farmer with a hardworking ox.
1. If the farmer never lets the ox eat, the ox will grow weak & ineffective.
  2. The same is true of church leaders—if they are constantly pouring out but never poured into, their ability to serve diminishes.
3. Practical Application
1. Support your pastors/leaders through prayer, encouragement, & generosity.
  2. Ask yourself: *Am I a source of encouragement or discouragement on those who shepherd me?* Am I **FOUNTAIN** or a **DRAIN**?

**19** *Do not listen to an accusation against an elder unless it is confirmed by two or three witnesses.*

**1. Hold Fast to TRUTH & JUSTICE** — Protect Leaders from False Accusations

1. Leaders are often targets of unfair criticism. Paul insists that accusations must be backed by two or three witnesses, following Old Testament law (Deut. 19:15).
  2. This prevents claims from destroying a leader’s reputation & the church’s unity.
2. Imagine a courtroom where the judge makes a decision based on one person’s claim without any evidence. That would be unjust! Similarly, we must ensure fairness when evaluating accusations against church leaders.
3. Encouragement: Be cautious about spreading or believing rumors.
1. Follow Matthew 18:15-17—if you have a concern about a leader, go to them directly before involving others.
  2. Encourage a culture where truth, not gossip, prevails.

**20** *Those who sin should be reprimanded in front of the whole church; this will serve as a strong warning to others.* **21** *I solemnly command you in the presence of God and Christ Jesus and the highest angels to obey these instructions without taking sides or showing favoritism to anyone.*

**1. Hold Fast to INTEGRITY** — Leaders are to be Accountable for Sin

1. Paul commands that persistent, unrepentant sin amongst leaders be publicly addressed, not to shame them but to warn others.
  2. He warns Timothy not to show partiality—no leader should be exempt from accountability.
  3. Dave Shirley, “*Jesus doesn’t take sides, He just takes over.*”
2. A pilot who ignores engine failure warnings puts everyone on the plane at risk. A church leader in sin who is not held accountable can bring harm to the entire church body.
3. Churches should not cover up sin in leadership
1. Integrity matters more than reputation.
  2. In leadership, invite accountability & surround yourself w/ godly counsel.
  3. Respond biblically to sin—w/ truth, grace, & a commitment to restoration.

**22** *Never be in a hurry about appointing a church leader. Do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.* **23** *Don’t drink only water. You ought to drink a little wine for the sake of your stomach because you are sick so often.* **24** *Remember, the sins of some people are obvious, leading them to certain judgment. But there are others whose sins will not be*

revealed until later. **25** In the same way, the good deeds of some people are obvious. And the good deeds done in secret will someday come to light.

**1. Hold Fast to WISDOM** — Be Cautious in Appointing Leaders & Good Choices

1. Laying hands on someone symbolized appointment & blessing — 1 Timothy 4.14  
*Do not neglect the spiritual gift you received through the prophecy spoken over you when the elders of the church laid their hands on you.*
2. Paul warns Timothy not to be hasty in appointing leaders—a leader’s character must be tested over time.
  1. Some sins are obvious, but others take time to surface.
  2. Conversely, some good works go unnoticed
  3. But will eventually be revealed
3. Faithfulness matters even when it’s unseen.
2. Hiring someone QUICKLY (five-minute interview) can be a recipe for disaster.
  1. Employers check references & evaluate character before making decisions.
  2. How much more important is it for church leadership?
3. If you aspire to leadership, focus on spiritual maturity before seeking a position.
  1. Churches should prioritize character over charisma—just because someone is gifted does not mean they are ready to lead.
  2. Be patient & discerning—the right leader at the right time is a blessing, but the wrong leader can cause great harm.

**CONCLUSION:** Paul encourages Timothy to **Hold Fast to Godly Leadership**

1. Here’s what he says
  1. Honor those who faithfully lead.
  2. Protect leaders from accusations
  3. Hold them accountable for real sin.
  4. Have wisdom in installing leaders.
2. Here’s the call — HOLD FAST —
  1. **Hold Fast to RESPECT**
  2. **Hold Fast to TRUTH & JUSTICE**
  3. **Hold Fast to INTEGRITY**
  4. **Hold Fast to WISDOM**

**APPLICATION:**

1. Questions for Reflection & Call to Action
  1. Am I honoring & supporting my spiritual leaders in a Biblical way?
  2. Am I just in how I evaluate & speak about leaders?
  3. Am I willing to hold leaders accountable in love & truth?
  4. Am I growing in spiritual maturity so that, when the time comes, I can lead well?
2. Call to Action:
  1. Pray for your pastors/leaders this week
  2. Identify 1 way to encourage a leader in your church.
  3. Examine yourself, are you leading well in the areas where God has called you?

**ENCOURAGEMENT:**

1. I recognize that this is a unique sermon for a leader to share, but let me be clear—this isn’t about me. This is about the way God designed His church to function.
2. Pastors are called to serve faithfully, to work hard, & to lead well & churches are called to support w/ respect, truth, justice, integrity, & wisdom.
3. If we get this right, the church thrives. If we get it wrong, well... we’ve all seen what happens when churches either mistreat their leaders or blindly follow unqualified ones.
4. So let’s be a church that honors, protects, & holds fast to godly leadership—because when we do, it’s not just the leaders who win, but the whole body of Christ!