

First Timothy: The Household of God

The Family of God
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THE FAMILY OF GOD 1 Timothy 3:1-5:16

If you have a Bible, and I hope you do, let me invite you to open with me to 1 Timothy 3. Those of you who have been here the last couple of months, we've been walking through 1 Timothy. Over this last month, you know that we've taken a couple of pauses: one with Heather's mom passing away, and then with September 11th, and we've gotten behind. For a variety of reasons...including the fact that Heather and I are hoping sometime soon, maybe even in October or November, to travel to China to pick up our little girl there...we just can't push this series back. So, we've got some catching up to do.

As I was looking at the schedule, trying to work it out, I decided to do, tonight, what my mentor in preaching would be absolutely ashamed of me for. What some of you might be ashamed of me for, and I'm going to try to cover two and a half chapters of Pauline literature in one night. So, our goal is to do Secret Church style tonight, through 1 Timothy 3, 4 and the first part of 5. I know that there's no way we're going to do justice to all of these texts, but here's the deal: we've been through 1 Timothy 3 on a variety of different occasions before, when we've talked about elders and deacons in the church, so that's something we've covered before.

If you just totally feel robbed, then you feel free to go back and listen to previous sermons on 1 Timothy 3 until your heart's content. So, that's 1 Timothy 3. I had planned on doing 1 Timothy 4 in one week and then 1 Timothy 5, the first half deals with widows, which is something I really have been looking forward to addressing. I'm actually going to be out of town next weekend. You can be in prayer for me. I'm going to be at a conference. I don't like being gone on Sundays, but this is a missions conference with Desiring God and John Piper and Louie Giglio and some others that I believe has tremendous potential to mobilize thousands of individuals to go to unreached people groups. So, not going to be here next week, and I didn't want to give this text to someone else. I wanted, pastorally, to cover this first part of 1 Timothy 5. So, that left the option tonight for us to go Secret Church style.

So, I hope that you have chosen wisely in the person you are sitting next to, that they are helpful when it comes to taking notes, and I hope that you have brought your seatbelt and are ready to dive in fast and deep, as we think about what it means to be the family of God. I'm thinking, specifically, here about us as The Church at Brook Hills. I know that there are some of you who are here tonight who might be visiting from other churches. So, if that's you, then I want to encourage you to consider the wonder of what it means to be a part of the local church that you're a part of, and, maybe, if you're here tonight, and you're not a follower of Christ, my hope and my prayer is that you would see the goodness of God on display in a picture of the church. Maybe even tonight, you might choose to become a part of His family, but for those who are a part of, member of The Church at Brook Hills, I want us to think about what it means for us to be God's family in these two and a half chapters.

What we're going to do is, we're going to read through the whole text, so two and half chapters, which is longer than, obviously, we would normally do, but I want you to...let's

take advantage of this. Sometimes, we have a tendency to take Paul's letters, for example, and just dissect them and pick them apart. We fail to realize that these letters would have been received and certainly read, most times, in one sitting. So, I want you to, even as we're reading chapter three and chapter four and the first part of chapter five, I want you to almost hear it like you're at Ephesus, and Paul has written this, and you're waiting to hear what he has said. So, I want you to just let it soak in. Let's read it, and then let's think about it together.

So, let's dive in. 1 Timothy 3:1. This is what Paul writes to Timothy, the church at Ephesus, and by extension, to us:

"The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. 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? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

"Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

"I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth. Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

"Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

"If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full

acceptance. For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

"Command and teach these things. Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

"Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity. Honor widows who are truly widows. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God. She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day, but she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives. Command these things as well, so that they may be without reproach. But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

"Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband, and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work. But refuse to enroll younger widows, for when their passions draw them away from Christ, they desire to marry and so incur condemnation for having abandoned their former faith. Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not. So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander. For some have already strayed after Satan. If any believing woman has relatives who are widows, let her care for them. Let the church not be burdened, so that it may care for those who are truly widows."

All right. Here we go. You ready? Actually, I want us to start in the middle of what we just read. 1 Timothy 3:14, 15 and 16, because...and I'm guessing, if you have been on this journey over the last couple of months, you might already have verse fifteen, maybe fourteen and sixteen too, underlined...because this is really the theme verse that frames the whole letter of 1 Timothy. In a sense, it really helps frame these two and half chapters that we're going to read. So, I want us to start in verse thirteen thinking about who we are, thinking specifically about church, and its significance, and then Christ and His supremacy.

Who We Are

So, start with me in verse fourteen. Now, to recap, Paul says, *"I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, [this is the purpose of the letter] if I delay,*

[underline this verse if you don't have it underlined: theme verse of 1 Timothy] *you may know how one ought to behave in the [now, follow this, three descriptions of the church...one] household of God, [two] which is the church of the living God, [three] a pillar and buttress of the truth."*

The significance of the church...

So, three descriptions here about the church. On one hand, we are the expression of God's family, literally, the household of God. His family unit, His children. So, my household includes a wife, and two sons and little girl on the way from China, and my household operates according to my rules...at least theoretically...my household operates according to my rules. So, children go to bed at this time in my household, and they wake up at this time. Children act this way at the dinner table in my household; children treat their mom this way in my household...those are the things that happen in our house. So, in a very real sense, the book of 1 Timothy is Paul helping us understand, "All right, this is how...this is the rules...this is how we behave in the household of God, as a part of the family of God." We are, in a very real way, as the church, the expression of God's family. So, that's first.

Then, second, we are the inhabitation of God's presence. We are the church of the living God. Literally, the assembly of the living God. This is a great phrase. Language like this just takes Jewish Christians...Bible readers...immediately back to a place like Bethel, where Jacob meets with God, and he says, "Surely God is in this place." Or Moses and the tabernacle where we see Moses say, "The living God will dwell among you in the tabernacle. His presence will be with you through the tabernacle." Or, descriptions in the Old Testament of the temple, God's indwelling presence among His people in the temple. This is one of those places where then you turn the pages in the New Testament, and you find that we don't need to go to a certain city or tabernacle, temple, certain place in order to encounter the presence of God.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 6:16, you...talking about the church...you, "...we are the temple of the living God..." We are, as the church, the temple. Ephesians 2:22, "In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit." So, hear that language. As the church, we are the dwelling place of God. As the assembly of God's people, He dwells among us. Do you realize how significant it is when we gather together, even like in this room tonight, as the assembly of God's people, that we are gathered and the living God is among us? We are worshipping in His presence as His household. We are listening to His Word. We're about to gather at His table. The inhabitation of God's presence...the church.

As if that's not enough, the third part, Paul says we're the guardians of God's Word. He says we're the "pillar and buttress of the truth." Now, what does that mean? Well, put yourself in Ephesus for a second and see this temple of Diana, one of the seven ancient wonders of the world. This shiny, large marble rooftop held high by a hundred ionic columns all the way around. You've got that image in your mind. Paul says to the church there, "You, as the church, you're the pillar and buttress of God's truth."

What does that mean? Well, what do these columns do? What do pillars do? What does it mean to be a pillar and buttress of the truth? Well, follow this. The church, you have the privilege and responsibility, on one hand, of preserving God's Word; we hold it firm. This is what pillars...this is what a buttress does...holds on to something firm. This is what we do as the church from age to age, from generation to generation. We have the responsibility, as the church, of holding firm and fast to the Word of God. To defend it against false teaching in the first century; to defend it against false teaching in the 21st century and all the centuries between there. One of our responsibilities as the church, as The Church at

Brook Hills, is to make sure to hold fast to this Word in our culture, that we pass it on faithfully to the next generation which is what the whole next book of 2 Timothy is all about.

So, we hold it firm, and then we proclaim God's Word; we hold it high. That's what columns do, they hold something firm, and they hold it high. That's what we want more than anything else from The Church at Brook Hills. This is our privilege and responsibility. We don't want to hold man's opinions high. We don't want to hold man's innovations high. We don't want to hold our creativity, our possessions, our things high. We want to hold one thing high...we want to hold His Word high. We want people to see it and hear it proclaimed loudly. Preserved, proclaimed, held firm in the body, held high from the body.

So, this is who we are, and this is what we do. Just let this soak in. We are the very guardians of God's Word, as the church, the very inhabitation of God's presence. The expression of His family. The God who spoke and the world came into being. The God who calls the stars by name and holds the nations in His hand. The God who reigns and rules over everything in all the universe, this awe-inspiring reality: this God dwells among us. What an amazing truth that tonight, even in this room, there is nothing routine or casual about what we have gathered together to do in this room tonight. As the church, we are the assembly, the dwelling place of the living God. To paraphrase verse 15, Paul is saying, "God is in the house." He's in the house, and that's why, when you go over to 1 Corinthians 14, you see Paul talk about how an unbeliever will come into the gathering of the church, and he will fall on his face, and he will exclaim...what will he exclaim? He'll say, "God is really among you."

I pray for that every week. I pray that people would come into this place who don't know God, and they would just, in being with the church and seeing the presence of God in the church, that they would fall and say, "God is among you." I pray that would happen tonight, maybe with some of you who don't know Christ.

The supremacy of Christ...

So, as if that's not enough, keep going here to verse 16. So, see the significance of the church, and then see the supremacy of Christ. So, Paul starts talking. In verse 16, it says, "*Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness...*"

Now, a couple of notes here. When we see Paul talk about mystery, just a reminder, he's not talking about something that's kind of an unsolved mystery or a clue that needs to be found. He's talking about something that was hidden for a time and has now been revealed. That's the way he talks about mystery. So, here he's talking about something that's been hidden, and something that's now revealed. The mystery of godliness. Now, you might circle that word and... I wish we had time, we don't.

Nine times in the book of 1 Timothy, he uses this word, "godliness." One of his favorite words; probably one of the primary themes of this entire letter. The way he uses this word is to describe the kind of life...godliness...the kind of life that is centered on God, that is permeated by a God-consciousness. That somebody, when they wake up in the morning and they go throughout the day, and they go to bed at night, is just God-centered, God-saturated in their thinking, in their planning, in their doing, in their speaking, in their relating to others. There's this godliness, God-centeredness, God-consciousness that just permeates everything they do. So, Paul says, "*Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness.*"

Well, what is the mystery of godliness? You get to verse 16, right after he says that, the very first word he says is, "He." "*He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit,*

seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory." Who is the mystery of godliness? Christ! So, Christ reveals the mystery of godliness, meaning, Christ is godliness disclosed...godliness revealed. Christ is the manifestation of God-centeredness. So, how does Christ reveal the mystery of godliness? He displays the majesty of God. Listen to this description: incarnated as the Son, "manifested in the flesh..." He is God in the flesh. Verified by the Spirit. This whole picture of vindication, verification, pointing us to how the Spirit affirmed the Son of God as from God. This goes all the way back...remember the scene in Matthew 3 with the baptism? Jesus was baptized. All the signs and wonders that Jesus did, evidence of the Spirit's power on Him; and then ultimately His resurrection from the grave.

Romans 1:4 says, He *"was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord."* Romans 8:11, *"If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead..."* Verified by the Spirit. Incarnated as the Son. Verified by the Spirit. Praised among the heavens. Seen by angels. Seen and savored by angels. They sang at His birth. They announced His resurrection. They were there at His ascension. Seen; praised among the heavens; proclaimed across the earth among all the nations to this day. Christ being proclaimed among the nations as the Savior of the world.

Think about this. Even today, right now, Christ is being believed on in the world. Christ is saving in the world. There are people right now in Asia and Africa and Europe and America who are believing on Christ as the Savior. You just think about...when you get up tomorrow morning...so, let your Monday morning be immediately encouraged when you roll out of bed, and you think, "God is saving right now. There's people...He's turning blind eyes to see. He's bringing people from death to life forever. It's going to be a good day. It's going to be a really good day."

It's what He's doing. People are believing on Him and the Lord, that that might happen even in this room tonight. The Savior of the world and the King over all the universe, taken up into glory at the Father's right hand. So, Paul says, "This is Christ." Paul is not just saying who He is, revealing the mystery of godliness and displaying the majesty of God. What he's saying is, "Church, realize what this means for you. Realize what this means for godliness in your life. Realize what this means for godliness in church. Let this awe-inspiring reality soak in. This Christ, who is incarnated as the Son, vindicated by the Spirit who raised Him from the dead, praised among angels, proclaimed across the earth as Savior of the world and the King over all the universe. This Christ lives within you."

Oh, just come aside from notes for a second and let this soak in. Christian, right where you're sitting in your seat, this Christ dwells, resides in you. Oh, be encouraged, brothers and sisters. Brothers and sisters who are walking through difficult times where you feel weak, this Christ is strength in you. Brothers and sisters who are confused and don't know what to do next in your family or your job or this or that, know this: this Christ is peace in you. Brothers and sisters who feel bruised and battered by this world, this Christ is healing in you. Brothers and sisters who are facing some challenges you don't know if you are going to be able to get through, take heart: *"greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world."* You have no reason to fear when Christ is in you.

The God-centered life...so, this is not in your notes; it's just, no extra charge...the God-centered life is the overflow of the Christ-empowered life. So, this is *"Christ in you, the hope of glory."* Christ centers us on God. This is what Paul is saying. So let it...let all this soak in, and then recognize what it means to be the church. We're the household of God, the dwelling place of God, the guardians of God's Word, indwelt by God's Son. All of these things radically change the way we live. All these things radically change the way we

operate as a church. There is nothing like the church in all of the world. There is, literally, no other body on the planet in all of history that is more significant than the church now and forever. Oh, we're never going to get through this, but this is good stuff.

How We Are Led

So, then, based on that, okay, based on that...you see that? That's foundational. It's foundational for the whole book and for these two and a half chapters. Based on that now, God says, "In light of the importance, the significance of the church, the supremacy of Christ, here's how you behave in my house, okay?" Here's how we are led, and this takes us back up to the beginning of 1 Timothy 3 where God outlines two primary positions of leadership in the church. Getting these two positions right, being biblical when it comes to church leadership, affects everything else. There might be a temptation for you, at this point, to kind of tune out. "Okay, all right, church leadership, church offices."

Know this. Every single person in this room is affected by church leadership. There are many of you in this room who have grown to wonderful heights and wonderful depths in your relationship with Christ as a result of godly leaders and godly pastors in the church. They've had huge, eternal influences in your life. There are others of you, I know, in this room who have been hurt deeply by some church leaders or pastors that you have come across. I'm guessing there are probably some, maybe many, in this room who, at some point, have even felt pushed away from the church or pushed away from Christianity as a whole because of leadership you've seen in the church.

This is where we realize the level of leadership in the church, the level of leadership in this church, will have a direct effect on the spread of the gospel through this church. If leadership...in this church or any church...if leadership in the church is casual about God and casual about holiness and casual about mission, that will have devastating effects on that church, and it will have devastating effects on people around that church that need to hear and see the gospel. Some very devastating effects. Conversely, if leadership in the church is passionate about God and passionate about holiness and passionate about mission, then that will have a wonderful effect on that church and the spread of the gospel through that church. So, we need to get this right. The health of the church and the spread of the gospel depend in large part on the faithfulness of church leaders. So, what God does is He gives us two positions of church leaders here in 1 Timothy 3.

Elders: Servant leaders in the church.

One, elders. God gives elders to the church as servant leaders in the church. Paul uses here in verses one and two the word "overseer," which is a term in the New Testament that's used interchangeably with elder and pastors. You've got elder, pastor, overseer used interchangeably in Scripture to refer to the same group of people. These elders, pastors, overseers have overall leadership responsibility in the church. They lead under the authority of Christ.

So, Christ is, obviously, head of the church. Christ is the authority over the church. He is the Chief Shepherd, but how does He visibly, practically lead His church? He does it through shepherds who are appointed by God, raised up by God through His Spirit, by the work of the Spirit in them they aspire to serve. That's the word that he uses there in verse one: "*If anyone aspires to the office of overseer...*" You see that? You've got a desire here within a man to serve as a pastor. This is not some longing for power or longing for position that's

driven by selfish ambition. This is a desire to serve the body of Christ, a desire to care for the body of Christ, a desire to lead the body of Christ under the authority of Christ.

Now, just because somebody has that desire does not then necessarily mean, "Okay then, they must be an elder." They are affirmed by the church. We see in the New Testament the body of Christ raising up, sending out, affirming elders in different ways, but the church recognizes in a man the qualities of an elder, the leadership ability of an elder and affirmed as an elder. We have a whole process here as a church that we go through every year. We did it this spring, where we prayed through and considered who God, by His Spirit, has raised up, given a desire to serve in this way. We, as a church, walk through a process; we affirm those whom He has raised up. Nobody becomes an elder here without the church saying we affirm him as an elder, and in the vein of Hebrews 13, what we're saying is we will follow him as a leader. So, that's elder. Under the authority of Christ, they lead.

Then, they shepherd the body of Christ. That's what a pastor is; he's a shepherd, caring for the people of God. Paul said to these same Ephesian elders back in Acts 20:28, he said, "*Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.*" Powerful statement. When I think about God entrusting me as one of many pastors in this body...a body that He has bought with His own blood...there's huge responsibility there. Then, Paul went on right after that to say, "*I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you...*" and will try to destroy the flock. So, you guard the flock; that's what a shepherd does. That's one of the reasons why, this last year, we expanded the number of elders that we have at Brook Hills, because we have a lot of people to shepherd and care for. So, we expanded that number so that...

Here's how the shepherding plays out right now. Travis mentioned earlier...and we encourage...and I would encourage anybody who is not already in a small group, if you're a follower of Christ, member of this body, put it at the top of your priority list to get plugged in with a group of brothers and sisters that you can spur on toward Christ and share the gospel with, spread the gospel with, here and around the earth. So, get plugged in to a small group. Then, every one of our small groups is then under the care of a certain elder. So, elders have different small groups that they are praying for intentionally. They're available to those small group leaders to do anything pastorally that would be helpful to those. So, trying to provide shepherding care for every member in the body, that's what elders do. They shepherd the body of Christ.

Now, they lead and they shepherd by doing this third thing. They teach the Word of Christ. So, a shepherd's primary responsibility is not to pet the sheep but to feed the sheep. Okay? Not that care and compassion is not essential. It is. We just talked about that, but you look at 1 Timothy 3 and all these qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 are character qualifications except for one. There's one competency qualification, and it's the end of verse two when it says they must be...he must be "*able to teach.*" So, here's the deal. There are godly men throughout this church who will not serve as elders simply because they do not have the gift of teaching. Now, why would it be necessary for an elder to be able to teach the Word? Think about it.

Christ, the Head of the church. He leads the church. How? He leads the church through His Word. So, elders only have authority to lead, credibility to lead, ability to lead based on being tied to this Word. That's why Scripture can be so bold as it is in places like Hebrews 13:17 where the author of Hebrews says to church members, "*Obey your leaders and submit to them...*" That strikes us, particularly in our culture. Obey? Submit to their authority? What does that mean? Well, think about it. If leaders...if elders in the church are

only teaching the Word of Christ, then to obey them, to submit to their authority is to obey and submit to whom? Christ. Now, the key is, that's a big "if." Elders must be teaching the Word, and that's the key.

Okay, we've come up with all kinds of qualifications for leadership in the church today. You've got to be entrepreneurial. You've got to be engaging. You got to have a charismatic personality. You got to have wisdom, experience. Okay, I'm struggling as we go down that list, but the encouragement is, not one of those things is mentioned here. What's mentioned here is they must be faithful to communicate the Word of God. So, my authority to lead in this church as well as any other elder in this church is totally tied to speaking this Word. When it's this Word that is leading us, then we're good. When it's man's opinions, man's thoughts, man's ideas, man's innovations, man's creativity, we're going down the wrong path, and we don't need to be going down that path. This is how Christ leads, by elders who teach the Word of Christ.

So, they lead under the authority of Christ, they shepherd the body of Christ, they teach the Word of Christ and, as they teach, they model the character of Christ. Thus, we have this list that's character qualifications. We're not going to go through all of these because of time, but clearly the Christ-like character of an elder is non-negotiable.

So, you might write down Hebrews 13:7. When the author of Hebrews says there, "*Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God...*" So, think about your leaders who speak the Word to you. He says, "*Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.*" So, that's it. The church is intended to be able to look to elders, pastors, overseers, not as men who are perfect by any means. I am certainly not perfect, but to be able to look at elders, pastors, overseers and say, "I see the outcome of their way of life, and I want to imitate their faith."

Personally, at home, this is why when we go through the elder selection process as a church, we always involve the whole family in that picture. Not just at home, but many outsiders in the community. This is why we, before somebody becomes an elder here, we put their name in *The Birmingham News*, and we say, "We want to know if anybody in the city knows anything about this man that would cause question when it comes to him representing Christ in this church." Because this is important. Every elder is intended to show the character of Christ in this way.

Deacons: Leading servants in the church.

So, that's first category. Elders, servant leaders in the church; and then second category is starting in verse eight: deacons: leading servants in the church. The kind of position we see in Acts 6 and miscellaneous other parts of the New Testament, those who are serving alongside elders, supporting the ministry of the Word, caring for specific needs in the body, like the care of widows that we're going to talk about in just a second in the beginning of 1 Timothy 5. The qualifications here are all really character-based. They must exalt Christ with their lives, and their leadership must edify the church. Deacons are edifiers; they're unifiers in the church, assisting elders and caring for the body. So, you've got these two positions.

We cannot ever, even when it's difficult, when it's challenging...Brook Hills, we cannot ever compromise on biblical standards for leadership in the church. I've heard it said, "Well, that leader is so gifted or has so much skill or talent, shouldn't they be able to lead in the church even if they don't fulfill all of these qualifications?" The answer is no. God takes the holiness of His leaders in His body very seriously. Even as I say those words, I'm filled with a sense of fear because I know that I'm held accountable to those things.

So, that points us to see the mystery of godliness, and I'm impelled to plead for Him to produce these kind of qualities in me. So, pray for me. Pray for elders. Pray for deacons. Pray for leaders in the church along these lines. Small group leaders and leaders of various ministries in this church. Pray for these things in our leaders because, just as Paul says in the next few verses that we already talked about, these brothers and sisters had the responsibility of leading the household of God.

What We Do

Which then, okay, now transitions us into 1 Timothy 4, what we do. Now, when I say what we do, here, that we...I want you to think about it on a couple of different levels because when you come to chapter four, what you've got is specific instructions from Paul to Timothy and probably applicable to the other elders around Timothy, but it's really pretty specific. At the same time, what Paul is saying, certainly, in some senses, applies to the whole church. So, there's this sense in which, when I read 1 Timothy 4, I just almost feel like it coming right at me, as the young pastor of this church. At the same time, it's not just for me; this is, obviously, what we do together. So, let's think about what Paul says we do. Two levels, together.

We detect error in the church.

First, we detect error in the church. Let me remind you what Paul said at the beginning of chapter four: detect error in the church. *"Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared..."* So, here's the deal. At Ephesus, you had a group of people who were questioning true teaching in the church and spreading false teaching in the church, and Paul says, "You've got to watch out for these things. You have to watch out for demonic teachings, deceitful spirits and the teachings of demons." Don't be fooled. All false teaching is straight from hell. It's demonic in its source. These demonic teachings coming to life through deceptive teachers... *"liars whose consciences are seared."* Literally, men and women who have become so numb to truth that are spreading lies and saying it's truth. Verse seven says they're spreading *"irreverent, silly myths,"* superstitious beliefs.

Now, don't misunderstand here. These are not teachers who rise up in the church and say, "My conscience is seared. I have silliness to share that comes straight from the pit of hell." What makes it deceptive is these are the people that others are looking to, to hear truth from. It's masked, and it makes it especially dangerous. It's really dangerous when you put this together with what Paul said in Acts 20:30 when he was talking to these Ephesian elders. He said to them there, *"and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them."* Paul said that to elders. He said, "Some of you are going to rise up and speak twisted things."

So the implication is...what's happening here in 1 Timothy, some of these false teachers are pastors. They're elders in the church. A problem then and a problem now. Rampant then. Rampant now. There is unbiblical, bad theology all over the church. You say, "Well, who are you to say that what you've got is the right theology?" Well, test everything by the Word. We're going to talk about that. We're going to talk about that.

However, prosperity theology. The idea that when you trust in Jesus you have all the health and wealth you want. Sometimes trumpeted exactly like that, or sometimes embraced by

materialistic Christians in settings just like this. Universalistic theology: Jesus is our way, but He's not everybody's way. Cult theology: saying Jesus is a little different than maybe what you originally thought. Then, just packed with their theology about life and possessions and heaven and the afterlife. Ideas that come from best selling books that Christians are reading as opposed to the very Bible itself. Dangerous stuff. Be on guard.

This is not just in the world. Paul is talking about the church. Be on guard in the church. Some teachers will fall away from God's Word. Don't be surprised by them. Brothers and sisters, when you hear that a church member, when you hear that a church leader, even a pastor, has wandered away from Christ, has abandoned the faith, "Don't be surprised," the Bible says. It will happen. John said in 1 John 2:19, there will be some who we thought were Christians who will show that they were not Christians. So, when that happens, don't let it throw your faith into a total tailspin. The devil is active in trying to pull people away from truth in the church, trying to lead them to become false teachers. So, don't be surprised by them.

At the same time, we should always be saddened by them, and we should fight to keep more people from being pulled away. That's why Paul said in 1 Timothy 1, "We're in a war, and we wage good warfare with this Word." Detect error in the church. You say, "Well, how do you know? Okay, how do you know when it's truth and falsehood?"

That leads to the substance of what these false teachers, liars were teaching at Ephesus. Now, Paul's obviously addressing some specific teaching here, but I do think that, even though it might not be the exact same specifics in our day that are going on here in 1 Timothy 4, there's a root here. You think about it. Paul's addressing two things here. He's talking about teachers who were denying the goodness of God, and they were distorting the Word of God. Now, I want you to put these two together with me for a second and think about...

Let's go back, all the way to Genesis 3. We've studied that passage before...the entrance of sin into the world. Remember when the serpent tempted Eve, and what the serpent did when he mentioned the title...name of God...he used the name of God that intentionally highlighted God's power, God's greatness and minimized God's goodness and God's love. The whole tone and tenor is clearly God doesn't know what is best for you. God doesn't desire what is best for you. You know what is better for you than God. Denying the goodness of God. Then, what was the serpent's first question? "Did God really say?" That question is alive and well today.

"Did God really say that? I mean, surely He didn't say this, or surely He didn't say that, or surely He didn't mean this, or surely..." Eve should have been suspicious when she heard that question. She should have been suspicious when a snake started talking to her, but beyond that, she should have been suspicious when the words were, "Did God really say?" Distorting God's Word. So, you fast-forward...that's Genesis 3.

You fast forward to 1 Timothy 4. You've got the same thing. You've got false teachers who were taking good things from a good God like marriage and eating certain foods, and saying we cannot do these things. We can't marry. Forbidding marriage. Forbidding eating certain foods. Denying the goodness of God and distorting the Word of God. Obviously, saying that God has said things when He has not said those things. So, "Watch out," Paul says. Then, watch out now when people begin to deny the very character of God that we see revealed in Scripture, and people begin to distort the Word of God, adding to it, taking away from the Word.

We declare truth in the church.

So, we detect error in the church, and as we do that, we go on the offensive and declare truth to the church. "*Put these things before the brothers,*" verse six says. Paul says, "Put truth before them. Let truth permeate, saturate the church. Combat falsehood by..."

Now, what we see is Paul kind of reiterates three main ideas in different ways in this last part of chapter four. He says, "Teach truth with authority. First and foremost," Paul says, "command; teach these things." Verse six says, "...*you put these things before the brothers...being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine...*" It says, down in verse 13, "...*devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching...*" Verse 16, "*Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching.*" It's what we've already seen in 1 Timothy.

Even when he says, "*Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in...*" what? What's the first thing? In speech: what comes from your mouth. Let this Word sound from your lips. Speak the Word of God. Read the Bible, explain the Bible, exhort from the Bible, teach the Bible. In the process, you will demonstrate your submission to the authority of Scripture and will thus lead the church rightly by declaring truth with authority in the church. So, teach it with authority. Then, live it out with purity. Not just your doctrine but your life. "Keep a close watch on yourself," Paul says. Not just your speech but your conduct, your love, your faith, your purity.

So, Robert Murray M'Cheyne, incredible pastor, used mightily by God in Scotland in the early 1800's. He died when he was only 30, and it was written on his gravestone:

Died in the 30th year of his age, in the seventh year of his ministry,
Walking closely with God, an example for the believers in word,
In conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.
He ceased not day and night to labor and watch for souls.

Oh, that that would be the description...and M'Cheyne once said...as a pastor, he said, "My people's greatest need is my personal holiness." There's truth there that we desperately need to hear and apply.

So, I've been studying for *Secret Church: Family, Marriage, Sex and the Gospel*, and in the process, have just been brought to my knees. Considering sexual immorality, not just in the world, although that is obviously just deafening, but sexual immorality in the church. So, I came across some credible research. I say credible...I mean, this is *Focus on the Family* and some others. This isn't just...I found a site on *Wikipedia*. I'm not saying *Wikipedia* is bad, but this is credible, okay? That's what I'm saying. This...so, let me just share this with you: As many as 50% of pastors' marriages today will end in divorce. Almost 40% of pastors admit that they have had an extra-marital affair since the beginning of their ministry. Over 50% of pastors...so the majority of pastors...say they have visited pornography sites on the internet in the last year. Approximately one third of them have done so in the last month.

That's what I mean...just brought me to my knees. I shared this with Heather, and we both were just brought to our knees together. I shared these stats with you just trembling. I want you to know, by God's grace, I don't visit pornography sites and have never visited them as your pastor. By God's grace, I love my wife and could not even imagine, do not imagine, anything but absolute faithfulness to her, but these statistics scream out to me, "Watch your life closely!" They cause me to scream out to every elder in this church, "Watch your life closely!" Every member of this church, "Take heed lest you fall."

Watch your life and your doctrine. Teach the Word with authority and live it with purity and train for eternity. So, here's the key verses here, verses seven and eight: *"Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come."* So, most believe that the Ephesians spent a good bit of time, money, training athletes for a variety of different festivals. It was a craze, so to speak. Paul says, "That kind of training is not bad. At the same time, it's not best." So, this is key. Hear this: physical training is valuable. We need to care for our bodies. Most of us, including myself, need to do this more and better. They are temples...our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. We need to eat well. We need to exercise well, and at the same time, let that pale in comparison to the training we do in godliness.

So, pour more time and more energy and more resources into training in prayer and the Word and worship and fasting and sharing the gospel. Train there. Train much more there. Your body will last for a few years. The most healthy body in this room is not guaranteed to make it through this night, but godliness will last forever and ever and ever and ever.

So, invest there. Time, money, energy, resources...there. Train for godliness. Paul says, "Work out your own salvation progressively and persistently." This is training. He says, "Progress in this..." end of verse 15. Verse 16, "Persist in this, and you will save yourself," simply meaning, you will see your salvation come to completion as you are transformed more and more and more into the image of Christ. As you do this, work out your own salvation and work hard for others' salvation, locally and globally. "You will save both yourself," Paul says, "and your hearers."

What a statement! Now, obviously Paul's not saying that we, in and of ourselves, save people. Obviously, it's clear all over the New Testament and Paul's writings in the New Testament, that Christ alone saves people, but how does He save? He brings salvation to people through the church, through Christians, through leaders in the church. So, the healthier we are as followers of Christ, as leaders in the church, the healthier the church is, the more effective we will be in spreading the gospel. This is why we do what we do. Why do we guard the truth? We guard the truth in the church because people will be saved by this truth. If we distort it, it doesn't save; it damns.

Some hold on to truth and hold it fast and don't compromise at all because people's lives are at stake for eternity, based on hearing truth from the church. Live with purity so that people see there's something different that Christ does in our hearts and our bodies and our minds. So, they see that Christ in you changes everything. So, we do what we do in the church for the spread of the gospel in the world. We'll get back to that. Okay.

The Way We Live

We love each other like we are a family.

So, last kind of major section...the way we live in the church. I'm going to try to go quickly here, okay. We love each other like we are family. Opening verses of chapter five, Paul says to Timothy, *"Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity."* What great language! Paul says, "Timothy, when you talk to an older man, or an older woman in the church, talk to him, with him, with the respect due an elder and with the affection that you would have for your parents. When you talk to a younger brother, don't talk down to him. When you talk to a younger man, talk to him as a brother, and when you talk to a

younger woman, talk to her with purity in a way that guards her purity and your purity." These are...this is good counsel. Good commands for family living, and that's what we are. That's why we talk about faith family...church family...around here. We relate to one another as family.

This is just a wonderful reality, even in this room, to look around each other and see each other this way. Like, we're not just people who are sitting in seats on Sunday night, next to each other. We're brothers and sisters. Spiritual mothers and fathers. Resist, brothers and sisters, resist the temptation to minimize the wonder of what we are as a church. This is where, oh, just the way we cheapen...resist the temptation to hop from one church to the next. What are we saying to the world? "You get tired of this family? Move on to another family. You get tired of that family? You got a little preference here you don't like, well move on to another family." What are we showing to the world? That we love one another like we're a family because we are a family, and we care for those who have no family.

We care for those who have no family.

So, in verse three, Paul begins to talk about widows. This is one of these texts that I mentioned, I've been looking forward to getting into, and in fact, it's one of the reasons why I wanted us to study 1 Timothy this fall. Because, here's the deal: as a faith family, we've put a lot of focus on caring for orphans in our midst, in our city, in our community and in the world. By God's grace, an adoptive culture just permeates this body and there are kids from all over the world in this church. There are kids all over our county who are being cared for right now because of what we've been doing in foster care. That is spreading in the city in ways that we can talk about later. So, I praise God for all of that, and we are commanded to do that.

At the same time, we've also been commanded to care for widows, to look after widows. So, James 1:27, the verse that really catapulted us, as we were studying James, into even deeper orphan care in this church, what does it say? "*Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction...*" I've known, and it's been in the back of my mind, "Okay, we're caring for orphans, but what are we doing for widows?" The reality is, we're doing some things. There are some things relationally and organically that are going on. There are a couple of ministries that members of this church have begun, specifically, to care for widows that are great, but at the same time, we have not as a church said, "How are we intentionally going to make sure widows are looked after and taken care of in this body?" Because God, yes, indeed, He is the Father to the fatherless, but He is also the Defender of the widow. He says...this is a command..."*Honor widows who are truly widows.*" When he says "honor" there, that word is not just kind of have respect for. This word is look after, support.

So, what I want us to do is, I want us to think about what this passage that we read earlier means for us in this room. This is not just, "Okay, this is just for widows who are here tonight." This is for the church pertaining to widows, and this is for all of us.

It's challenging, this text, on so many different levels, because along one level it's just a deeply emotional text for widows, and I would include widowers. This is, obviously, a text that's dealing with women who don't have a means of support, but I know that there are brothers and sisters across this room who have walked through the difficulty of losing a spouse. So, even just specifically to focus on widows, because that's where the text ends, I know that there are precious women in this church...some younger, some older...who have walked through the loss of a spouse in a way that I don't even begin to presume to know how tender this is. I have wept with you; I have wept for you; I have preached at your husbands' funerals and know this is heavy. So, there's challenge there.

Then, at the same time, even pastorally, my mind is also drawn to something that was probably not as prevalent in 1 Timothy 5, but in our day. So, there are young women and older women across our faith family who have lost a husband due to death, and there are other women who have been abandoned by husbands due to divorce and are living a husbandless life, without support from a husband. So, functionally, basically living in the same way. So, Paul is not addressing that in particular. You've got heavy emotions here.

There are some significant differences between first century Ephesus and 21st^t century Birmingham. Just the reality that we have disability insurance, life insurance, 401k's, assisted living centers, nursing homes that are available to help with elderly and, specifically, with widows. Obviously, all of these things are very good things. At the same time, if we're not careful, these safety nets can quickly become something we begin to abdicate our responsibility to care for widows in the church to, in unhealthy ways. So, we need to be careful.

Then, when we come to this text, Paul is addressing some specific circumstances. Like, we know from 2 Timothy 3, 1 Timothy 2, that there are some women, most likely younger widows, who were helping spread these false teachings, who were gossips and busy bodies. So, Paul is addressing some specific things here that may not be as poignant like right here as The Church at Brook Hills. So, all that to say, with these challenges, what I want to do is I just want to walk, very plainly, through this text. What is Paul saying? What is the Bible saying here? Then, I want us to think about what that means for us.

So, what is God saying here? First, the Bible is teaching us to honor destitute widows through support. Paul says in verse three, "*Honor widows who are truly widows.*" As soon as we read that, we realize there are qualifiers here. There are truly widows and not truly widows. The difference here is not whether or not a woman's husband has passed away. The difference is family. He says in verse four, "*But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God. She who is truly a widow, left all alone...*" So, that's who Paul's talking about here: a widow who is all alone without family. So, first qualifier: they must be devoid of relatives.

If a widow has relatives, those relatives should support their parents and their grandparents. A widow's children and grandchildren have that primary responsibility. So here's...don't miss this clear, biblical mandate to any Christian in this room who has aging parents: support your parents and your grandparents. It's a biblical mandate. This pleases God, verse four says. This demonstrates your faith.

Verse eight says, "*But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*" Caring for aging parents is a fundamental display of Christ's love in you and through you. To not do so is to deny your faith in Christ. The Bible is saying here, it is impossible for a Christian to not care for members of their own household. If you're not caring for your own household, there's question about whether or not Christ is even in you. This demonstrates your faith, and this relieves the church.

This is key. The church is intended...when it comes to widows here...the church is intended to be second line of defense. Family is first line of defense. Family takes precedent here whenever possible. So, in order for widows to be supported like Paul is talking about in church, he says they must be devoid of relatives.

Second, they must be dependent on God. "...*Has set her hope on God...*" verse five. They must be devoted to prayer. So, she "*continues in supplications and prayers night and day...*" verse five. Not self indulgent, but Christ-centered. The picture here...you just step back...it's wonderful. The image of Christian widows with a unique devotion to prayer, even unique ministry in prayer. You just can't help but think about Anna in Luke 2:36-37 who "*...was advanced in years...as a widow...She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day.*"

I read a quote from Susan Hunt. It just seems so applicable here. She said,

"It seems to me that widows have entered into a dimension of dependence on God that prepares them for the ministry of intercessory prayer. The widow's mite was recognized and commended by Jesus because she, out of her poverty, put in everything, all she had to live on (Mark 12:44). Perhaps the widow's mite is most mighty when these women band together as helper/defenders in intercessory prayer. Older women, who do not have the daily responsibilities of jobs, are a powerful source for intercessory prayer."

That's the picture here. The primary reference here is to older widows who don't have the responsibility of raising children anymore, or doing some of the things that younger women have responsibilities for. They're freed up with greater capacity to spend in prayer.

So, at this point, I want to just pause and pastorally call older widows in particular, or widows who are in that kind of situation who have...who don't have the responsibilities of raising children, working a job right now. I want to call the church to be a part of supporting widows in that way, and then I want to call these godly women to devote yourselves to the ministry, the unique ministry of prayer, that God has given you in a situation that, obviously, you would not have necessarily brought upon yourself, but that He has given to you to be maximized for His glory. So, support older widows in this way.

Then, enlist older widows for service. You get to verse nine, and Paul talks about widows being enrolled. There's a little debate about what they're being enrolled in. Some think that maybe this is enrolling widows in the kind of support that he's talking about in the first part of the chapter, but then the majority of you, which is kind of where I would come down, sees this enrolling as, basically, Paul talking about a specific designation of a group of widows who are serving in the church. He basically begins to use the kind of language that he's used in 1 Timothy 3 to talk about, in a sense, qualifications for a special group of older widows who have the capacity to serve in unique ways in the church. So, not just in prayer but in service in the church.

He says, okay, they must be mature women. He's talking about older women here, he says, "*not less than sixty years of age.*" Probably not a hard and fast age rule, but more likely a reference to women who are beyond the ability to support and work themselves; women who may be less likely to remarry, which we're going to talk about in a second. So, the Bible says that they must be mature women; have been faithful wives; literally, a one-man woman, devoted to her husband. They must care for children. Obviously, not meaning that a barren widow would be disqualified here in this text, but that God has uniquely gifted women when it comes to care for children that we want...that a woman would have maximized...would want to maximize. They must be a hospitable hosts..."*has shown hospitality.*" They must be humble servants..."*has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted.*" They must be unselfish..."*devoted herself to every good work.*" They must be kind, devoted to good works.

So, Paul's saying there's a unique and wonderful window of opportunity for widows like this to serve in the church. So, he's calling them to maximize their time on earth through service in the church while the church supports them as they do that.

Now, in verse eleven Paul begins to talk about younger widows. This is the third thing he says. He says, "Encourage younger widows to marry." Now, this is what we need to remember that Paul is addressing specific circumstances here. We know that, because you go over to 1 Corinthians 7, and he says to single women there, and men, widows, "Stay single." So, you remember that here at Ephesus, you've got false teaching that's saying, "Marriage is bad. God forbids marriage." You've got younger widows who are not marrying because of this false teaching and, as a result, are wandering from the faith, from truth. So, Paul says, "It's good for them; I want to encourage them to marry." So, this is not, in a sense, a command...every younger widow...whatever that means...younger widows must remarry. Instead, it's a clear command to, well, two things: first, they must avoid laziness, and they must abhor gossip. Idleness, gossips, busy bodies is a problem here at Ephesus that Paul's addressing. He says, "You've got to avoid this."

However, beyond that...okay. You think through...all right, what does that mean, though? What does that mean for us in this room? What does this mean for younger widows in this room? I think what we're seeing here in 1 Timothy 5, is that there is...there are differences between older widows and younger widows. Younger widows, especially, who have...who still have responsibilities to raise children or maybe are still working to provide for themselves in ways that older widows may not. Younger widows may be more likely to remarry than older widows, and that's why Paul says here, he says, "Don't include younger widows in this class of...this designation of widows for service, because the reality is, the likelihood is, they would remarry." It's good.

I know that there are some younger widows who wonder, "Is it okay for me to remarry?" I want you to hear that the Bible's not saying, "Okay, you're in sin if you don't." At the same time, the Bible is saying it's okay. The Bible is saying it's good to remarry. It's good to devote yourself to a husband in another marriage. It's good to raise your kids in another marriage, if the Lord leads you to that, absolutely that's good, but the overall picture is clear. Regardless of younger or older, church for widows who are devoid of relatives, trusting and hoping in God and leaning on Him, we have a responsibility to provide for them, to care for them. At the same time, Paul's calling younger widows, older widows alike, to maximize the opportunities they have in prayer and service in the church for the spread of the gospel in the world.

So, here's the deal. Up until now, you could go to our website, and you could click on a link for care for children. You could find all these ways you get connected with orphan ministry, adoption ministry, foster care, this or that. So, as of today, we now have the same thing on there for caring for widows. So, I mentioned earlier. Relationally, organically, this is happening all kinds of ways all across the church right now, which is great, which...just continue. At the same time, we want to make sure that we are reflecting the character of God here. So, if there are widows in our faith family who need support, need ministry in some way, then there's a place for you to connect there.

There's also a place for small groups. So, small group leaders, there's a place for you and your small group. If you would say, "Okay, in obedience to this, we believe the Lord's leading us to, specifically, do this...care for widows in certain ways." There's a place for you to connect, and the whole goal is to kind of facilitate those connections. In addition to what's already going on relationally and organically in different ways, but we want to be intentional. As a church, we have a responsibility to show that God is the Defender of the

widow, and we want to demonstrate His character clearly. That's how we live. Yes, the Father to the fatherless and the Defender of the widow. We want everyone, younger or older alike, in this body to know the care and the love and the mercy of God.

Why We Exist

So, all right. We have made it to the end. Why we exist. This is where I...go back with me to 1 Timothy 4:10, and this is where we'll close. We kind of glossed over this verse. We didn't really hit on it, and I think it's one of the key verses in the whole book. So, I wanted us to bring it back to it. 1 Timothy 4:10 says, *"For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe."* Now, when it says *"especially of those who believe"* ...and we'll see this next week because the language is the same in 1 Timothy 5:17...but it's basically Paul saying that is, those who believe. So, He's the Savior of all the world, that is, those who believe. He's the Savior of all in the world who believe.

To show what it means to have God as our Father.

So, this is why we exist. So, bring it all together, everything we've talked about. Church at Brook Hills...why we exist. We exist to show what it means to have God as our Father. As the church, we are a family. We are the household of God, and that affects the way we lead; that affects what we do; that affects the way we live. This is so significant...that God would sink it deep within our minds and our hearts that when we gather together as the church, this is not just cultural routine or monotonous religion. This is supernatural reality. Ephesians 3:10 says, *"...through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places."* Like, he is saying to angels and demons alike, "Look at my character, wisdom, might on display in my church." We are the inhabitants of God's presence, the expression of God's household, the guardians of His Word. This is significant stuff that we're a part of, and we show...what does it mean to have God as our Father? Look at the church, and you'll see a people who have God as our Father...as their Father. How they relate to one another. How they love one another. How they live with one another. How they lead one another.

To say to the world that God is the Savior.

At the same time, we exist, as we do that, to say to the world that God is the Savior. We toil, and we strive. We work in the church. We behave as the household of God because we want the world to know that the living God is the Savior of all people. So, that means today, church, we're a family on a mission to every nation. That's what church is...family on mission. 1 Timothy 4:10. You couple it with 1 Timothy 2:4. Two of the greatest mission verses in all of what Paul writes in the New Testament because in those verses, we realize that God desires His family, His household, to include all kinds of people. Every nation, tribe, tongue and people. So, there are 11,000+ people groups in the world. God wants all of them in His family. He wants all of them.

There are thousands and thousands of those groups of people, those types of people across the world who have yet to hear the gospel from the church, and they have yet to see the gospel in the church. There are thousands of people groups, spanning over a billion people, who have never even seen what the family of God looks like in a church, and they need to see it. We want them to see it. Together elders, deacons, brothers, sisters, younger widows, older widows, we exist because we want them to see the mystery of godliness. Christ, the majesty of God. The glory of Christ in the church. We want them to see it. This is what we live for. This is what we die for. We want them to see His glory more than we want our own

lives. We're family on a mission. Confident. We've put our hope in the fact, that one day we will be a family with members from every nation. One day, together with all 11,000 of those people groups, with the Baloch and Hui and the Arundo and the thousands and thousands and thousands of other types of people, we will gather around the throne of God our Father and Christ our King, and we will declare His glory together as one family.

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