

Family of God

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Preacher: Jason Webb

[0 : 00] And turn in your Bibles to Titus chapter 1. And we'll read verses 5 through 9.

! And appoint elders in every town as I directed you.

An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.

Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless, not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain.

Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined.

[1 : 16] He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

Let's hear the word preached. Well, we are in the book of Titus, and Paul is teaching Titus what the church needs to look like.

And so we are learning something of the blueprint of what we are to look like. But, you know, churches are different than buildings.

There's nothing, a blueprint is a very straightforward two-by-fours and rafters and concrete. But there's more to a church than just those sort of standard things.

It's about people, and there's a certain tone that a church needs to have. Now, we all know how important our tone of voice can be.

[2 : 22] So, if you're a parent, I'm sure you've said, don't use that tone with me, young lady or young man, or it's not what you said, it's how you said it.

Tone is supremely important in our own personal relationships, in our own personal conversations. If you don't care about tone, you don't care about people, because so much of the meaning and so much of the feeling that we're communicating all the time is about the tone.

And tone is also important in the church. It's not just what we believe, the nuts and bolts, the statements of truth. It's not just our confessional faithfulness.

It's how we hold those truths. It's how we present them. Tone is the atmosphere of a church.

So, there can be an atmosphere of grace and kindness and big-heartedness and a pastoral tone. Or it can be harsh.

[3 : 28] It can be impatient. It can be clinical. It can just take people, and you don't care how they're feeling about something, as long as they are saying the right thing or doing the right thing.

So, just to put it very plainly, two churches could hold to the 1689 Confession of Faith, the same confession that we have, and they can hold it in very different ways, with two different tones.

So, two pastors can preach the same content, as it were, and they can preach it very differently, with two different tones. One can inspire joy and courage and hope, and another one will inspire just the opposite, with fear and doubt and discouragement.

So, tone. That's what we're going to be talking about this evening. And tone comes from the top.

Tone comes from the leadership, from the pastors, and then it goes down.

Harshness in the pulpit, where you're berating people, or you spend 90% of your time on convicting and convincing of sin, and then just a little bit on the good news.

[4 : 41] That kind of overbalance, imbalance. Harshness in the pulpit. Harshness in our personal dealings with people. So, if I, as a pastor, am sitting with you, and I have a harsh tone of voice, a demanding, a ridiculing sort of tone of voice, that's going to spread through the whole congregation.

And the same goes for gentleness and kindness. Graciousness. It works the same way. Tone starts at the top.

And I think that's why I thank God for Pastor Bob. He was a gentle, gracious man. One reason we are the way we are is because he had a wonderful tone.

He had a wonderful graciousness to him. He was a peacemaker who sowed in peace and raised a harvest of righteousness. He had that wisdom that I, two weeks ago, asked you to pray for us.

That peace-loving, considerate, submissive kind of wisdom that James talks about. And Pastor John and I are trying to hold on to the truth in the same way, with that same heart.

[5 : 54] And we want to pass that, not only the content of the faith, but the tone down to the next generation, to the next ministers who serve here.

And if they have the confession and they miss the tone, Grace Fellowship Church, as we know it, will be dead. Because it's a combination of both of those things.

And so this just isn't a minor thing. This isn't a central thing. And again, where does tone come from? It comes from the top, from the leadership. And how is that tone born in a leader?

Well, in verse 7, we kind of get a key, a way of looking at the whole church, at the pastor, at the man. And if we understand just this little verse here in verse 7, we're going to understand where that tone comes from.

It comes from a leader understanding who the church is, or what the church is, and who he is. So what the church is and who he is. And that's what you see in Titus 1.7.

[7 : 02] So last time we were in Titus, we looked at pastors as elders. And we saw that elders were the God-given men with wisdom, and they were to lead the church wisely.

And today, we see in verse 7, elders are overseers. They're over God's household, his family. And so elders are stewards of God's family.

So this word overseers is the Greek word oikonomos, and it's where we get our word economics, as in home economics. Before I ever met the economics of the country, it was talking about managing a household.

How do you deal with the finances? How do you deal with the food? How do you manage a household, a family? The equivalent word is used in the Old Testament in the book of Jeremiah. Charlie was just talking about Jeremiah. For the palace chamberlain. So he wasn't the king, but he was in charge of the palace. He was in charge of the princes.

[8 : 10] He was in charge of the guards. He was to make sure that the cooks and the maids and the guards and everyone else and the whole household, the children in the household were where they were supposed to be, were doing what they were supposed to do.

He was in charge of managing the household. So the king could worry about other things because this palace chamberlain had the responsibility of his family.

It's a family word. It's a household word. And so what does that have to do with tone? Well, it has everything to do with tone. It has everything to do with tone.

So where does a gracious, gentle kind of spirit come from? A gentle spirit, a kind way of doing business come from, it comes from getting into our bones and acting out this reality that we are a family.

We are the family of God. We are the family of God. And that's our first point. If we're going to understand this tone, if we're going to live out the life of the church the way it was supposed to be, we have to understand who we are.

[9 : 29] We're the family of God. We are not a corporation. The church is not a business. The church is not a volunteer organization.

We have 5013C status, but we are not a volunteer organization. The church is a family. Paul uses this word of the house of God, the household, the family of God a lot in his pastoral epistles.

So when Paul is writing to Timothy, when he's writing to Titus, he uses this word a lot because he's trying to convey to these young ministers the mentality, the spirit of how this church thing is supposed to happen.

And so 1 Timothy 3.15, he calls the church the household of God, the church of the living God, and the pillar and the foundation of the truth. So Titus, Timothy, this is God's household.

This is God's family that we're dealing with. And you have to see the church is that. We're a family. We aren't a corporation. We aren't in a legal relationship.

[10 : 43] And so you have a business. You're in business. You own a business. And as a business, you have relationships with other businesses.

You as a business might have a relationship with advertisers. You have a relationship with vendors. You might have a relationship with your utility companies, your internet providers. You have these relationships. And what is the basis of those relationships? Well, it's a legal relationship. It's purely legal.

These relationships are established by contract. I'm going to do this and in return, you are going to do this for me. I'm going to provide this. You're going to pay this.

We're going to do this for you. You're going to do this for us. And if you don't do this, if you don't provide us with the internet, if you don't provide us with the materials that we need at the price that we said, then you're breaking contract and the relationship is going to be over.

[11 : 47] It's all quid pro quo. It's all this for that. You give me something, I give you something. And we can have a relationship as a business as long as we're both living up to our side of the deal, of the contract.

It's not law, or it's not love, it's law. And there's a place for that. But in the church, we aren't in a legal relationship.

We are a family. And there are, there are no contracts here. Now there's love-backed promises, isn't there?

We make promises to each other. There's love-backed commitments to each other. But there's, there's no simply cutting things off if someone doesn't live up to the terms of the deal.

We are in this together. It's not just a legal relationship. And when, when we understand that we are a family, you know what that does?

[12 : 58] That does something extremely important. It dries up that consumer mindset, that quid pro quo, that, that legal mindset.

And what I mean by that is, if I'm only going to church because of what you can give me, as soon as you don't give me what I expect and what I thought the deal was, I'm, I'm out of here.

And you see that in a lot of, a lot of churches. You, you see people going from church to church to church to church, not because there's some great fault with the church, but because people have come into that with this, with this expectation that as long as you're doing this for me, I'll be here. But as soon as the going gets rough, I'm out of here. But that's, that's not how families work. That's not how families work, does it? It's that kind of purely, merely legal relationship that kills churches, that kills the tone.

When, when that kind of just legal, quid pro quo, this for that kind of relationship, that's where you see just droves and droves of people fighting, people complaining, people leaving all the time over any little thing.

[14 : 15] It doesn't go their way. That's where you see pastors demanding and demanding and demanding because they're looking at this church as, as their little kingdom and dominion and so they're like Pharaoh and all they want is more and more bricks.

those churches haven't come to terms with this reality that we are a family. That needs to be the analogy that controls our expectations, that controls how we think about the church.

It's not legal, but it's not casual either. So, a legal relationship is where two people are bound together by this contract, by law, law.

And, but a casual relationship is sort of on the opposite end of the spectrum. And this is what I mean by casual. So, you're in your first grade class.

My first grade teacher was Mrs. Harley. And so, you're sitting in Mrs. Harley's class and you just happen to be seated next to Joe or you happen to be seated next to Kim. And so, for your first grade, your Joe and Kim are your best friends.

[15 : 25] Right? And you're going to be lifelong friends, your best friends forever. And then, second grade comes and you're in Mrs. Johnson's class and Joe and Kim are in a different class. And now, you're not friends anymore.

That's what I'm talking about. A casual friendship where it just happens. You're walking in a path for a certain amount of time, but you don't have any real bound, you're not bound together.

So, casual friendships, it's not just a childhood thing. It's a grown-up thing. We all have relationships with people that, when the circumstances change, those relationships are going to be over.

So, when I was at NISCO here in Bremen, I worked with a, I had a friend, his name was Dustin, and I really liked working with Dustin. We loved working to each other, with each other.

We talked all the time. And now, 10 or 11 years later, I honestly cannot remember his last name. I'm bad with names, that's one thing. But, two, I haven't really talked to him.

[16:29] Why? I mean, we were friends, but it was just a casual relationship. Casual. You come and go as you please. You come and go as sort of like, eh, the circumstances are right.

Is family like that? Is your family like that? Family isn't like that. It's like the same people are there at Christmas, at the Fourth of July party, every year.

You get married, and they're there. You move away, and they're still family. You get a new job. You lose your job.

You move here, there, wherever, and they're there, still family. Family is not casual, is it? Family is a group that's bound by blood, by love, and that's the church.

We are bound together with these bands of love. We're bought with the same blood, the same spirit, as in each one of God's children, the same life.

[17:39] So we have one father, one spirit, one Lord, one sacrifice. In other words, there ain't no easy just getting out of this. We're bound together.

It's not come and go. It's the shared commitment to each other. I'm going to be here. Your good day, your bad day, I'm going to be here. We're going to live together.

We're going to stick together. My own personal life, just as an opposite illustration of this, is I have sworn off Applebee's.

I will not go to that restaurant. I won't go to Wendy's either. Nothing against them. If you love them, that's fine with me. I don't care. If you pay, I might go.

But that's the only way. I just got so tired of eating microwave food and paying \$40 at Applebee's. I'm just like, I'm done.

[18:38] I can't take this anymore. And Wendy's would just not stop putting mayonnaise on my hamburgers no matter how many times I asked them not to. So I'm done. I really am.

I'm done. I haven't gone there in a decade at least. I've had too many bad experiences. But you know where I've had more bad experiences than all of those places?

And you have too? And my family? And your family? Heaven, isn't that true? We've had more fights and disagreements and uncomfortableness, and it's nothing against our families.

But you know what I'm saying. We have plenty of bad experiences with our family, but do we swear them off like I've sworn off Wendy's? Just because they keep putting mayonnaise on my hamburger?

No. We stick together. We're still together. And that is what Paul is saying. That's the church. We suffer together.

[19:39] We work together. We celebrate together. We weep with those who weep. We rejoice with those who rejoice. We worship together. We aren't casual friends.

God is our Father. Jesus is our brother. And we are brothers and sisters. And it's that reality.

It's that truth when it's been permeated through us that creates this kind of tone of gentleness and kindness and grace and patience.

It's one of the places with commitment, with kindness. And so, that's the first point. Where does that tone come from? It comes from this reality that we're a family.

Now, look at, and here's secondly, very briefly, this family relationship should guide us how we treat each other. And it should guide how pastors treat the flock.

[20:40] So, take your, you have your Bibles, turn back just a few pages to 1 Timothy chapter 5. It should be two or three pages to your left. 1 Timothy chapter 5 and verse 1 and 2.

And so, remember the second point is here, this family relationship should guide us, should show us on how we should treat each other. And especially how pastors, in this case, how pastors should treat the members of the church.

this family, this way of thinking about church as family is not just like a nice theory that has no practical relevance. It has on the ground, boots on the ground relevance.

So, 1 Timothy 5, 1 and 2, do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters with absolute purity.

So, Timothy is going to have different personal dealings with all kinds of people in the church. With old men, older women, younger women, younger men, and he's going to have these personal dealings and the way, how is he supposed to, how is he supposed to go into those relationships?

[22 : 05] How is he supposed to think about them? It's this family mindset that should say, hey, how should I treat this man? I should treat him as a father. So, I'm going to have a personal dealings with this older man.

I'm going to have to rebuke him or exhort him. And so, there I am. How do I do this? That's a hard thing. Well, how do you treat him? You treat him like family.

You treat him like a father. You wouldn't disrespect your father with some sort of harsh, condemning, disrespectful, giving them this harsh tongue lashing.

If you have to rebuke your father, don't you go into that with sort of a, I really don't want to do this. This is going to be hard. I need to be careful. I need to speak respectfully.

I need to have this even gentle timidness should fill you. And, Timothy, that's how you treat the older men. As fathers.

[23 : 05] When you have to have dealings with them. When you maybe have to say something hard. It's this idea that they're like your father, Timothy. Treat them like that. Older women or younger men as brothers.

So as equals. As lifelong companions. So if you have a brother, you know what he's talking about. I don't have a brother so I don't have first hand experience but if you have a brother, how do you treat your brother?

How do you live with him? How do you think about him? You treat him like that. Older women as mothers. So the older women in this church, and so we're talking not the sort of the moms but the next generation above that, the older women in the church should have a hundred loving sons and daughters.

Treating them with respect. Treating them with care. Looking after them because they're thinking this woman is like my mother. She's a mother to me. And younger women.

Paul's basic idea is here you wouldn't lust after your sister. You wouldn't have sexually immoral thoughts about your sister. Don't have it about your sister at church.

[24 : 18] Protect them, guard them, treat them with absolute purity. You're a family. Act like it. It should affect how you think.

It should act how you speak. It should act how you feel. Or it should affect how you think and feel. And so there aren't strangers here.

There aren't just mere church members. There aren't cogs in the wheel to accomplish something. They're brothers. They're sisters. They're moms and dads.

So this is your family. That's the first point. And the second point is simply we need to act like it. We need to treat each other like it.

Now, we're coming to the third point, and this is the last point. And again, remember, where does that tone come from that we were talking about in the beginning that's so important?

[25 : 18] It's not just like we believe these truths, and it's just clinical and harsh. Where does that graciousness loving family tone come from? It comes from the top, and it comes from pastors seeing themselves, in Paul's words, as an overseer, as a steward, as a household manager of the family of God.

And now, I just want to take you through five truths that should be in a pastor's mind, and in his heart, and then in the church, as they think about their pastor, that's going to affect how we feel and how we think in the tone of this whole place.

So five truths. The first is pastors are not the owners of the house. Overseers, stewards, the palace chamberlain, did not own the palace. It wasn't his personal property.

Pastors get into huge problems and fall into huge temptations when they look at their church and the people in there and look and think, I own this. This is mine. They become like Nebuchadnezzar. Look at what I've done. Look at this great kingdom that I have built. The city that I have built for my own glory. The pastors are not the owners of the church. Now, we have this kind of way of talking about this is Pastor So-and-So's church, Pastor someone else, but this is not Pastor John's church.

[26 : 47] It's not my church. This is God's family. There's only one father. There's only one owner, and it's God himself. There's only one Lord.

It's the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no Pope. That just means there's no big father, and there's no lesser popes. There's no lesser fathers. There's one father. And pastors have to remember that. We aren't the owner. God is the paterfamilias. He's the head of the household. He is. And we're his servants.

And pastors and I, I'm going to get into all sorts of problems when I think of the church as mine. It's not mine. It's not for me. It's not a reflection of my glory.

It's not mine to decide what happens, not ultimately. It's not my agenda. It's not my glory. It's not for my ease. It's not for anything. He's the owner.

[27 : 51] God is the owner. God is the father. We're the servants. The pastors are the servants in the household. Number two, we are not lords either.

This relates to it. We aren't lords either. So Jesus talking in Matthew, the Gentiles lord it over them, not so with you.

So what does leadership look like in the world? So much of the time it looks like lording it over people. The Gentiles lord it over them, not so with you.

Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave. you want to be first, the first place is the lowest place.

The first place is the person who is serving the most people. So we are not lords. Pastors are not lords. And if we go at this work like we are lords, telling people what to do, expecting them to do it because we said, and then so in a huff because they're not doing what we wanted, with that sort of domineering, domination then we have it all wrong.

[29 : 10] We have it wrong. We are stewards. We don't own the house. We're not lords over the house. Jesus is the Lord. And so pastors are the servants to the greatest.

Pastors are servants to the least, to the oldest, and to the youngest. We're servants to all. congregations get into all sorts of trouble when they think of their pastors as lords.

It's good for you to treat us with respect. Dignity is good. But reverence, awe, is too much.

It's not right. It's too far. And congregations have gotten themselves into trouble when they've elevated their pastors to a place that they don't belong. They do belong on the place of respect and we should treat them with dignity, but they are not lords.

Now, pastors get into a different trouble when they think they're lords. but my authority only goes as far as this word says.

[30 : 29] It only goes as far as Jesus has said. This far and no further. So, number three. So, number two, we're not lords. Number three, the overseer is the servant of the Lord.

So, again, if we're using this analogy of the steward, the palace chamberlain, the overseer is the servant of the Lord. So, who employs him?

Well, the master does. So, who does the steward of the household work for? Does he work for the maids and the cook and the guards and the children?

Well, he serves them, but he's not employed by them. And that's true here. We are your servants, but in another sense, we aren't your servants.

We're his servant. And we need to see that. We are your servants, but in another sense, we aren't your servants. We're his servant. He's given us the assignment to serve you.

[31 : 29] And so, we don't belong to you in one way. We don't belong to you. He sets the agenda. He sets the pattern. He gives the commands.

He gives the direction. And so, he says, now serve them. And so, we have to serve you. And we do serve you gladly. But, you know, just to use that analogy of this palace chamberlain, of the steward of the house, he doesn't take his directions from the maids and the cooks and the guards and all the rest and the children.

He takes his direction from the father. He's showing up in the father's office and saying, what do you want me to do? And then he carries it out. Because sometimes, you know, he's going to be in trouble.

If there's the children, they don't want to go to school. They don't want to take their medicine. They don't want to do their chores. But the father says, you need to do it. And so, the father says, take your medicine.

Go to school. And so, the steward is going to have to displease the children in order to please the father. that's what I'm saying here. Sometimes we aren't going to do what you like us to do.

[32 : 45] Or sometimes we aren't going to be what you want us to be. And we have to be okay with that as long as we're being faithful to the master.

And I think you know that. And I think you hope that we are. We're his servants to do you good. But he's the agenda setter. Number four, the fourth truth, the overseer, the steward, is accountable to the Lord.

Again, if he's brought us on, if he's made us the servant, then we're accountable to him. Hebrews 13, 17, obey your leaders and submit to their authority.

They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. we're going to give an account one day. If we're stewards and God has put certain people under our care, we are going to give an account for how we did.

The Lord will judge what we do. The Lord will reward. And so you remember all the parables that picture that. of a man. He gives ten talents to one, five to one, three talents to another, and then he goes away.

[34 : 04] But then he comes back and he says, what have you done with what I've given you? How have you taken care of things? And so again, the church isn't ours to do with whatever we want.

The Lord says, no, I've given them to you, but I'm going to ask you what you're doing with it. And I'm going to hold you accountable for what you've done. So, how did you do?

How did you treat my family? There's stories of men, stewards, who the master went away and then he started beating the other servants.

He started dominating them and demanding from them. And so Jesus is going to ask us, what kind of steward were you? Were you demanding, domineering, or were you kind and generous and faithful?

Did you treat people fairly? I gave you some of my children to watch over and to teach them. What did you do with them? How did you do? And so we're going to be held accountable.

[35 : 09] Number five, overseers have authority. So overseers have authority, and this is the fifth point, and I'm leaving this to the very end because it has to be put in the proper context.

This idea of authority has to be used correctly. The authority is framed with everything I've said so far, but there is no denying that overseers do have definitive authority.

They do have authority. Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. To be a leader means you have real authority. You have responsibility, but then you have the authority to carry it out.

It works the same way in the household. Parents, you're to take care of your children, you're to raise them in the instruction, the admonition of the Lord. Do you have the authority to carry out your responsibilities?

Yes. You have authority over your children to carry out your responsibility. The same thing is true here. We have real authority, we have real responsibility, and we have the authority to carry it out.

[36 : 16] And so we don't have to apologize for being in charge. We don't have to necessarily justify everything that we do or the choices that we make because God has said rule, and so we want to rule well.

And so that's what we're going to do. Elders in the Old Testament led different families and different clans and different cities. Elders in the New Testament had authority to lead in those churches.

They weren't just figureheads, they had real authority to do and carry out the work of the church.

And so that's another problem. There is one set of problems where the elders, the pastors are dominating and domineering and they use their authority with a heavy hand.

And then the other side of the problem is where they won't exercise authority. They won't lead. They won't say this is what we're going to do, let's do it.

Again, you see this very same thing in families. Some parents are too heavy handed and some parents don't have it. They don't use their authority.

[37 : 26] But to not lead, to not lead, to not use the authority God has given us leaves the flock without a shepherd. The point of having a shepherd is to have someone in charge.

The point of having an overseer is to have someone in charge. It leaves the children without a tutor. It leaves the maids and the cooks and the guards and the stable boys and the accountants and all the other people in the household trying to figure out what they're supposed to be doing instead of doing what they're supposed to be doing.

Instead of working on what God has given them to do, now they're worried about what everyone else is doing and they're not where they're supposed to be. And so people aren't doing what's best for themselves, they're not doing what's best for others.

So factories, they don't run on their own. They need managers. Companies need CEOs. And churches need men with authority.

They need overseers. It's for the factories good. It's for the companies good. It's for the churches good. It's how it works best. It's how people are blessed.

[38 : 37] So, that's a lot of teaching. I think it's important and it's good. What have we seen? What do we need to do? Well, we need to think more and more of the church as our family. We need to work out that analogy more and more.

Okay, am I looking at the church as a family or just sort of a casual relationship? I know most of you here are committed.

Think of the church as a family. Treat each other as family. And third, pastors should act as overseers of that family. With real responsibility, with real care, they should act as overseers. And that's what we're doing. And when we're doing that, and when we have that, and that's part of now the DNA and just the way we treat each other and how we treat each other, that's where this wonderful tone of not just having the truth, but speaking the truth in love and holding it with kindness and presenting it to people with patience and graciousness, that's where it comes from.

[39 : 59] That's where that wonderful tone comes from, and I think we've enjoyed it, and I hope we will continue to enjoy it more and more. But for now, we need to keep on.

It's good to go back and look again at the blueprint and say, is this what we're doing? Is this what God is, this is how God has said to do it? Is this what we're doing? Is this what I'm doing? And so let's keep on, and even more, let's do better.

Let's do better. Well, let's pray. God, we're going to pray. Our Heavenly Father, you have been so gracious and kind, so wonderfully kind to us to put us into a family.

Everyone here could say, oh, life would be so much worse. It would be so much harder if we didn't have the family of God to love us, to care for us, to support us, to uphold us, to encourage us. So we thank you for the family of God. We thank you for Grace Fellowship Church, for the brothers and sisters, the fathers and mothers that we have here.

[41 : 13] Continue to bless us. We want you to bind our hearts even more in love, drive out every selfish ambition and deceitful thought, but let us love with all sincerity, with great generosity, remembering that it's because of Jesus, remembering because it is because of you that we have each other.

So please help us to think of ourselves as a family, to treat each other as family, and I pray that as pastors you would help us to lead the church as overseers of this family.

Lord, do us good. Even bless our meeting coming up. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.