Lownes Free Church Sunday Morning – January 27, 2019

**Nurturing God’s Family**

**Planting, Establishing, and Leading Local Churches**

Practical Principles from The Pastoral Letters

 **“Whose house is this?”**

**1 Timothy 3:14-16**

God’s people are God’s, but they also are, well, people. And since people are fallen, the church is subject to all sorts of abuse, suffering even from its well-meaning friends. So many churches, so many differences, so many opinions, how does one sort it all out?

 While we must act in humility, we should be sure that our patterns and practices are those God reveals. Otherwise, what separates a local church from a garden club, political party, or non-profit charity?

 Because the Church is God’s household, the instructions in the letter will guide Timothy to act accordingly. So a leader’s task is not innovation, but believing and applying the guidelines God has established.

**What are Paul’s key points?**  “Tim, I’m writing this letter. . .”

✓ To inform: You need to know certainly. vv. 14, 15a

✓ To persuade: You need to behave appropriately. v. 15b

✓ To focus: You need to treat the church as God’s house. v. 15c

✓ To encourage: You need trust His life at work in people. v. 15d

✓ To commission: You need to proclaim truth boldly. v. 15e

✓ To ground: You need to confess the gospel of God’s Son. v. 16

***What is the Big Idea?***

 *A church is established (matured, becomes healthy)*

*as church leaders know and implement God’s “Household Rules”*

*in order to incarnate and spread the gospel of God’s grace in Jesus.*

***How do we apply these principles?***

***1. Ownership or Stewardship?*** Church leaders must lead as shepherds of God’s flock, not cattle drivers on their own ranch. So when we talk about “household rules,” we must be sure we are not imposing our own ideas, but implementing God’s will. Peter is clear about this (1 Peter 5:1-4) as is Paul in Acts 20. There is no place for self-assured dictators or manipulators or those who would enslave others. On the other hand, there should be a quiet confidence in the authority of Scripture and the presence of the Spirit.

***2. Methods or Principles?***  While principles do not change, methods are quite variable. This is why no two churches are alike, nor should they be expected to be. There always are attempts to clone churches in the likeness of the “Mother Church,” leading to cult-like adherence to manmade rules. So Paul constantly warns against both the abuse of the Law AND lawlessness! A church is a living organism, pulsating with the very life of God, and our task is more like tending and pruning a vine than manufacturing a product. Jesus, who has died for the churches, watches over them, gifts them, and blesses them. The job of leaders is to facilitate the church’s growth according to its own DNA. Revelation 2, 3

***3. Create or Proclaim?*** While creativity is welcome in methods, the central message should be defended against all innovation. God has acted and spoken into human history, culminating in the one theme, JESUS! Hebrews 1:1-3