Lownes Free Church Sunday Morning – February 24, 2019

**Nurturing God’s Family**

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

Practical Principles from The Pastoral Letters

**“Recognize, train, and follow godly leaders.”**

**1 Timothy 3:1-16**

Even a cursory reading of our Old Testament reveals that nations and institutions rise and fall in accordance to how they are led and governed. Local churches are no different. Everything depends upon leaders and how closely they are attuned to God’s heart and order.

 We complicate things with layers of tradition, but Paul lays out a relatively simple pattern in which each local church appoints, trains, and follows men of good character: a two-part structure which can bring unity and peace to any local church whose members joyfully embrace it.

**What are Paul’s key points?** Elements of godly leadership include...

✓ Motive: Do they joyfully and sincerely serve others? vv. 1, 8, 13

✓ Character: Are their lives under control and godly? vv. 2, 3, 8

✓ Reputation: Are they esteemed colleagues / citizens? vv. 7, 10, 11

✓ Experience: Are they tried, good leaders of homes? vv. 4, 5, 6, 12, 14-16

✓ Faith: Can they teach and /or defend the faith? vv. 2, 9

✓ Teamwork: Can the elders lead as one, the deacons support, in culturally relevant, practical

ways? vv. 3:1, 8, 11

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

 *A church is established as it identifies, trains, and follows godly men*

*who are proven teachers and shepherds in their homes and community, aided by like-minded others who serve the flock in concrete ways.*

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

***1. God alone creates leaders.***  The risen Christ, through His Spirit, gives and empowers men to lead His church (Eph. 4:1-16). Ours is to recognize God’s hand in the lives of these men, train them, and make certain they are the true leaders of the church, as opposed to the ungodly, imposters, greedy, or power-hungry. The church must be active and vigilant, not passive, in this process.

***2. What’s in a name?*** The New Testament pictures each church led by a team of men, “elders” (pl.), also known as “overseers,” or “pastors,” all terms for the same office, not a hierarchy (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Peter 5:1-3). They were never called “priests,” since all believers are priests (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:5, 6). Deacons were men who, often with their wives (1 Tim. 3:11), ministered to the physical needs of the flock, caring in practical ways for widows and others as needed. We see this pattern evolve in the first church (Acts 6:1-6).

***3. Who’s Number One?*** The apostles’ favorite sport was arguing over who was the greatest. That may sound strange, but the love of power and the desire to control others runs deep within us. Jesus always corrected his erring leader wannabees by reminding them that (1) Leadership is rooted in loving and serving others, not controlling them, (2) the greatest leader is the one who serves the best, and (3) He Himself is the pattern for leadership in in laying down His life for others. When we truly seek to apply those principles in choosing leaders, the field of candidates can quickly shrink! Matt. 18:1-4; Luke 22:24-27; John 13