

Titus 1:6 & 1 Timothy 3:4-5

Introduction

Last week, after the service, our brother... stepped aside from the position or the office of elder at Living Word Bible Church. The very first thing I want to emphasize is that there's a hidden beauty in that statement. _____ has not in any way resigned or been demoted from membership in this local body of believers at Living Word Bible Church. Being an elder doesn't grant any higher privileges in the body of Christ compared to any other member, and so neither does resigning from the office of elder diminish these privileges in the slightest. Do we dare to think this is a small consideration? What are the privileges of membership in the body of Christ that all of us partake of equally? Full and free access to the Lord's table each and every Sunday. The sweet fellowship of believers and the joy of worshipping together, praying together, and building one another up in the faith. Teaching and instruction from the Word. Being guarded and preserved in the faith by the leadership and authority structures that Christ has established in His church. The meeting of physical and practical needs as God's people love and care for one another. These are just some of the privileges of membership that pertain *no more* to the elder than to anyone else. We remember that the elders are not the church. They themselves are members *of* the church along with everyone else. The elder does not have a higher level of membership in the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, or the temple and people of God than any other member. I say these things not to diminish the office of elder, because as Paul says, if anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a good and a noble task (1 Tim. 3:1). I say this only to help us always keep things in biblical perspective. I am so glad to know that I'm not a hired hand from outside. I love to know that my family and I are a part of this church, members with you of this local body of believers. _____ has as honored a name among us as he has ever had. And so I'm reminded of Romans chapter twelve:

□ Romans 12:10 — Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

Set against the backdrop of the high calling and privilege of *membership* in the body of Christ, we can truly see resigning from the office of elder in proper biblical perspective, and this should be to us a truly beautiful thing.

The next thing I want to mention is also beautiful and something that should cause us rejoicing. Our brother wrote in his letter: "I am still prepared to serve this body any way the elders feel is appropriate." What an example this is of a servant's heart and a true love for the body of Christ! At one point after we had finally come to our conclusion together, our brother was asked if he would potentially be willing to teach the adult Sunday School class in the fall and his response was something to the effect of, "I would love to." I say this not to exalt _____ (though this *is* an honorable and praiseworthy thing) but to help us see clearly that in resigning from the office of elder not only has _____ not lost any of the privileges of membership in the body and bride of Christ, but the rest of us in the body and bride of Christ have not lost any of the blessings of _____ service, or any of the giftings that the Lord has given to him. Isn't that a truly beautiful thing? While the office of elder does require certain "giftings," the exercise of these gifts has

never depended—and will never depend—on holding office in the church. For this we can all be grateful, and as a church we can also rejoice and be grateful to God for _____ example to all of us of humility, and love, and service.

The third thing I want to draw our attention to is also something beautiful and something that should cause us great joy as a church. _____ mentioned in his letter a growing “weight of conviction” regarding the qualifications for elder and wrote: “I shared my concern with the elders, and we have spent considerable time searching the Scriptures, praying, and seeking other viewpoints of those who have dealt with the same issue. The more we studied and prayed, the more I, along with the other elders, came to a reasonable level of consensus, albeit understanding that this is not a clear cut, black and white issue... In the end, I need to walk before the Lord with a clear conscience...” I want to be very clear that in using the words “conviction” and “a clear conscience,” _____ was not referring to any “guilt” that he feels for shortcomings as a father. _____ is not beating himself up with a hyper sensitive conscience. In speaking of “conviction” and “a clear conscience,” our brother is speaking purely of his desire to be governed by and wholly in submission to the authority of God’s Word. My brothers and sisters, here is a lesson that we all need to learn, regardless of what we understand the Scriptures to say on this subject. How easy it is to say that the word of God is our authority only until it’s not convenient for us or until our human emotions and sensibilities object. How easy it is to *start out* with our human sensibilities and then “interpret” the Bible accordingly so that we can maintain the façade of submitting to its authority even as we’re practically undermining and denying that authority. I want to assure you that if this was at all about our human and *fallen* sensibilities, _____ himself would not have made the decision to resign, and the elders would not have “let him” resign – **IF** it was at all about our human and fallen sensibilities. But here’s the wonderful beauty in what’s happened. In the midst of much love and brotherly affection, a powerful testimony has been borne to the reality that the Word of God truly is our authority, and it’s by that good and perfect Word that we are all to be governed both as individuals and as a church. None of this is to say that there’s not disagreement over the interpretation of the passages in 1 Timothy and Titus respecting the children of elders. And none of this is to say that once there’s agreement over the interpretation, there may not still be disagreement over the application. My only point is to say that when a decision is made in humility and love based on what one understands the Scriptures to teach, there is beauty here, and cause for great rejoicing by all of us – even in the midst of any sadness. In this sense, our beloved brother is not to be felt sorry for, but rather rejoiced with, and encouraged, and gladly affirmed in this wonderful testimony to the firm foundation that we have in the Scriptures as the Word of God.

At this point I want to reemphasize what _____ wrote: “I shared my concern with the elders, and we have spent considerable time searching the Scriptures, praying, and seeking other viewpoints of those who have dealt with the same issue.” It can be so easy for us to have knee-jerk reactions based on an initial and superficial reading and application of Scripture. It was only shortly before _____ brought up his own situation that another brother in our church had asked me about Titus 1:6 with regard to an entirely different situation. Paul says in Titus that one of the qualifications for an elder is this (quoting the ESV):

- Titus 1:6 — ...if anyone is above reproach... **having believing children** [who are] not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.

I remember first of all realizing that I had largely overlooked this verse and never really studied it out carefully. And I remember, second of all, that my “knee jerk” reaction was that it probably didn’t mean what it sounded like it meant. Brothers and sisters, whether or not this means what our English translations make it sound like it means or not, we must never trust our “knee jerk” reactions *or* our fallen sensibilities, but carefully study to show ourselves approved, workers who have no need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (cf. 2 Tim. 2:15). It should be with joy that our consciences are bound by the Word of God. Is your conscience truly bound by the Word of God? Is the Word of God, not just in theory, but in actual practice, our final authority in all things?

So now we come to study the Scriptures together, and to go through some of the process *together* that we as elders have gone through over the last couple of months. I understand that in the end we may not all come to the exact same conclusions, but I’m praying that even the process of studying the Scriptures together will have a unifying effect among us. Paul highlights the qualifications for elders in two places. In both of these passages, he addresses the issue of the elder’s children.

- 1 Timothy 3:4–5 — He must manage his own household well, with all dignity **having children in submission**, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church?
- Titus 1:6 — Appoint elders in every town... — if anyone is above reproach... **having believing children** [who are] not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.

At first glance, it seems that the qualification in Timothy (“keeping his children submissive”) is far less strict than the qualification in Titus (“having believing children”). And so what we often do is try to interpret Titus in light of Timothy rather than interpret Timothy in light of Titus. But Titus is, at least in some ways, very, very clear, and I think we’ll find in the end that it’s far easier and far more natural to start with Titus, and then interpret Timothy accordingly.

I. Titus 1:6 — ...if anyone is above reproach... **having believing/faithful [pistos] children...**

The first thing we notice about the passage in Titus is that the word for “believing” can also be translated “faithful”¹ – “If anyone is above reproach... having faithful children...” There are many pastors and church leaders who choose this translation and then explain that “faithful” simply means “obedient.” So according to this view what Paul is basically saying in Titus is this: “if anyone is above reproach... having *obedient* children” – and we all know that even unbelieving children can be “obedient.”

¹ **Believing** – ESV; NASB; NIV; NRSV; NLT; NCV; ASV

Faithful – HCSB; NET; NKJV

Believing – Mounce, WBC; Hendriksen, NTC; Towner, NICNT; Lea & Griffin, NAC; Hiebert, EBC; Kelly, BNTC; Lenski, CNT; Schmoller, Lange’s; Calvin; Vincent

Faithful – Liefeld, NIVAC; Knight, NIGTC; Gill

The first problem with this is that there's a very specific word in the Greek for "obedience," and Paul does not use that word here. In the New Testament, the Greek word for "faithful" assumes obedience, but it also assumes far more than this. Part of the process that we went through as elders was to look up every single place in the New Testament where this Greek word (*pistos*) is used to describe a person.² By seeing how this word is used everywhere else in the New Testament, we can come to a better understanding of how Paul is using it here in Titus. *Pistos* is translated eleven times in the ESV with the word "believe," "believer," or "believing."

- Acts 16:1 — A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a **believer**.
- 2 Corinthians 6:15 — What portion does a **believer** share with an unbeliever?
- Acts 10:45 — The **believers** from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed.
- 1 Timothy 4:12 — Set the **believers** an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.
- 1 Timothy 6:2 — Those who have **believing** masters must not be disrespectful on the ground that they are brothers; rather they must serve all the better since those who benefit by their good service are **believers** and beloved.
- 1 Peter 1:20–21 — He was... made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are **believers** in God.
- John 20:27 — [Jesus] said to Thomas... "Do not disbelieve, but **believe**."
- 1 Timothy 4:3 — [Men] who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who **believe** and know the truth.
- 1 Timothy 4:10 — We have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who **believe**.
- 1 Timothy 5:16 — If any **believing** woman has relatives who are widows, let her care for them.

Pistos is translated in the ESV once with the word "faith."

- Galatians 3:9 — Those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of **faith**.

Twenty-eight times, *pistos* is translated in the ESV with the word "faithful" (when referring to people). The only place that this word appears in the Gospels is in the parables of Jesus:

- Matthew 24:45 (cf. Lk. 12:42) — Who then is the **faithful** and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household?
- Matthew 25:21 (cf. 25:23; Lk. 19:17) — Well done, good and **faithful** servant. You have been **faithful** over a little; I will set you over much.
- Luke 16:10–12 — One who is **faithful** in a very little is also **faithful** in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. If then you have not been **faithful** in the

² We pass over the places where this word is used to describe God (1 Cor. 1:9; 10:13; 2 Cor. 1:18; 1 Thess. 5:24; 2 Thess. 3:3; 2 Tim. 2:13; Heb. 10:23; 11:11; 1 Pet. 4:19; 1 Jn. 1:9) or Jesus Christ (Heb. 2:17; 3:1-2; Rev. 1:5; 3:14; 19:11) or some other inanimate reality (Acts 13:34) because those places aren't really relevant to our question.

unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been **faithful** in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?

In these verses, *pistos* describes not simply servants who are *obedient* to authority, but servants who are *faithful* in the privileged stewardships that they've been given in their master's household. It's in this sense that "faithful" is, for Jesus, a description of all of His true disciples. Other than these occurrences in the parables of Jesus, here are the remaining seventeen uses of the word faithful (when referring to people):\

- Acts 16:15 — After [Lydia] was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be **faithful** to the Lord, come to my house and stay."
- 1 Corinthians 4:1-2 — This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found **faithful**.
- 1 Corinthians 4:17 — That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and **faithful** child in the Lord.
- Ephesians 1:1 — To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are **faithful** in Christ Jesus.
- Ephesians 6:21 — Tychicus the beloved brother and **faithful** minister in the Lord will tell you everything.
- Colossians 1:2 — To the saints and **faithful** brothers in Christ at Colossae.
- Colossians 1:7 — ...just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a **faithful** minister of Christ on your behalf.
- Colossians 4:7 — Tychicus... is a beloved brother and **faithful** minister and fellow servant in the Lord.
- Colossians 4:8-9 — I have sent... with him Onesimus, our **faithful** and beloved brother.
- 1 Timothy 1:12 — I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me **faithful**, appointing me to his service.
- 1 Timothy 3:11 — [Deacons'] wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, **faithful** in all things.
- 2 Timothy 2:2 — What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to **faithful** men, who will be able to teach others also.
- 1 Peter 5:12 — By Silvanus, a **faithful** brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you.
- 3 John 5 — Beloved, it is a **faithful** thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers.
- Revelation 2:10 — Be **faithful** unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.
- Revelation 2:13 — You did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my **faithful** witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.
- Revelation 17:14 — They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and **faithful**.

It seems clear that when *pistos* is translated "faithful" in the New Testament, it's assuming specifically a *believing* kind of faithfulness – a faithfulness with respect to the Lord.^{3,4} If we go

³ The following are examples of this use of the word *pistos* in the Septuagint and other extrabiblical writings:

Numbers 12:7 — My servant Moses... is **faithful** in all my house.

Psalms 101:6 — I will look with favor on the **faithful** in the land, that they may dwell with me; he who walks in the way that is blameless shall minister to me.

back and look at the nine places where *pistos* is used in the Pastoral Epistles (1 & 2 Timothy & Titus), six of these refer specifically to believers,⁵ and three of these to a specifically Christian faithfulness (faithfulness to the Lord).⁶ Finally, there's one other important thing for us to notice. In Titus 1:6, Paul says, "having faithful children."⁷ In 1 Timothy 6:2, Paul uses the exact same grammar ("having faithful masters"),⁸ and it's clear that here he's referring to believers, or to those who are faithful to the Lord.

- 1 Timothy 6:2 — The ones having **faithful** masters must not be disrespectful on the ground that they are **brothers**; rather they must serve all the better since those who benefit by their good service are **faithful** and **beloved**.

Paul seems to assume that the natural/automatic understanding of "faithful masters" is "masters who are believing." What, then, would Paul assume to be the natural/automatic understanding of "faithful children"?

II. Titus 1:6 — ...having faithful children [who are] not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.

There are many who interpret the meaning of "faithful children" in light of the negative counterpart that comes next. So they think that a faithful child is mainly just a child who is *not* open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. But notice how Paul paints this negative picture in the darkest and most extreme colors. He uses the word "debauchery," which we find only two other times in the New Testament.

- 1 Peter 4:3–4 (cf. Eph. 5:18) — The time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of **debauchery**.

Wisdom of Solomon 3:9 — Those who trust in him will understand truth, and the **faithful** will abide with him in love, because grace and mercy are upon his holy ones, and he watches over his elect.

Sirach 1:13–14 — Those who fear the Lord will have a happy end; on the day of their death they will be blessed. To fear the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; she is created with the **faithful** in the womb.

Sirach 34:8 — Without such deceptions the law will be fulfilled, and wisdom is complete in the mouth of the **faithful**.

Sirach 44:20 — [Abraham] kept the law of the Most High, and entered into a covenant with him; he certified the covenant in his flesh, and when he was tested he proved **faithful**.

1 Maccabees 2:52 — Was not Abraham found **faithful** when tested, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness?

2 Maccabees 1:2 — May God do good to you, and may he remember his covenant with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, his **faithful** servants.

⁴ The negative counterpart to *pistos* is *apistos*. This word is translated in the ESV with "unbelieving/unbeliever" 17 times. Five of the six remaining times, it refers to someone who is spiritually or covenantally "faithless" (Mat. 17:17; Mk. 9:19; Lk. 9:41; 12:46; Rev. 21:8). In Acts 26:8 *apistos* refers to thinking something "incredible."

⁵ 1 Tim. 4:3, 10, 12; 5:16; 6:2

⁶ 1 Tim. 1:12; 3:11 (cf. 1 Cor. 7:39; 9:5; 2 Cor. 6:14–16); 2 Tim. 2:1

⁷ Titus 1:6 — τίς... τέκνα ἔχων πιστά

Anyone [sing.] **children** [Acc. Pl. Neut.] **having** [sing. part.] **faithful/believing** [Acc. Pl. Neut.]

⁸ 1 Timothy 6:2 — οἱ... πιστοὺς ἔχοντες δεσπότης

Those [pl.] **faithful/believing** [Acc. Pl. Masc.] **having** [pl. part.] **masters** [Acc. Pl. Masc.]

Paul also uses the word “insubordination” which is a stronger word than “disobedience” and only appears three other times in the New Testament.

- 1 Timothy 1:9 (cf. Titus 1:10) — The law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and **insubordinate**, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers...

So is Paul really saying that for a man to be an elder, all that’s necessary with respect to his children is that they *not* be guilty of drunken debauchery and lawless insubordination? Paul is clearly painting the starkest *contrast* between what the elder’s children should *not* be and what they *should* be. So the question we have to ask is, “What *does* Paul contrast with pagan debauchery and insubordination? There are many examples in the Bible where the way of the godly and righteous is contrasted with the way of the wicked in the most extreme categories.

- Romans 13:13–14 — Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.
- 1 Peter 4:2–3, 7–8 — ...so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry...
- Ephesians 5:18 — Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit...
- 1 Timothy 3:11 — [Deacon’s] wives likewise must be dignified, not malicious gossips [NASB, cf. NIV], but sober-minded, faithful [*pistos*] in all things.⁹

When Paul says that the elders’ children are not to be open to the charge of debauchery and insubordination, we should see this as the extreme opposite of that “Christian faithfulness” that is required of the elder’s children.

III. Titus 1:6 — ...having faithful **children** [who are] not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.

The last thing we need to ask here is what is meant by the word “children.” The lexicon says that this word means “one’s *immediate* offspring, but *without specific reference to sex or age.*” (Louw-Nida) So this word can include very young children, but it can also include children who are grown adults.

⁹ The Greek word for “malicious gossips” is *diabolos*, and it refers 34 times to the devil. Only three times does it refer to someone who speaks evil of others.

2 Timothy 3:2–3 — For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, **slanderous**, without self-control, brutal, not loving good...

Titus 2:3 — Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not **slanderers** or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good...

In 1 Timothy 3, then, deacons’ wives are not to be malicious gossips, but faithful (*pistos*).

- Matthew 10:21 — Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death.

Here in Titus, Paul says that the elder’s children must not be open to the charge of debauchery and insubordination. Paul can still be including young children, but it’s obvious that he’s also including much older children – children who are old enough that the father is no longer able to require their obedience or to keep them even outwardly under control. So the word “children,” in this context, can definitely include “adult” children, and almost certainly *should* include adult children – if by “adult” we just mean children who are over the age of eighteen, or even over the age of twenty-one. However, I do think we’ll see in 1 Timothy that there is a qualifier, or a limitation, to what Paul has in mind when he says “children.”

IV. 1 Timothy 3:4–5 — He must manage his own household well, with all dignity **having children [who are] in submission**, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church?

In Paul’s day, the “household” included *adult* slaves or household servants as well as one’s wife. This tells us that Paul’s main point seems to be not the age of those in the elder’s household (whether children or servants), but rather the fact that if they’re *in* the household, then they’re still under the authority of the head of that household. Paul’s point is that all the members of the elder’s household, and in particular his children (no matter what their age may be), are to be in submission. I think this is also the clear meaning of “children” in Titus, namely: children—of whatever age—who are still under their father’s roof.

The ESV says “*keeping* his children submissive”; but that can easily have the flavor of something forced or of outward constraints, and that’s not what Paul intends. The Greek literally says “*having* children in submission.”¹⁰ That’s the same word we have in 1 Timothy 6 where Paul speaks of slaves “*having* believing masters” (cf. 1 Tim. 6:2) and also in Titus where Paul speaks of elders “*having* faithful children.” We see here that one of the main differences between obedience and faithfulness is that obedience can often be “forced” whereas faithfulness cannot be “forced.” It’s true that Paul assumes that the head of the household bears a huge responsibility in the matter of his children’s submission (“he must manage his own household well”), but this management is not simply about outward constraints and controls that keep otherwise rebellious children “in check.” This is a management that results in children who *willingly* and *purposefully* submit to the authority of their father (the head-of-household¹¹) for as long as they remain in their father’s house. This is what Paul means when he says: “Having children [who are] in submission.” I really appreciate what one commentator writes:

¹⁰ The NASB even translates: “*keeping* his children *under control*.” However, of the 706 additional times that this verb (*echo*) appears in the New Testament, there is not a single instance where it has this idea of exercising “control” over another. Instead, it refers mainly to the simple idea of what one *has*.

¹¹ The mother is equally to be obeyed and honored (Exod. 20:12; 21:15, 17; Eph. 6:2). I am simply choosing to emphasize here the head-of-household, who also bears the responsibility of making sure that his children honor and obey their mother.

“Though authority must be exercised, this must be done ‘with true dignity,’ that is, it must be done in such a manner that the father’s *firmness* makes it *advisable* for the child to obey, that his *wisdom* makes it *natural* for a child to obey, and that his *love* makes it a *pleasure* for a child to obey.” (Hendriksen)

Now certainly, we know that as children grow, the way that this submission is worked out changes over the years. This is something to which father’s must always be sensitive. At the same time, that fundamental principle of the father’s loving authority and the adult child’s diligent and willing submission never changes.

So now the question is, in what specific areas are children (whether minors or adults) to submit to their father? The simple answer is, “in everything” (cf. Col. 3:20). Children of *whatever* age who still live in their father’s household are to be *actively* and *willingly* submissive to their fathers “in everything,” and not least of all in the sphere of their father’s leadership and authority with regard to the faith. This is what helps us to understand the logic of what Paul goes on to say: “for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church?” The parallel isn’t just in the *management* of a household and the *management* of a church but in the fact that both of these managements have to do with the *spiritual condition* of the household (both the family and the church). So, one commentator says very simply that this “submission” in 1 Timothy “probably *includes* commitment to the faith.”¹² I think of Joshua’s famous words:

□ Joshua 24:15 — As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

Joshua wasn’t technically requiring that all of his household would be truly regenerate and circumcised in heart, but rather that all of his household (whether minors or adults) be in *wholehearted* and *willing* submission to his leadership and authority with regard to the faith – that they would, with him and in submission to his authority, “serve the Lord.” That’s actually one of the main points of the 5th commandment:

□ Exodus 20:12 — Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

This commandment “with a promise” assumes the ideal of children *faithfully honoring* the *covenantal* discipline and instruction of their parents. In other words, they aren’t just honoring their parents in the non-religious secular realm. They’re honoring their parents by willingly submitting to their covenant instruction. So listen to what Paul says in Ephesians:

□ Ephesians 6:1–4 — Children [all minors and adults who are still members of their parents’ household], **obey your parents in the Lord**, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

¹² Towner, NICNT; cf. Mounce, WBC; Lange

We can't understand Paul's requirement in 1 Timothy that the elder have children "in submission" without understanding this passage in Ephesians where we see that children are to obey their parents "*in the Lord*," especially as their fathers bring them up "in the discipline and instruction *of the Lord*."

So now we see that instead of interpreting Titus in light of 1 Timothy, it's far more helpful and far more natural to think of interpreting 1 Timothy in light of Titus. Having "children in submission" (1 Timothy) means having "faithful children" with respect to the Lord (Titus) – having children (whether minors or adults) who are in *willing* submission to the spiritual oversight of their father as regards the faith. Does this mean a father can guarantee the salvation of his children? Are fathers sovereign over the salvation of their children? Certainly not! And yet we're clearly taught in these verses as well as in other Scriptures that God works to accomplish *His* sovereign purposes through the faithful management of heads-of-households. It's this reality that explains the requirement that all children still in the elders' household be – at a base level – in willing and faithful submission to their father as regards the faith – even if this doesn't necessarily guarantee that they're actually regenerate, or born again. We recall again Joshua's words: "As for me *and my house*, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15). And we also think of the *regular* emphasis on entire households fearing the Lord and coming to faith and being baptized in the New Testament.¹³

- Acts 10:1–2 — At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius... a devout man who feared God *with all his household*...¹⁴
- Acts 11:13–14 — [The angel said to Cornelius,] "Send to Joppa and bring Simon who is called Peter; he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household."

Conclusion

Together, now, we've studied both Titus 1:6 and 1 Timothy 3:4-5. But after interpretation comes application, and this is where as elders we want to be clear that God has not given us *specific* directions as to how to *apply* these verses in every possible situation. We do know that it would be wrong to apply these verses in such a way that in order for a man to be qualified to serve as elder, all he has to do is remove any "unfaithful" children from the household. It would also be artificial to say that as long as an elder candidate's children are all already out of the house, then the *principle* of these verses no longer has any application at all to the candidate under

¹³ Acts 16:14–15 — One who heard us was a woman named Lydia... who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. And... she was baptized, and her household as well...

Acts 16:31–34 — [Paul and Silas] said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." And they spoke the word of the Lord to [the jailor] and to all who were in his house. And... he was baptized at once, he and all his family... And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.

Acts 18:8 — Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household.

1 Corinthians 1:16 — I did baptize also the household of Stephanas... the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia.

¹⁴ Peter seems to attribute the faithfulness of Cornelius' household in large part to Cornelius' faithfulness in managing his household.

consideration. Faithful application of these verses requires prayer and wisdom and can at times be difficult to discern. And yet we do *know* that the word of God is sufficient to give us wisdom for every situation provided we're truly seeking to obey Him – to live always as those whose consciences are bound—willingly and joyfully—by His Word.

I want to conclude by stating the obvious: God is not in the business of punishing or shaming His beloved children. That's not what any of this is even remotely about. I want to remind us again of the powerful example that our honored brother has been to all of us in his humility before the body, his deep love for the body, and his conscientious commitment to live under the authority of the Word of God. In *each* of these things, may we all truly imitate the example of our brother as he has imitated, before us, the example of Christ.

Finally, please pray for your elders, and I might say, please pray especially for me, in this regard. But more than this, let's pray for one another – that always *from this day forward* (forgetting what does, or doesn't lie behind), we will all be faithful stewards of the households that God has entrusted to us to manage and to lead. And may God, in His sovereignty, grant the fruit.