

1 Timothy 3:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;

Analysis

One that ruleth well his own house (τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου καλῶς προϊστάμενον, tou idiou oikou kalōs proistamenon)—literally 'managing/leading his own household well.' The verb proistēmi means to lead, direct, care for—not domineering tyranny but benevolent leadership.

Having his children in subjection with all gravity (ἐν ὑποταγῇ μετὰ πάσης σεμνότητος, en hypotagē meta pasēs semnotētos)—children in submission 'with all dignity.' The semnotēs (dignity, seriousness) applies to both father and children—the household reflects godly order through respectful relationships, not mere authoritarianism.

The logic is clear: if a man cannot lead his own small flock, how can he shepherd God's church? Family life is the proving ground for pastoral ministry. Titus 1:6 adds that children should be believers 'not accused of riot or unruly'—the elder's home demonstrates the transforming power of the gospel.

Historical Context

The oikos (household) was the basic unit of Greco-Roman society, including extended family, servants, and dependents. In a culture where paternal authority was absolute (patria potestas), Paul redefines household management in gospel terms—dignified, respectful leadership that points to God's fatherhood. The elder's family becomes a microcosm of church health.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does gospel-centered family leadership differ from both permissiveness and authoritarianism?
2. Why is public ministry effectiveness so closely tied to private family relationships?
3. What does 'dignity' (semnotēs) in household management look like practically?

Interlinear Text

τοῦ	ιδίου	οἴκου	καλῶς	προϊστάμενον	τέκνα	ἔχοντα
G3588	his own	house	well	One that ruleth	his children	having
	G2398	G3624	G2573	G4291	G5043	G2192
ἐν	ὑποταγῇ	μετὰ	πάσης	σεμνότητος		
in	subjection	with	all	gravity		
G1722	G5292	G3326	G3956	G4587		

Additional Cross-References

Titus 1:6 (Parallel theme): If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.

1 Timothy 3:12 (Parallel theme): Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

Genesis 18:19 (Parallel theme): For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

Titus 2:2 (Parallel theme): That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience.

Acts 10:2 (Parallel theme): A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.

Joshua 24:15 (Parallel theme): And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

Titus 2:7 (Parallel theme): In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity,

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