

1 Timothy 3:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

Analysis

For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God? (εἰ δέ τις τοῦ ιδίου οἴκου προστῆναι οὐκ οἶδεν, πῶς ἐκκλησίας θεοῦ ἐπιμελήσεται; ei de tis tou idiou oikou prostēnai ouk oiden, pōs ekklēsias theou epimelēsetai?)—'if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?' Proistēmi means to lead, manage, care for. Epimeleō means to take care of, care for—the same word used of the Good Samaritan caring for the wounded man (Luke 10:34-35).

Paul's logic is clear and compelling: household management tests and prepares for church leadership. The skills required are similar—wise leadership, patient teaching, conflict resolution, resource stewardship, long-term vision. If a man fails at home with a few people he loves deeply, how can he succeed in shepherding God's larger family?

This isn't arbitrary requirement but wisdom. Family relationships reveal character under stress—how a man treats wife and children when no one's watching shows his true heart. Public ministry can be performed with skillful hypocrisy, but home life exposes reality. The church needs leaders whose character has been tested and proven in the laboratory of family life.

Historical Context

The household was the basic unit of ancient society and the early church—congregations met in homes, and household conversions were common (Acts 16:15, 31-34). A man's household management was visible evidence of his leadership ability. If he couldn't lead his small domestic 'church,' he wasn't ready for larger responsibility. The parallel between household and church wasn't metaphorical but literal—both are God's family.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. Why is family life such an effective testing ground for church leadership capability?
2. How does 'caring for' (*epimeleō*) the church differ from merely 'managing' or 'ruling' it?
3. What specific household management skills translate directly to church eldership?

Interlinear Text

εἰ	δέ	τις	τοῦ	ἰδίου	οἴκου	προστήναι	οὐκ	οἶδεν	πῶς
G1487	(For	G5100	G3588	his own	house	to rule	not	how	how
	G1161			G2398	G3624	G4291	G3756	G1492	G4459
ἐκκλησίας	θεοῦ	ἐπιμελήσεται							
the church	of God	shall he take care of							
G1577		G2316							
					G1959				

Additional Cross-References

1 Samuel 3:13 (Parallel theme): For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.

Ephesians 5:24 (Parallel theme): Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

Ephesians 5:32 (Parallel theme): This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Acts 20:28 (References God): Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

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