

THE MEASURE OF A MAN

RULING HIS OWN HOUSE

We are measuring a godly man by looking at the spiritual characteristics required of leaders in the church. Even if you do not aspire to a position, your practice should be the same if you want to be a maturing, godly man.

Our thirteenth characteristic takes up two whole verses:

1 Timothy 3:4 one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence

1 Timothy 3:5 (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?);

A leader in the church must “rule” his own house, and especially his kids, in such a way that it indicates he could “take care of the church of God.”

We should probably start with the word “rule.” It’s from a compound Greek word and means *to stand before* or *to preside*. It’s connection with the word “care” in verse five gives the sense of presiding over the house with a concern for the welfare of its occupants.

Before we look at this as a general characteristic of maturity I’ll say something about it as a qualification for leaders in the church. There is, of course, a debate as to whether or not a leader must therefore be both married and have kids. For that matter he would need to have older kids because language scholars say the word used for “children” refers to older ones.

Paul never says that having kids is a must - only that if you have them you must rule them well. I think it is essential and revealing to look at the home life and especially the kids before you lay hands on someone as a leader.

Now what if someone has been serving the church and then their child or children goes sideways? Grace dictates that we take it on a case-by-case basis. Rebellious children don't automatically disqualify someone from leadership. However, too often we overlook rebellious children and a home that is in shambles simply because a man is gifted spiritually to teach or preach or otherwise serve the Lord.

A lot of Bible guys had terrible kids. Eli the priest had awful sons. But he did a pretty good job raising Samuel. Then Samuel turned around and had rebellious sons! They went after dishonest gain, they accepted bribes, and they perverted justice.

No one is perfect. Each case needs to be decided on its own merits. Sometimes you can do everything "right," so to speak, but still have kids turn out wrong.

Let's move away from the leadership aspect and just look at this as a trait of spiritual maturity. It basically says you should be a good dad!

Why is that so important? Whether it's the home or the church the Lord wants men to represent the qualities of a good dad because He is our heavenly Father.

Gayle Erwin wrote a series of books starting with *The Jesus Style*, then *The Spirit Style*, and then *The YHWH (Father) Style*. His approach to the Father is to take a look at God's revelation of Himself on Mount Sinai to Moses. He revealed Himself as compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin.

Each of those characteristics of our heavenly Father would provide a great meditation on ourselves.

Is it any wonder that, since God puts so much emphasis on the father, that our society is tanking due to fatherless homes? Even a not-so-great dad is better than no dad (according to most research - not counting those who are abusive!).

Starting with “tak[ing] care” is the best way to get a handle on this trait. It means to concern yourself with the condition of others and, thus, take care of them. It’s a definition that preaches a few things to us:

- For one thing it preaches humility. If I am going to concern myself with the condition of others I must put them above my own condition. This precludes, for example, the stereotype that the dad comes home to rest!
- For another thing I must be pretty involved with them in order to know their condition. This precludes, for example, getting caught-up in my own habits and hobbies rather than spending time with the kids.
- For a third thing, I must be flexible because each person I care for will be at a different place and have different needs. This precludes, for example, having a set of legalistic rules that keep the house running on autopilot without my involvement. Life just happens and I must flow with it.

If this is my bedrock attitude - to care for the condition of others - then “presiding” is the practice of caring for them. An alternate translation of the words for “preside” is *practice*. I put into practice my care; **I actually do it!**

Who you are at home is who you really are. What a wife and what children think of a man speaks a lot louder than what friends and co-workers might say. As Gene Getz points out, it is relatively easy to fool people at work or in the church. Your family is with you, observing you, depending on you, 24/7 and 365 days a year.

A lot of guys in the ministry foster rebellion in their kids by always putting others ahead of his family. They see the hypocrisy of caring for others while your family is overlooked.

You don’t have to be in ministry to make that mistake. You can put almost anything ahead of your family. When you do it’s a recipe for rebellion.

One of the best portions of Scripture for being a good dad on a practical level might be Deuteronomy 6:5-9.

Deuteronomy 6:5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

Deuteronomy 6:6 "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.

Deuteronomy 6:7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

Deuteronomy 6:8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

Deuteronomy 6:9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Behind it all is your own relationship with your heavenly Father. If you are walking with Him, talking with Him, confiding in Him, enjoying Him, then you will reflect the qualities of your Father as a father.

Even if you are not a father you can still reflect the father-like qualities of God!

This is one reason it is so important to understand the true, gracious nature of God and not relate to Him on the level of rules & regs, rites & rituals.

Legalism is not father-like. Love is.