WEEK ONE
JESUS AND LEADERSHIP

1. Jesus proclaimed the kingdom (Mark 1:14-15), and those who responded to his call became a community that adopted a distinctive pattern of life.
   a. Some noticed that Jesus’ disciples were different from other groups.
      i. The Pharisees noticed that Jesus’ disciples plucked grain on the Sabbath (Matt. 12:2/Mark 2:23).
      ii. The Pharisees also noticed that Jesus’ disciples did not follow the custom of fasting (Mark 2:18).
   b. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus described the moral conduct that distinguished his disciples (Matthew 5-7).
   c. Jesus expected his disciples to be a “counterculture”—a community that was different from other communities.

2. Those who followed Jesus became a new family composed of those who had left their families.
   a. In the call of the disciples (Mark 1:16-20), the disciples left their father in the boat to follow Jesus.
   b. In Mark 10:29-31 Jesus says, “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mothers or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life.”
   c. Those who left their families found a new family in Jesus Christ: “He replied, ‘Who are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.’”
   d. Unlike physical families, this family was composed of people who had nothing in common except Jesus Christ.
      i. Imagine Simon the Zealot (a revolutionary against Rome) at the same table with Matthew, who collects taxes for Rome!
   e. This new family often met in homes, enjoying table fellowship together.

3. This community would practice a new form of leadership.
   a. Jesus condemned those who wanted power: “They do all their deeds to be seen by others; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long. They love to have the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have people call them rabbi. But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. And call no one your father on earth.” (Matt. 23:5-9).
   b. Jesus added: “The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.”
   c. When the disciples wanted the places of power, Jesus contrasted his people with
other communities: “‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.’” (Matt. 20:24-28)

4. The defining characteristic of leadership in the community around Jesus was service (diakonia)
   a. Hans Küng, The Church, 390: “Diakonia means an activity which every Greek would recognize at once as being one of self-abasement: waiting at table, serving food and pouring wine. The distinction between master and servant was nowhere more visually apparent than at meals, where the noble masters would lie at the table in their long robes, while the servants, their clothes girded, had to wait on them...Diakonia...never lost its sense of inferiority."
   b. Diakonia occurs in contexts of preparing meals and caring for the bodily needs of others. cf. Lk. 10:40; Acts 6:1; Mk. 1:31par. It had the wider connotation of caring for the bodily needs of others; cf. Lk. 8:3; Mk. 15:41. Fundamental idea is living for others.
   c. Jesus relates the leadership among his disciples to his on leadership.
      i. Mark. 9:33-35: “And when he was in the house he asked them, ‘What were you arguing about on the way?’ But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve and said to them, ‘Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.”
      ii. Lk. 22:26f.: “A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. But he said to them, ‘The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? It is not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.”’ (Luke 22:25-27)
   d. Gerhard Lohfink, Jesus and Community, 49: “The passages mentioned above indicate that Jesus wanted his disciples to be a counterculture in the area of authority. These passages address precisely what we would today call structures of domination. Such structures are standard in the societies of this world. In the community of disciples, however, relationships of domination are not permitted.

5. The entire story of Jesus describes the nature of leadership: The authority of Jesus was based on his willingness to go to the cross for the sake of others.

6. The basic question confronting the church is: Have we been faithful to Jesus’ teaching on leadership?
   a. The church cannot live without leadership.
   b. The church cannot live with a worldly form of leadership.
WEEK TWO
A NEW KIND OF LEADERSHIP

Although Paul insists that secular power has no place in the church, he develops new models of leadership that should guide the church.

1. In the early letters, he says little about offices, but describes the participation of the whole church in the church’s ministries.
   a. 1 Corinthians does not list the offices of elders and deacons, but list a variety of ministries within the body, the church with the focus on the participation of the whole church.
      i. Note the description in 1 Corinthians: “to each is the Spirit given for the common good” (1 Cor. 12:7); i.e., each is involved in the vital ministry.
      ii. Among the gifts listed in 1 Cor. 12:28 are “forms of assistance, forms of leadership” (NRSV; cf. NIV “those able to help others, those with gifts of administration”). That is, leadership is merely one of the many gifts exercised in the NT.
      iii. In the body of Christ, every member is indispensable (1 Cor. 12:22).
   b. Compare the list in Romans 12:1-8 as another indication that the whole community is involved in ministry.
   c. Note the many obligations incumbent on all. One of the most important words (but seldom noticed) is the word “one another,” which indicates the mutuality of all ministries (cf. Rom. 12:10, 16; 15:7, 14; 1 Thess 4:18, 5:11).
      i. “Bear one another’s burdens” (Ga. 6:2).
      ii. “Be servants of one another” (Gal. 5:13).
      iii. “Comfort one another and build one another up” (1 Thess. 5:11).
   d. Discussion: How does the focus on the body and the “one another” passages provide the framework for our understanding of leadership? What is the place of leadership in such an egalitarian setting?

2. We now see how leadership developed in this setting: function preceded title.
   a. In Gal. 6:1, Paul appeals to “you who are spiritual” to restore members who have fallen away.
   b. In 1 Cor. 16:15-16, Paul mentions the household of Stephanas, the first fruits of Achaia, and he instructs the church to “be subject to them because of their work.”.
      i. Their role is associated with seniority.
      ii. Although Paul does not mention their office, he mentions their “ministry,” and he asks the church to be submissive to them.
      iii. Leadership apparently involves a task performed and the recognition by the church.
   c. In Paul’s earliest letter, 1 Thessalonians, he assumes a form of “dialectical leadership”: the whole church has responsibility for building up the congregation, but he mentions a specific group with special responsibilities in 5:12-13. In a letter written to the whole church, he instructs members, “Respect those who labor among you, and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you; esteem them
very highly in love because of their work.”

i. We note the verbs indicating the role of the congregation: “respect” (v. 12) and “esteem” (v. 13 NRSV) the leaders. One cannot have leadership without the community’s acknowledgment of those who lead. Discussion: We might ask what the group thinks those verbs mean in actual practice. We probably know instances where communities refuse to accept leadership of any kind. We may know of communities were “respect” and “esteem” were made difficult because of the quality of leadership.

ii. Although this church is very young, leadership has emerged, although there are no nouns/titles. Leadership is depicted with verbs (participles in Greek): “those who labor among you, have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you.” The fact that only one definite article is used in Greek indicates that the three verbs describe one group with three different functions.

(1) “Those who labor among you” is likely a word for evangelistic labor (Paul commonly uses “labor” for his evangelistic work).
(2) “Those who are over you” refers to a role in leadership. Cf. Rom. 12:8, where the word involves both leadership and charitable work. [A form of this word is used to describe Phoebe in Rom. 16:1-2.]. The word was also commonly used for the functions of a head of household. It can also have the meaning “preside.”
(3) “Those who admonish you” indicates that this group takes the lead in admonishing wayward Christians.

iii. Discussion: What does it mean that function precedes office? How would this principle be used in our own situation?

iv. 1 Thess. 5:12-14 indicates that, although the church is in some respects egalitarian, leadership is always necessary.

v. In 1 Thess. 5:14, Paul says to the whole church: “admonish the idlers, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them.” Although a specific group admonishes (5:12), the whole church nevertheless “admonishes the idlers.”

vi. Discussion: Describe the challenges of this new kind of (dialectical) leadership where leaders emerge to do what others are also doing. What are the pitfalls? What are the benefits? What is the definition of an office? What is the relationship between function and office? I suggest: An office is a function that one does regularly and is acknowledged in that role by others. Try other definitions.

3. In Philippians, Paul writes “to the saints in Christ Jesus with the bishops and deacons.”
   a. Here he speaks with titles/nouns: function has become an office.
   b. One might ask about the implications of the fact that he writes specifically to the whole church, including bishops and deacons; i.e., he does not write only to the leaders.

4. Discuss ways that this church can involve the whole congregation in its ministry. What
can leaders do to implement that?
1. We have noticed that leadership emerged in communities in which every member had a role in building up the body of Christ.
   a. In the earliest communities, function preceded title; i.e., leaders were recognized who were already engaged in ministries.
   b. Paul did not envision positions that were superior to others, but the gift of leadership alongside other gifts (1 Cor. 12:28).

2. In Paul’s speech to the elders in Ephesus (Acts 20:17-35), significant aspects of eldership are evident in the terminology of leadership: they are elders, shepherds (pastors), and bishops (supervisors).

3. Since Paul cannot be present in Ephesus on this final trip, he calls the elders to him at Miletus (20:17).
      i. Leadership by a group of “older men” was a common feature in the ancient world, including Judaism.
         (2) Leadership by a council of elders was common in ancient cities, as it is today in villages of the developing world.
      ii. The early Christian communities naturally developed leadership by elders; Paul has ordained elders in every city (Acts 14:23).
   b. Leadership by “older men” was a self-evident fact in ancient societies, where age was connected with wisdom. Discussion: If our post-industrialized world does not look naturally to age for wisdom, what challenges face us when our society does not look automatically to age for leadership.
   c. Before Paul describes the duties of elders, in 20:20-27 he recalls his work among the Ephesians, indicating the preparation of the elders for the task ahead.
      i. Paul’s self-description indicates that he has been a model for the behavior that he expects of his followers. He served the Lord with humility and tears (v. 19).
      ii. Paul gave extensive instruction to the elders (20:20-21, 27), educating them in the Christian faith.
      iii. What does one look for in an elder, based on these passages? Together the two passages point to a) someone who can model personal self-sacrifice for the faith and b) one who has a good understanding of the Christian faith. Discussion: What are the challenges of implementing these two criteria?

   a. “Keep watch over yourselves” indicates that the first duty of leaders is to ensure
their own integrity and character. As with Paul’s personal example, only those who demonstrate sacrifice and commitment should be leaders.

b. The passage makes extensive use of the shepherd image: “and to your flock . . . to feed (literally “to shepherd”) the church of God.
   i. The shepherd image has become one of the primary terms we use for church leaders, although it is used for church leaders only here and in 1 Eph. 4: 11; Peter 5:2 (The Latin word for shepherd is “pastor”; hence the common usage.
   ii. Although the image is in common use, precisely what the image means is not completely clear for those who do not live in agricultural atmosphere.
   iii. Paul explains the role of shepherds in this speech.
      (1) The shepherd’s task is to “be shepherds of the flock” (v. 28NIV). This role includes herding and feeding the flock.
      (2) V. 29 indicates that the shepherd’s task will be to protect the flock from wolves that threaten. The image of wolves points to false teaching.
      (3) The emphasis on herding and feeding is evident in Ezekiel 34:13-16, where God take the role of shepherd.
      (4) Note the role of the shepherd in the twenty-third psalm.
      (5) Jesus’ description of himself as the good shepherd (John 10:7-9) provides another dimension: the selflessness of the shepherd.

c. Discussion: What images come to mind when we speak of the Christian leader as shepherd? Summarize what the image means for us. Some use the image to emphasize the tender care of the shepherd, but not the authority of the shepherd. We should keep in mind that the shepherd is responsible for the flock’s nutrition and protection from wolves; i.e., the shepherd needs to have a good understanding of the Christian faith. The shepherd should also be ready to sacrifice for the sheep. Give examples of some who fulfilled this role admirably.

5. Paul describes the church leaders as overseers (v. 28). The Greek episkopos (epi=over; skopos=see) is most commonly translated “bishop.” It may also be translated “supervisor” (super=over; visor=see). It was the common term in secular life for a supervisor at work or in the field. The passage suggests the authoritative role of elders/bishops.

6. Our challenge, as noted above, is to take roles that first developed in house churches and small communities and apply them to a large church. Discuss the challenge of shepherding in this situation where it is difficult to know all of the people. Discuss the challenge of protecting the church against the wolves=false teachers.

7. In verses 33-35 Pau describes once more the education that he gave in terms of his personal example. If Paul was an example of helping the weak, etc., that should also be the task of the church and the role of the elder.
WEEK FOUR: THE ROLE OF ELDERS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. In previous weeks, we have emphasized that, while the church is like all other communities in requiring leaders, Christians avoid secular forms of leadership by insisting that Jesus offers a countercultural model based on service.
   a. Jesus both modeled and taught that true leadership begins with sacrificing oneself and avoiding all selfish ambitions (Mark 10:41-45).
   b. In the letters of Paul, we saw that leadership occurs within the context where every Christian is active in Christian service.
   c. We saw that function precedes titles and offices (1 Thess. 5:12-14).

2. In Churches of Christ, we have given special attention to the offices described in 1 Timothy and Titus as models for the church of all ages.
   a. In both letters, Paul assumes that he will not be present to guide these churches; Timothy and Titus are not residential ministers, but envoys of Paul taking his instructions. The letters resemble ancient administrative letters sent by an official to local magistrates who hand on instructions to the people.
   b. In 1 Timothy, those who assume leadership roles include bishops (“overseers,” 1 Tim. 3:1), deacons (servants, 3:8), and “women” (3:11; it can be rendered either “wives” [of deacons] or “women” [who are deacons]). Note also the qualifications for widows in 5:3-16. Elders are mentioned in 5:17; we assume (and some dispute) that they are the same as bishops.
   c. Titus mentions only elders (Titus 1:5-16).
   d. In 1 Timothy 3, Paul assumes that the people are already familiar with these offices, while Titus is told to “ordain elders in every city” (Titus 1:5).

3. This form of leadership was common in the ancient world in which communities commonly looked to older men for leadership; i.e., leadership by elders was common in the synagogue and continues to be common in pre-industrial societies.

4. If we look at the context of the instructions in 1 Timothy and Titus, we see that Paul is responding to a crisis facing the church, and that bishops/elders will provide the leadership and stability.
   a. In 1 Tim. 1:3-7 Paul describes the crisis posed by false teachers; cf. also 1:18-20; 4:1-6; 6:3-10.
   b. Paul instructs Titus to ordain elders because of the critical situation posed by false teachers (Titus 1:10-16).
   c. These instructions remind us that the church faces new challenges in every generation that will determine the church’s mission and identity.
   d. The appointment of leaders was not simply to fill out an organizational chart, but to choose those most capable of guiding the church in a time of transition.

Discussion: In what way is the church today in a time of transition? What challenges do we face in determining our identity? Try to envision the difference between the church you know and the church of the next generation? What changes will be welcome? What changes will be destructive?

5. The focus on qualifications calls attention to the character and good habits of Christian leaders who are expected to model the Christian faith.
   a. A source of difficulty for our churches has been the relative absence of a “job description” for elders; all of the attention is given to qualities of character (Note:
we speak of “qualifications,” a term that is not used in 1 Timothy and Titus; perhaps we should speak of “qualities of character.”

b. One of the most important features of 1 Timothy and Titus is the need for leaders to be models of Christian living.
   i. For the focus on modeling the Christian faith, see 1 Tim. 4:12; Titus 2:7.
   ii. One may note also that qualities of character are given in Titus 2 for everyone in the church (old men, old women, young women, young men, slaves) that parallel the list for elders. That is, the qualities suggest that Christian leaders are expected to exhibit the same qualities that are expected for everyone.

c. Our major challenge—and the area in which we have had the most division—concerns how the lists are to function. Discuss the different ways that we use lists: job descriptions, the spouse one is looking for, manuals for installing a computer, etc. We use some lists as checklists and others as guides. How do we interpret these lists? Are they comprehensive of everything we should look for? Are all items of equal weight?

d. We will understand these lists best when we note how they function in 1 Timothy and Titus.
   i. Besides describing good examples (see above), they focus on the good reputation of Christian leaders in the larger community among non-Christians.
      (1) It is striking, especially given our focus on countercultural leadership, that the qualities are primarily secular; i.e., values that would have been appreciated in the society at large. In fact, an inscription discovered some years ago listed the qualities of a good general. The inscription has many parallels to the list in 1 Tim. 3.
      (2) The first in the list (“blameless”; NIV “above reproach”) is the heading for all of the qualities, and the final quality of the list (“a good witness from without,” 3:7) both point to the leader’s reputation among non-Christians.
   ii. The qualities “temperate, self-controlled, respectable” (1 Tim. 3:2) were virtues that were admired by the entire populace.
   iii. “Not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome” were virtues for anyone who accepted responsibility and were expectations for everyone.
   iv. “Not a recent convert” (3:6) is a reminder of the importance of experience for Christian leaders.
   v. “Not a lover of money” is a common Christian virtue (cf. Heb. 3:5; 1 Tim. 6:10; 2 Tim. 3:2). The elders would most likely be responsible for the handling of money, and some were paid (1 Tim. 5:17-18).
   vi. We will look at the remaining qualities next week.

e. Discussion: Since these qualities are basically commonsense attributes of leaders, should we also consider other commonsense virtues that we would want in a leader. Discuss the importance of experience and age as a prerequisite.
1. Although the primary authority belongs to God as mediated through his apostles, Paul recognizes the need for local leadership from the very beginning. Such leadership emerged in the cultural context of the family.
   a. The household setting undoubtedly influenced Christian identity and understanding of leadership.
   b. We note the imagery from family life to describe the church.
      i. For people of that culture, the language of “brotherly love” (Rom. 12:10; 1 Thess 4:9; Heb. 13:1; 1 Pet. 1:22) applied only to actual family members.
      ii. The most pervasive image for the church came from family life; note the references to “brother,” “sister,” “mother” in the faith.
      iii. The fact that Christians saw each other as siblings is significant for their understanding of leadership; i.e., Paul sometimes refers to himself as the father to his churches, but no local person is explicitly referred to with this language.
   c. Ancient writers considered the family the proving ground for leadership of all kinds.
   d. Although Christian leadership emerged within the house church where Christians saw the leader on the analogy to the Roman father, Christians adopted only some of the roles of the Roman father.
      i. The Roman father was known for his absolute authority over the household, a quality that Christians did not adopt.
      ii. The Roman father had the responsibility for the education of the children and the well-being of the household--roles that were adopted in the house churches by the leaders.

2. In the ancient household model, churches owned no property and had no budgets (i.e., they handled money and paid their teachers, but had no fixed expenses). Discuss how the changed situation of property ownership, legal liability, etc., alters the responsibility of elders.

3. Christian understandings of leadership were shaped in the context of the household.
   a. “Hospitable” (philoxenos, lit. “friendship with strangers”) in 3:2 (cf. Titus 1:8) refers to receiving strangers in one’s home (not inviting one’s best friends to one’s home).
   b. Note the high value placed on hospitality as a virtue for all in Rom. 12:13; Heb. 13:2; 1 Pet. 4:9.
   c. The strangers in this case were often Christians from other cities who needed a place to lodge. One would not have the opportunity to do a background check on these guests.
   d. Those who were “hospitable” were often hosts to the entire house church.
   e. Discussion: We might ask how this quality translates into our own time when we do not meet in house churches. The basic idea of welcoming strangers would apply in all circumstances.

4. “Husband of one wife” appears in both 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6. Cf. the qualification for the enrolled widow in 1 Tim. 5:9, “wife of one husband.” The phrase is as ambiguous in Greek as it is in English. Possible meanings:
a. Not a polygamist.
b. Not remarried after being widowed.
c. Not widowed.
d. Not divorced and remarried.
e. Here one should keep in mind the overall tenor of the qualifications. Most likely he is describing one who is exemplary in family life.

5. The household setting shaped the “job description” for the bishop/elder.
   a. A source of much confusion in our churches is the near absence of a job description for elders; consequently, people work with conflicting assumptions about what elders do.
   b. The job description appears in 1 Tim. 3:4; note the details that are given here.
      i. “Managing his own household.” (NIV “family”). The assumption is that the elder, unlike the heretics (cf. 1 Tim. 4:3), affirms marriage and family. “Manage” (proistemi) has the dual connotation of “be at the head of/rule” and “care for/give aid.” The NIV renders it “leadership” in Rom. 12:8; other translations have “give aid” in this passage. Someone has suggested that the word means “caring authority” and “authoritative care.” Thus the word is appropriate for a father figure.
      ii. “Having children in subjection” suggests again that the home is a proving ground for public duties. A chaotic home life would not be a recommendation. Recall biblical stories of leaders who did not have children in subjection (1 Sam. 1-2). Discussion: One might ask how well this translates into our own time. How much responsibility should parents take for their children. Here the passage doesn’t comment on the age of the children (six or sixteen?).
      iii. The parallel in Titus frames the qualification differently: “Having children who believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient” (Titus 1:6). The qualifying phrase suggests adolescent or grown children.
   c. In 1 Tim. 3:5 the parenthetical phrase indicates more about the job description and the relationship between family and church. Note the parallel between “manage” and “take care of.” This comment defines further the role of the elder. Elders have the authority to care for the church, look out for its best interests, etc.
   d. Christians have different assumptions about the nature of the authority of elders. One model is highly authoritarian, while the other is a reaction to the authoritarian model. Discuss how the family metaphor determines the nature of the authority, preventing it from going to either extreme. What is the challenge of taking this household model into the contemporary church.

6. The modern church, like the ancient church, requires the leadership of those who exemplify the Christian life, teach the Christian faith, and guide the church in its future.
   a. The church is not a representative democracy.
   b. Although elders do not necessarily “micromanage” every aspect of the church, they guide the church in every aspect of its life.
   c. The elders gain authority by attaining the credibility that is rooted in acts of service.
Week Six

LEADERSHIP IN A TIME OF CHANGE: TRUSTEES OF THE FAITH

1. We begin with the summary of what we have learned about the leadership of the church.
   a. In week one, we saw that the church defines leadership, not in secular terms of power and prestige, but in Christian terms as the willingness to serve (and even suffer) for the sake of God’s people (Matt. 20:20-28).
   b. In Christian leadership function precedes titles (verbs precede nouns): 1 Thess. 5:12-14 uses verbs rather than nouns to describe leaders.
   c. According to Acts 20:17-35, the shepherd metaphor is used alongside the nouns elder and bishop/overseer/supervisor.
      i. The shepherd imagery suggests care and feeding as well as authority and protection from wolves.
      ii. The term *elder* is a reminder that leadership is connected with maturity.
   d. In the qualifications for elders in 1 Timothy and Titus, the focus is on personal habits and character: those who live exemplary lives.

2. Previous lessons have indicated the importance of the teaching function of elders (i.e., shepherds feeding the sheep); teaching is of utmost importance in the pastoral epistles.
   a. We note the circumstances: false teachers are promoting bad ideas (1 Tim. 1:3-7); someone must assume the teaching role.
   b. One of the qualifications in 1 Timothy 3 is “able to teach” (3:2); i.e., to counter bad teaching with good teaching.
   c. Titus 1 is more emphatic about the elder’s role as teacher.
      i. Note that after Paul gives the qualifications for elders in Titus 1:5-9, he gives the reason: “For there are many rebellious people, ... they must be silenced” (1:10-11). This is the crisis for which elders are the answer.
      ii. The elder is “entrusted with God’s work” (1:7); i.e., the elder is a “trustee.” The term (Gk *oikonomos*) was used for the manager of a household or estate. It could be translated “manager” or “steward.” It refers to a person in a position of responsibility who handled accounts. That is, he was *entrusted* with the property of another. Note Jesus’ parables about *stewards* (Lk 12:42; 16; 1, 8) and the functions of those who had a trust.
   d. Titus 1:9 elaborates on the nature of the trust: “he must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.”
   e. Although 2 Timothy never mentions elders specifically, Timothy’s charge is to “entrust to reliable men who will also teach others.”
   f. On several occasions, the Pastoral Epistles use the banking metaphor of the “deposit” (also translated “trust”) to indicate that the Christian faith is a trust to be passed from one generation to another (cf. 1 Tim. 6:20, literally “guard the deposit”).
   g. Discussion: When we recall that Timothy and Titus were both itinerant envoys of
Paul, we see that the only people responsible for handling the trust is the group of elders. How do we translate all of this into the modern age? Discuss the challenges we face.

i. To what extent should an elder be a professional teacher? What about those who are not gifted as public teachers? In what ways do we actually teach?

ii. What is the challenge we face when elders commonly have professions of their own, while the minister is more likely to have an education in Scripture?

iii. Discuss what you expect of trustees. What is the role of trustees at the bank? At the university?

iv. What is the most important aspect of Paul’s emphasis on the trusteeship of teaching for us to ensure in every age? Surely we want someone who is knowledgeable about the Christian faith. This advice doesn’t limit the role to professional scholars.

v. Another quality mentioned in 1 Timothy is that the elder not be a recent convert (1 Tim. 3:6, literally “not a neophyte”). Experience is a major qualification. Discussion: Reflect on the importance of this qualification and the kinds of experiences that qualify one. Should we think in terms of experience with a specific community; i.e., knowing its history and memories? Or is general experience acceptable?

3. Any study of elders would be incomplete without some reflection on the response of the congregation to the elders. Leadership must have legitimacy among those who are led. We see a few comments about the responsibility of members.

a. According to 1 Thess. 5:12, Paul says, “Respect those who work hard . . .” Then he adds, “Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work.”

b. 1 Peter 5:1-5 presents advice to both elders and “younger men,” indicating reciprocal responsibilities.

i. Elders should not “lord it over” the congregation; i.e., should not be authoritarian.

ii. “Younger men” should be submissive to the elders.

iii. Although this passage does not precisely speak of elders and congregation, it offers a model for congregational cooperation.

c. Discuss the challenges of implementing this relationship between the leaders and those who are led. What are the situations in which this balance is disturbed? What are the difficult situations where this balance is difficult to maintain?

4. Having looked at the specific qualities in 1 Timothy and Titus, one might ask if the list is comprehensive. Does it cover everything that needs to be considered? Can you think of other areas that need to be considered for the good of the church?