

Leading God's Church: *Qualified Character* Part 2 1 Timothy 3:1-7

"Shepherd the flock of God that is among you"

Introduction: The call for certain types of leaders is nothing new. 1 Samuel tells the story of two leaders, both chosen by God, but one was a result of a sinful request of the people, and the other was the one that would reflect the heart of God Himself. You'll remember that at the end of the era of judges, Israel was led by Samuel the priest, but his sons were worthless, greedy, despicable leaders. This gave opportunity for the people to ask for their hearts desire: *give us a king so we'll be like EVERY OTHER NATION* (1Sam. 8:5). The problem with this request was it was a direct affront to God and His leadership, since He was their king. But God, as He does, gave the people their request, giving them the king they wanted but did not need. He gave them the man Saul, who had the quintessential *look* of a leader: handsome, young, and literally a head taller than any other Israelite. The people saw him and said, "Yep, that's our king!" The problem was, Saul was a terrible leader whom God regretted making king (1 Sam. 15:11) and a judgment to the people, This was juxtaposed with David, who was a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14), one who would reflect the leadership qualities God gave and sought. David was not the obvious choice. Though handsome and ruddy with a stellar set of eyes, he was the youngest of 8 boys, all of whom looked the part. David was the one who watched the sheep, the runt, the annoying little brother. But as Samuel came to anoint a new king out of Jesse's house, the Lord said the timeless words about leadership and service in His Kingdom:

*Do not look on his appearance or the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: **man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.***
1 Samuel 16:7

This is exactly what we think about when we talk about qualified leadership in God's church. We are not looking for those that **look** the part by external experience or personality types, but who a person is at the level of their heart, their inner man. **What is freeing about this for all of us?** God uses all people, even the least likely, to serve in His house, His family, and it has everything to do with who you are rather than what others would define what makes up a worthy worker. Over the next several weeks we will continue to look at what qualifies leaders in God's church, those who teach and those who serve, but the foundation of both is the same: the greatest qualification is a **new heart**, moved from stone to flesh and yielded to the Lordship of Christ Jesus through His death and resurrection and the forgiveness He brings to sinners like us. These qualifications, then, are what every leader in the church must **possess**, and what every believer in the church should strive to **attain**.

Tangible Qualification #1: *A Desire for the Work*

Holy Aspiration

Last week we looked at the beginning of the qualifications for the specific role or function of leadership in God's church, and that was of pastor/elder. The first qualification is that a **man wants to do the work of a shepherd**, in knowing, leading, feeding, and protecting the people of the church. The inference is that he understood that the work would be noble, but difficult and costly. If someone had every other qualification on the list but simply did not have a desire, he would not be qualified.

Hearty Perspiration

If the desire is truly there and generated by the Spirit, the desire will be accompanied by preparation, both in the hard work of knowing the Scripture as well as preparing his life and family to lead in a broad way. Along with preparation his life would be characterized by **shepherding before he became an elder**, meaning that he does not start the work when he gets the office but is qualified for the office because he is already recognized as an elder.

Tangible Qualification #2: Character to back up the Desire

Moral Mastery

"Therefore, an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable..."

Last week we looked at the moral qualifications of a pastor/elder. It started with an over-arching moral call to being **above reproach**, which means that there is nothing to hold onto, nothing to drag him down when it comes to his Godly character. This matters much since an elder is both a **model and representative of Christ**, so both effectiveness and reputation are on the line with how an elder carries himself. We looked at how he must be consistent in his life in the church, his home, neighborhood, job, and community. I was having coffee with my buddy Ryan on Friday at Starbucks and had multiple people I knew from our church and community drive thru and wave. I was reminded that there are few places in Simi Valley that we do not know someone or are recognized as a pastor of this church. That is a great reminder that how I act *in all places matter*, and will either contribute to the message of the gospel or detract.

Next he must be the husband of one wife, committed in mind, heart, body to one woman. He must be pure sexually and keep the marriage bed sacred (Heb. 13:4). He also must be **settled in life and mind**, sober-minded, self-controlled, and respectable. He has worked through the peril of youth that is trying to figure out direction and meaning of life. He is not **easily swayed**, does not freak out under pressure, and is steady in the midst of heat. His life is one that others want to emulate, respect, and ask how he got to where he is today.

Interpersonal Interaction

"...hospitable..."

The next two have to do with his life of ministry. We'll dig into his life at home next week, but for now, the idea of **hospitable** has to do with a "love of strangers" We all default to loving people like us. That is actually easy and is not distinctive. But it loving strangers that is difficult and flows out of a love for Christ. It's why Peter said, "*Show hospitality to one another without grumbling*" (1 Pet. 4:9). Loving the stranger is hard. This means that the **life and home** of an elder is open to those that are not known (yet), are not just friends, and need care. I love the testimony of Rosaria Butterfield who became a follower of Christ after being invited into a pastor's home after he wrote her a letter. Rosaria was a professor at Syracuse, a staunch feminist, and practicing lesbian. But she was overwhelmed by the warm welcome of a pastor and wife who had her over for dinner, engaged in conversation, and did this over months of time. It was these conversations that helped open her eyes to the realities of Biblical truth and glories of Jesus Christ. Rosaria is now married with children and has made her home a place of gospel ministry.¹

¹ Please, please, please try to read Rosaria's books "*The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert*" and "*The Gospel comes with a House Key*."

Appropriate Ability

"...able to teach..."

In a few weeks we will talk about Deacons, those who serve specifically in the church. The one distinction between elders and deacons is the **ability or skill in teaching**. This DOES NOT MEAN he *can* teach, it means *HE DOES TEACH*. He must be equipped in God's Word to be able to teach proactively and reactively, or as Titus 1 puts it, "*that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also rebuke those who contradict it.*" (1:9). Giving instruction means to teach all that God has commanded, to understand the scope of Scripture, and how to glorify God in Christ. "*whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies-- in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To Him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen*" (1 Pet. 4:11). He also must be able to answer error and false ideas from Scripture, since there will ALWAYS be false ideas coming into the church. Every elder must be theologically skilled and if he does not teach, he cannot be considered an elder. This does NOT mean he has to be a preacher per se, as Paul addresses there will be some who focus MORE on preaching and teaching than others (1 Tim. 5:17), but all must do it in some form. A pastors teaching allows the church to **maintain a high level perspective, to keep their eyes fixed on Christ, and remember their mission.**

Controlled Contentment

"*not a drunkard, not violent, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.*"

The next major category has to do with controlled contentment, and here we get the first of the **negative commands**. Notice in verse 3 that there are **4 negatives** with one positive in the middle which informs all of them. Each of the negatives are righted by **gentleness**, and are a product of being under control rather than being out of control in areas of life that leaders, men, and humans struggle with.

- **NOT a Drunkard** - The idea of this word is one who "lingers long over wine." It is important to understand what this says and what it does not say to understand it completely. In the culture of Paul's day and in the church at Ephesus, wine was a common drink but it was also a much more diluted liquid than our wine today. That meant that one would have to drink much more to get the point of drunkenness, and also that Paul WAS NOT prohibiting drinking alcohol in general.

What is the problem with drinking and drunkenness? All things, even the fruit of the vine, was given by God to us for our enjoyment when matched with thankfulness (1 Tim.4:4). However, we are all prone to allowing good things become ultimate things, which not only make them **idols in our lives**, but they become controlling. Paul said in **Ephesians 5:18** "*Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.*" In other words, drunkenness **controls us instead of being filled and controlled by the Holy Spirit**. I was talking to a friend and we were commenting how easily something like technology and screens can be controlling for our kids and us. We check out of life, enter into a world within a little square, and check out of reality.

An elder must not be controlled by alcohol also because he must show how to properly use his freedom. We may all have a **right** to do something, but if that right is exercised at the peril of another, it no longer becomes freedom but a stumbling block for others (1 Cor. 8:9). An elder must be aware that what he may do in freedom, someone watching may take to excess and in so doing, will violate his conscience. An elder may drink, but he will not press his right to do so, but will freely give up that right for the sake of others, showing others that our freedom in Christ

is to build up people, not for selfishness. (1 Cor. 8:9-10). **True Christian freedom is the right to give up our freedoms** since we are content in Christ.

- **NOT Violent** - Men have struggled with violence since Genesis 4. Cain let anger control him and reverted to violence over his brother Abel, killing him because of jealousy. They are supposed to be protectors, using their physical makeup to provide and protect those they love, but can easily use that strength out of frustration. **"What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask."** (James 4:1-2). A person that reverts to violence or any kind of physical intimidation is one that has a war raging inside of him that he has not dealt with. An elder never reverts to violence or intimidation to get his way.
- **NOT Quarrelsome** - Again, the source of quarrels is NOT getting what you want and trying to argue someone into it. **"It is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife, but every fool will be quarreling."** (Prov. 20:3) There is a immense difference between communication, discussion, and helpful disagreement and quarreling. If you have ever had a close relationship with someone, you know the difference. Quarreling means one is not listening, seeking to understand, and is simply trying to win. When I was first married I thought that because I could think more quickly on my feet with Erin, and "win" the discussion, we'd be all good. I realized quickly that I could win by quarreling and **lose** every time. An elder does not quarrel to exercise leadership and influence.
- **NOT a lover of money** - Paul was clear about our interaction with money: **"But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people in to ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kind of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs."** (1 Tim. 6:9-10). This is true of every person, but particularly for elders, since often they would have access in the budgeting or distributing of money. Elders would oversee the care of widows and those in need of the church, and in the modern day church often oversee the entire budget of the church. Notice here that the qualifier is NOT necessarily a person who hordes wealth or who is actually wealthy, but someone who **loves money itself**, the security, perceived power, and material gain it offers. The love of money leads to lying, deceiving, and taking advantage of others. As a model, an elder not only will have integrity with the church's money, but will have a life that does not revolve around this love. Money is clearly necessary, but it cannot be ultimate. The Biblical antidote; **"Keep your life free from the love of money, and be content with what you have, for He has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'"** (Heb. 13:5). The counter is both **contentment and trust**, knowing that one can never have enough money to satisfy a love for it, and God is the One who ultimately provides. Far too easily we think our money is our own, that IT is our identity, and that we can buy contentment (if only I had _____ I'd be _____). An elder is settled in this area, with contented control over his view toward money.
- **BUT is Gentle** - It's telling that **gentleness** is the counter to being out of control with wine, temper, anger, and money. Gentleness has the idea of *patience, forbearance, and yielding*. Men especially are prone to try to **dominate** their surrounding, believing leadership demands a strong hand. But **true manliness**, true strength that is under control is defined as gentleness. This is the opposite of quarreling, and instead of intimidation it seeks to **"show perfect courtesy**

to all people." (Titus 3:5). This is how opponents are to be corrected (2 Tim. 2:25), and how we are to learn from Jesus (Matt. 11:29), who is gentle and lowly in heart, and in doing this we will find rest for our souls. Gentleness displays an understanding that ALL are made in God's image and that we are dependent on God to work in people's lives, instead of trying to force people to change.

Familial Flourishing

"He must manage his own household well, with all dignity, keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?"

As goes the leader, so goes the church. We could also say, "as goes the home, so goes the church". The home is not only a proving ground for leadership, but the way our homes operate should mirror the way our church operates, and the opposite is true as well. Note here that the word "**household**" is the same word (*oikos*) that is used of God's church in verse 15. Far too often we can think of the church in different terms or a different metaphor. It can feel like a business, organization, club, or special assembly. But the fact that Paul uses **family or household is profound**. We think about family differently than all other organizations. There is a different expectation, commitment, and even overlooking of quirks that we have with family than we do for a business or club. If you want to know if an man is qualified to be a pastor/elder, look no further than his home, or no further than interviewing his wife.

Notice that he must exercise dignified leadership over his house in the form of guidance and loving discipline. This is proven in **parenting of children**. A loving husband and father will have his children under control. Titus 1:6 says it this way, "*and his children are believers (or faithful) and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.*" Some believe this means that an elders children must have **saving faith** as a qualification for their dad to be an elder, but that IS NOT THE CASE. The point is that an elder and father lead with loving discipline and consistent modeling, but no dad/pastor can grant salvation, nor is a pastor on the hook for all the people to be saved in the church. The real issue is this: are your kids **under control, is their father active in discipline, and is he playing his role in that**. I remember a youth pastor I had whose kids were always out of control, and he not only did not discipline them, it seemed like he was oblivious to the issue. It hurt his credibility. He would be talking with a parent of a student while his kids were burning the place down behind him.

This means that if an **elders first pastoring priority is his home**. If for whatever reason he has a child who is out of control, he may step away from being an elder for a time to pursue that child. It also means that if something changes in the home, through illness or the necessity of helping other family, he may step aside for a time. It also means that **all fathers here** are pastors of their homes. We each are called to lead, care for, feed, and protect those in our home. Finally, if you want to be trained to be a leader in the church, the home is the place to start. How are you leading your wife? Are you involved in the training and discipline of your kids? Do you give them a model to follow and if they followed you, would they become more like Christ?

Timelessly Tested

*"He must not be a **new convert**, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil."*

Finally, an elder must be **mature**, meaning he is not a novice in life or faith. The idea behind a "new convert" (*neophytos*) is that of something being newly planted. It was used of planting trees, and a

newly planted tree that has yet been able to grow deep roots. If we do this in Simi Valley, it will be assured that when the winds blow, that tree will get knocked down. But seasoned trees can stand the test, and will not fall when the winds come. An elder must be **tested**, one who has been put through the paces, has faced trials, hardships, and still stands up. Up until now, the list has not included a most important word. Paul has not mentioned **pride or humility** yet, but that is the idea here. A seasoned believer is no longer looking for a **status symbol**, no longer looking for a resume builder, and no longer believes that influence only comes from position. But a new believer can easily get sucked into the vortex of positional leadership and fall into the same temptation as the Morning Star, the devil himself who saw himself as not only God's equal, but wanted His position. A new convert will be prone to fall victim to thinking of himself more highly than he ought, and letting service revolve around himself. Humility is a characteristic that all leaders struggle with and can **ONLY** be proven over time.

Concluding Thoughts:

The call with all of this, is not only that we have qualified leadership, but that we are ALL growing in our maturity, love for Christ, and godliness.

- **How is your home being used for ministry?** Is it a place where the stranger is loved, where the gospel is proclaimed, and where leadership is exercised? What needs to change or be strengthened with how you view your home?
- **How do you define masculinity? Do you see it as being gentle?** Is there any aspect of your life, ministry, or parenting that is prone to intimidation, or do you exercise gentleness?
- **Is your life free from being controlled by alcohol?**
- **Are you content?** How does that affect how you view your money?