

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Identifying Men of God, Pt 1

1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-11

Keywords: Leadership, Elders, Shepherding, Fighters, Men of God

PowerPoint Presentation included: NONE

SermonAudio Blurb: It is hard to grow well as a Christian if you do not have good examples to follow. The Apostles started out by following Jesus. The early church followed the Apostles. Quickly the Apostles began to train men to fill additional leadership roles within the young Church. Paul was a master discipler who called the people to follow him as he followed Christ. And so on down through the ages. For the men of any church there are two basic things they should be doing: Either they are leading as godly examples to follow or they are following godly examples. Anything else is wasted effort and time. The next few sermons describe what it looks like to be a man of God. The purpose is to help men identify who they should be following and to give them a plan of action to put into place in their spiritual walk.

I. Introduction.

- A. Last message we saw a simple, yet powerful description of a man of God.
 - 1. What he runs from.
 - 2. What he runs toward.
 - 3. What he fights for.
 - 4. What he holds onto.
- B. Four characteristics of a man of God. And therefore four challenges to us at MDF who are men.
 - 1. Shall we rise up? Shall we decide to be done with lesser things?
 - 2. Shall we set our faces like flint toward the future and be determined that in whatever we do, big or small, mundane or glorious, that it will be done out of a conviction of the supremacy of God in our lives?
- C. Message was designed to confront and convict. To stir up your emotions and to help you do serious self-examination.
- D. There is a constant need to grow as Christians. It is a non-negotiable.
 - 1. You cannot merely maintain and coast along. This is only done when you are declining. A resting and reclining Christian is in an unhealthy place.
 - 2. Every Christian is to grow up into a conformity of Jesus Christ.

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3. But for men there is a special charge to lead the way.
 - a. A man is not to merely grow in Christ alone. Every man should be considering how he can grow so as to lead others in their Christian walk.
 - b. To be the shepherd and guide to those within their household.
 - c. To come alongside a younger or older man who needs a godly example to follow.
 - d. To rise up and lead other men to be men of God.
- E. How do we do this? What is the standard by which we judge ourselves and others in this important endeavor?
 1. It is to be done through men who are officially recognized leaders of the church. They come by many names but you know them as pastors, elders, overseers or shepherds.
 2. The bible is clear that God has established a form of leadership that is good for the health of the local church. And in establishing this office God did not leave us to guess what type of man should hold it. Rather, clear character points are described and mandated for those in that office.
 3. My intention behind these next couple of sermons is not to teach on the office of elder. Rather it is to use the qualifications of an elder as a way for each man in the church to judge themselves.
 4. It is to help each of us have a sober-minded view of ourselves and what we are or are not doing as men who are called to grow up in all aspects into Christ our Lord.
- F. It is easy to desire to be a leader. It is easy to see the need to have leaders. But it is a whole different thing to be qualified to lead a church.
 1. It is not a business, though too often people think it is.
 2. It is not a product nor does it truly have a brand.
 3. It is not made up of teachings or events.
 4. The local church is a gathering of people who are followers of Jesus Christ through faith in Him and His saving work. They are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. They are exceedingly precious to God and they are to be literally shepherded by those God sets as leaders.

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- G. For the next two sermons I plan to lay out key qualifications given to us by God for those who could be elders of MDF.
 - 1. I ask each male member here is to ask themselves if they qualify?
 - 2. Then I ask you to identify an area you might be weak in and begin to prayerfully consider what must change?
- H. Read 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-11. Keep both sections open.

II. Key Qualifications for Church Leadership.

- A. The first thing that should be noted is a reasonable desire to be in leadership (vs 7).
 - 1. “Aspire” speaks of stretching oneself out so as to reach something.
 - 2. Why this opening comment by Paul?
 - a. Likely there are those in the church that Paul knows will try to function like the church’s conscience. They can be quite frustrating to deal with as they have the ability to somehow read people’s motives in a multitude of ways.
 - b. These would be the type who would hear a man express interest in becoming an elder one day and they would question if he has a heart of pride.
 - c. But there is also the person who has an overdeveloped conscience on his own. Often you will find a man desired to be an elder but never let an existing elder know this because they feared it might be out of pride.
 - 3. Paul puts this to rest once and for all here. It is a good work that he desires.
 - a. The term for good here is not one of moral goodness. Rather it is speaking of something beautiful or noble. It carries the idea of powerful and strong as in the steel of a sword. If it is a “good” sword it is because the steel is strong.
 - b. Paul is saying that this is a work and an office that ought to be seen by all as a beautiful, strong and excellent thing. It is good. Good for the man to hold and good for the church to arrange itself under.
 - c. The work of an elder is for the well-being of the church. A church’s health is only as healthy as the leadership. A weak

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leadership, a sinful leadership, or a vacillating leadership only harms the church.

4. This means that the church members ought to view it as good and desirable.
 - a. It means wives should desire to see their husbands stretch out their hearts toward this task. That they should see how they might be of help toward that goal. That they might turn this into a point of prayer on behalf of their husband and their sons.
 - b. It means that those who have utterly no desire for the office should examine why this is so. What is it that makes them resist moving in that direction?
 - c. It is the need of the hour for our church that men rise up and stretch out their hands toward this office.
5. However, desire is not a requirement to be an elder.
 - a. Paul is not saying that you can't be an elder if you don't desire it.
 - b. It is normal for a man to be reluctant to become an elder if he is giving it serious consideration. It is a good work but it is also a hard work—seldom does praise and reward come from doing the easy things.
 - c. So do not dismiss yourself from this series if the first thought you have regarding being an elder is, “Nope!” Rather, ask why?
6. Desire is important and good but it is not what will determine if a man becomes an elder, character will.
 - a. “Necessary” means just that, it is necessary for certain things to be present in the man's life.
 - b. Character is far more important than skill or knowledge. You can have degrees and skill sets that are vast and great, but if they are not joined to godly character then they are not to be considered when choosing elders.
 - c. It is important to note that these are qualities that already exist in the person. They are not what he should learn to become; rather, it is what he must already be.

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- d. Why?
 - (1) What Paul lists in these two letters are behind the scenes sort of things. They are not the public face that is presented on a Sunday but what happens throughout the week.
 - (2) Over and over again we find men who are in pastoral leadership but are truly living a double life. We learn later of their abuses and their folly and sin.
 - (3) We learn how those in leadership knew of their problems but looked the other way because they were such gifted preachers or leaders.
 - (4) Willow Creek just put out a job description for a new Senior Pastor that clearly is designed to find a CEO rather than a shepherd. No real concern for character, but he must be a man of vision who can motivate others.
 - (5) Paul rejects this and says it is the hidden person, the real person, who is in view. He may not be the best teacher and the greatest of theologians. He may not garner a huge following, but he is a man of great and true character.
- e. This is important to remember because the elders are to be our examples as well as our leaders.
 - (1) It is out of the overflow of their character that they will lead. And if they are true men of God they will stand fast on the truth and not budge. They will resist the lies of Satan and they will flee foolish controversies.
 - (2) These are the men you can point to and say, “Be like them.”
 - (a) In Hebrews 13:7b it speaks of the fact that we are to consider those who led us and having seen the outcome of their life we are to imitate them.
 - (b) Who is your model, men?
 - (c) How often do you find yourself asking or watching your elders in life, conduct and decisions?
 - (d) How often do you invite your elders to speak into your life and decisions?

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- B. The first character quality is that of above reproach and is found in both letters.
1. It is best to see this as an umbrella term that defines all of the other character qualities.
 2. This idea of above-reproach speaks of there not being able to have a legitimate charge against the person. These are men who have chosen to carefully watch over their lives and establish a habit of godliness.
 3. These are men who are Spirit-controlled, Word-defined and Christ-following. They are men who love Christ and love His Church and live in such a way as to be faithful undershepherds.
 4. A man who is above reproach is a man who makes it his habit when facing a decision to ask if it is good, right, excellent, proper and such. This is especially true when the bible is not explicit regarding what is right or wrong.
 5. A man with a character that is above reproach is quick to repent when found to be wrong. Who models humility and a right understanding of his own weakness and sin.
 6. He is a man whose habit is to chose the right way and walk in that manner regardless of the cost. The church expects it from him. They know he chooses a God-glorifying position and would be surprised to see anything less.
 7. All of this is so necessary for a man to be able to shepherd God's people.
 - a. Paul warned the elders in Ephesus to guard themselves and the flock of God. He reminds them that these were the people for whom Christ shed His blood.
 - b. It is hard for a person to be rebuked or corrected. Few enjoy it. But it is even more difficult to be rebuked by one whose life is not above reproach.
 8. A man who is above reproach has learned first to shepherd his own heart and life He guards his heart. He has learned how to take up the yoke of Christ and to follow Him.
 - a. This is why an elder cannot be a young Christian.

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- b. And it is why this is such an important umbrella idea. It is capturing the wholeness of his life and saying that you cannot bring a charge against it.
9. How does this happen?
- a. It happens when you become less concerned with what you are and what you may accomplish and more concerned with what you ought to become.
 - b. It is accepting the Scripture's description of you as a sinner saved by grace.
 - c. It is embracing the grace and learning to walk in it rather than the legalism of the Law. To be freed to obey because in Christ you are already forgiven.
 - d. When you want to be more fully conformed into the image of your Savior even though it seldom is met by pleasure or approval in this age.
 - e. It happens when you realize that this age is as corrupt as the bible says it is and you begin to reject it's claws and hooks in your life.
 - (1) Where you truly learn to present yourself as a living sacrifice to God each day.
 - (2) Where you resist the world's pressure to conform you in any way and instead let it be renewed daily in the Word of God.
 - (3) It comes when you decide that it is necessary and good to walk in a manner worthy of the calling that you have in Jesus Christ.
 - (4) It means you are less impressed with this age and more interested in the age to come. The result is that you keep your eyes focused where Christ is, seated in the heavens.
 - f. And when it happens it will overflow into every other aspect of your life eventually.
- C. In Titus 1:9 we see another key character quality—doctrinally faithful.
- 1. The key point here is that they are men who hold fast to sound doctrine.

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2. They do not learn theology because it is fun or intriguing. They do not learn it out of curiosity and a love of learning.
3. They are men who learn it so as to have something true and solid to hold fast in the difficult times so as to not waver and flee.
4. Note the two-fold reason given in the term “that.”
 - a. On a positive side it is to exhort the people in sound doctrine.
 - (1) They don’t merely speak good words. They don’t merely give excellent quotes for tweets.
 - (2) These are men who have committed themselves to know the Word of God in such a way that it compels them to exhort/encourage/teach sound doctrine.
 - (3) They are not weak on doctrine. They are not vague when it comes to biblical truth. They are men who learn theology and learn it well. But for the purpose of using it in a good and positive way in the life of others.
 - b. On the negative side it is to expose wrong doctrine and living.
 - (1) Various translation use refute, rebuke, correct or even encourage. The term is broad in its application but the essence of its meaning is to expose something for what it is and bring the person to see it as such.
 - (2) This is hard work and it is expected of every elder. Not just paid elders/pastors but every elder.
 - (3) And this is to be already present in their lives. The church should see this on display as they grow in respect to their salvation. This is their reputation.
 - (4) They are not passive in their listening but active. They are seeking to hear well and then let it sift through sound doctrine to see if it is trustworthy. If it isn’t then they engage the person to show them the error.
 - c. This starts in the man’s own life. He sets it in his heart to learn sound doctrine. To read good theology. To listen carefully to his teachers so as to grasp the theology that is driving the teacher’s point.

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- d. But it also then affects his friendships and his marriage and home.
 - (1) A man like this is not turning a blind eye to wrong thinking when it comes out of the mouth of his friend, his wife, or his children.
 - (2) He is gently and faithfully instructing them and challenging them. Not as some pious jerk who knows better but as a man who love truth because it is truth. Because he loves God who is truth itself!
 - (3) He seeks to battle the constant pressures for his home to conform to this age. He fights it hard and without fear.
 - (4) And the church sees it.
- 5. Notice the reason given in vss 10-11:
 - a. There are “many” men who are rebellious, empty-talkers, and deceivers.
 - b. These are men who come into the church and create no end of trouble. They insert themselves into households and turn the people’s ears away from their faithful shepherds and onto themselves.
 - c. These are the men who love to critique their pastors but never stand and offer themselves before Christ as men of God. They will find fault and they will murmur but they will not allow themselves to be examined by the truth of God’s Word.
 - d. If it was true in the days of Titus, how much more true is it today where people come into households in a variety of ways? Through books and TV and the internet and apps—the ways seem almost endless.
- 6. And so an elder is one who has such a hold on sound doctrine that when facing bad doctrine he is able to show it for what it is. He is able to speak it into the lives of those around him as a good influence in their lives. And he is able to argue in such a way that he can silence dangerous fools.

III. Conclusion.

- A. Beloved, these are not little standards, but they are also not impossible standards.

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- B. I began this short series with the old hymn, Rise up O men of God. The key statement for us today is “Have done with lesser things; Give heart and soul and mind and strength; To serve the King of kings.”
- C. I do not preach this to rebuke you and I certainly do not preach this to discourage you.
 - 1. I preach this because to be this sort of man is good and right and full of blessing.
 - 2. Each man here should desire it and each of you ought, in the strength of the Spirit, push yourself to stretch forth your hand and take hold of it.
 - 3. Your wife and children need you to do this for their well-being.
 - a. Your sons need this so that they know the path they should walk before they become men. Oh fathers, give your sons a well-trodden path to follow you.
 - b. Your wife needs you to be this. Let her know that your life is such that even if what you decide is frightening to her that she knows it is done out of a conviction of what is true, right, biblical and above reproach. Give her that confidence.
 - c. And young men, your future wife and children need this now. So do not delay. Do not foolishly think you can decide later to become a man whose life is above reproach. Take this time now, before you are encumbered by the care of a household, to grow in your doctrine and life.
 - 4. Your country needs you to be this for its well-being.
 - a. Our nation is full of darkness and we are running head-long into destruction from within.
 - b. And we need men who can stand without fear for what is true when the entire culture says otherwise.
 - c. We need men who can speak boldly the truth of the gospel in a time when evil is called good and those who love the light are punished and threatened.
 - d. This is not a time to figure out how to be vague and non-threatening. It is a time to stand as God’s men and speak with the

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certainty of a prophet of Israel who would confront the evil with the sober words of “Thus saith the Lord. . . .”

5. But beloved, it is also because the church needs you.
 - a. Even if you don't become an elder in the official capacity, certainly each of you can see the massive impact you would have in the lives of all who are sitting around you.
 - b. Perhaps you have never faced a frightening thing with a trusted companion. But it is a good thing to stand ready to fight, even though you are afraid, and know that the one beside shall be there to the end, whatever it may be. But that is what it is like when an elder stands up against lies and falsehood and knows that beside him is another who loves truth as well.
 - c. The church needs men who are willing to shepherd Christ's sheep.
 - d. Men who will do the hard thing rather than the safe one. Men who will order their lives in such a way as to promote the power of the Spirit in their life rather than quench it.
- D. Beloved, desire alone will not suffice.
 1. It will take courage. Courage that is borne out of truth and conviction.
 2. Courage that comes out of a sincere love of the brethren and a love of truth.
 3. It takes that desire and begins to examine your life and changes begin to be made.
 - a. Perhaps it is by reading some theology and mastering it.
 - b. Perhaps it is by making changes in your home that you have resisted because they will be unpopular.
 - c. Perhaps it is by speaking up when it will not be popular or safe to do so.
- E. And if you decide to do so you join a path of men who for thousands of years have followed the one true God and spoke truth in times of lies and called men and women to repentance. It is a good work. It is a noble work.

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Community Group Questions

- **Why is above reproachness so important to Paul? What are ways that this might be seen?**
- **As a group identify the main areas of life (i.e. family, job, society, etc). Have someone write these down. Then brainstorm what above reproach would look like in those areas. This likely will take most of your time. Ask questions to draw out why something was chosen.**
- **Finally, identify key ways that each person (these character qualities are not restricted to men) might begin to grow. Write them down. Develop a plan of action that the leaders can refer back to as time progresses.**