



“What Makes A Good Elder?”

1 Timothy 3:1-7

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2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach;

3 not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous;

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

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

6 not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.

7 Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Sometimes I think its more difficult to be called to reform a church than to plant one. In planting everything is new, and you are essentially blazing the trail. It's kind of like planting a new garden. A reformer however, has to deal with false trails, abberations, bad habits, misconduct, and he has to tell people no all the time. The Reformer has to pull up the weeds while leaving the flowers in place.

Paul was a church planter, who of necessity was often involved in reform. (Galatians, Corinthians) Timothy however, had been sent to do a work of reform and reordering.

Paul had left his helper and spiritual son in the faith Timothy behind to set the disordered church in Ephesus in order while he went on to Macedonia. There were some big challenges ahead of Timothy. And this letter was a small book of church order or reform.

1) In chapter one we saw how Paul warned him that he was going to have to address the teaching of false doctrine that was occurring in the church and that he command them to teach nothing other than the pure apostolic doctrine they had received, “remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine”

2) He had then gone on to the conduct of public worship teaching about prayer and preaching and emphasizing the need for male leadership in the church.

3) Now he spells out the nature of that leadership and the necessary qualifications for the men, the elders who will lead, who will hold that office. Timothy will have to direct the church in this regard.

This remains a vital topic in every place and generation. For the health of the church depends very largely on the quality, faithfulness and teaching of its ordained ministers. They are often referred to in scripture as Shepherds and of course that is one of the titles that Christ used for himself. ***John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep."***

And of course the church is HIS flock, they are HIS sheep.

And yet he appointed men to be undershepherds and to care for that flock. We see him solemnly charging Peter to, fend and tend His sheep, his lambs in John 21. And the Apostles pick up that theme calling the members of Christ church, "The Flock" and the Leaders, "Shepherds"

You don't see sheep very often here in NC.

But When I was over in the UK I grew accustomed to seeing flocks of sheep.

I'm not expert but often you could see differences in them.

Once in the highlands on the way to Thurso which is just about as far as you can get North. We stopped in a town in the middle of nowhere for gas. I remember there was a barbed wire enclosure with the most pathetic assortment of sheep in a barbed wire enclosure I'd ever seen in my life, their wool was overgrown and matted and they were standing on mud having obviously eaten all the grass, so they would strain to get the grass growing outside and several had cuts and sores I assume from the barbed wire.

Now on seeing that, I was moved with pity and I and a couple of the other students took a moment to feed them grass through the wire. Now as I saw this pathetic scene, I didn't for a moment think to myself. What bad sheep these are to allow themselves to get into this condition! ***I thought, what kind of terrible shepherd would allow his sheep to get into this condition!***

As in the field, so in the church, the quality of the shepherd will inevitably determine the spiritual condition of the sheep.

Now, the Shepherds of Christ's sheep are referred to by several titles. The most common being the one we are familiar with, "elders". But here he calls these leaders, Episkopoi which is translated by the NKJV "Bishops" following the KJV. Episkopoi however, means, simple overseer, or one who watches over.

It is certain that episkopos ('overseer', 'bishop') and presbyteros ('presbyter', 'elder') were two titles for the same office and are used interchangeably. Why two titles? Well John Stott helpfully says:

"Why then were the same people given two titles? For two reasons at least. The word presbyteros

(‘elder’) was Jewish in origin (every synagogue had its elders) and indicated the seniority of the pastor, whereas episkopos (‘bishop’) was Greek in origin (it was used of municipal officials, supervisors of subject cities, etc.) and indicated the superintending nature of the pastor’s ministry. In sum, ‘the title episkopos denotes the function, presbyteros the dignity, the former was borrowed from Greek institutions, the latter from the Jewish’”.

Now I wish I didn’t have to do this, but in the church today there are a lot of people who feel that Christ’s sheep don’t need Shepherds. And that pastors and elders were an innovation. But brothers and sisters that’s not true.

Acts 14:23 So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Acts 20:17 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.

28 "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

Titus 1:5 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you --

Peter 5:1 The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed:

2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;

3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;

4 and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

And who ultimately appointed these men? Jesus

Eph. 4:11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

To desire this office is a good thing (remember he is trying to get MEN to take up spiritual leadership and authority) This is an excellent office good thing. But as Plato Said: *“Those things which are excellent, are also arduous and difficult” - Plato*

Qualifications

A man -

1) **His Reputation:** Not Sinless, but BLAMELES

Vs. 7 *Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.*

Of good behavior

Hospitable – a man who entertains others in his home

The world will be watching

The hucksters who bring disgrace on the church today

2) **His Household:** The husband of one wife

Not a polygamist

A one woman man

Having his children in submission

So the married pastor is called to leadership in two families, his and God's, and the former is to be the training-ground for the latter. The argument is straightforward. If he cannot look after his own family, he cannot be expected to look after God's. Eli the priest remains a solemn warning to us in this area, for his sons were both immoral and greedy, but 'he failed to restrain them'.⁵¹

3) **His Character:** Temperate, soberminded, not violent

Not a quarrelsome contentious pugnacious man

Gentle

Not a milquetoast – Not Ned Flanders

Not greedy

Not an alcoholic or addict

4) **His Experience:** Not a novice

Deion Sanders

After his conversion

Going to be a preacher

“I'm going Spend a month really studying the bible”

His theology and life have been a mess, divorces, affairs.

Pride, Devil exalts then brings down

5) His Ability – Able to teach

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As go the shepherds, so go the sheep

So what we call the 'selection' of candidates for the pastorate entails according to Paul three essentials: the call of God, the inner aspiration and conviction of the individuals concerned, and their conscientious screening by the church as to whether they meet the requirements which the apostle now goes on to list.

Why do we take training and appointment to ministry so seriously?

Because they are dealing with MEN'S SOULS

These are matters of Eternal Life or Eternal Death