

The Qualities of a Godly Leader

1 Timothy 3:1-7

“This is a trustworthy saying: “If someone aspires to be a church leader, he desires an honorable position.”² So a church leader must be a man whose life is above reproach. He must be faithful to his wife. He must exercise self-control, live wisely, and have a good reputation. He must enjoy having guests in his home, and he must be able to teach.³ He must not be a heavy drinker or be violent. He must be gentle, not quarrelsome, and not love money.⁴ He must manage his own family well, having children who respect and obey him.⁵ For if a man cannot manage his own household, how can he take care of God’s church?⁶ A church leader must not be a new believer, because he might become proud, and the devil would cause him to fall.⁷ Also, people outside the church must speak well of him so that he will not be disgraced and fall into the devil’s trap.”

Did you hear the story about the lion that approached the animals and asked who was the King of the jungle? He bypasses the smaller animals and goes straight to the bear. The lion asked the Bear who was the king, and the bear says you are of course, and the lion roars in agreement. The lion asked the Tiger who was the king, and the tiger says you are of course, and the lion roars in agreement. The Lion asked the Elephant who was the King, and the elephant wrapped his trunk around the lion, slams the lion into a tree, throws him against the ground a few times and then dunks him in the watering hole. The Lion struggles to his feet: beaten, bruised and battered, looked at the elephant and says, “Just because you don’t know the answer is no reason to get mean about it.”

John Maxwell said, “Everything rises and falls on leadership, leadership determines the direction and course of the church, everyone is a leader in some way, we all have different ways that we lead, some are

quiet and do background work, others are more vocal and lead at the front of the pack, still others sit and wait to find someone to follow.”

What does it take to be a godly leader? There are many excellent examples of leaders throughout the Bible - Moses, Joshua, Gideon, David, Nehemiah, Peter and Paul. God raises up people to be leaders and expects them to follow His direction and guidance; the church depends on good leadership both human and divine. **So what does it take to be a godly leader?** One of the best sources of advice comes from the apostle Paul here in 1 Timothy chapter 3.

Paul sets before us a worthy goal-which most of us will work on for a lifetime and still not completely reach. We ought to take this list seriously but also graciously and realistically. **Why?** Because all leaders from Moses to today have been human with human frailties.

Paul begins this way in verse 1, “This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.” The word translated “bishop” actually means “an overseer, a superintendent,” and is a word that has been misinterpreted and interpreted differently by different denominations. **In the early church the pastor was called by several different titles: he was called a presbyter, or elder; he was called a pastor, or shepherd; he was called a bishop, or an overseer; and he was called a minister.** The pastor was never called “reverend,” because that is a name that, early on, only applied to God.

This is the very same word that is used in Acts 20:28, “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.” You will also notice that he uses the word “overseers” (bishop) and the word “shepherd” to describe the very same office.

So when all of the titles are placed alongside each other they simply describe the total package of the pastor of the local church.

Considering the church as a flock that must be guided and guarded, he is called a “shepherd,” or pastor. Considering the church as an assembly (organization), he is called an “overseer.” Considering the church as those who need to be taught biblical truths, he is called the “teacher,” or an expounder of the Word of God. Considering the church fulfilling the Great Commission, he is called an “evangelist.” Therefore, in these expressions, we are able to see the work of the *pastor*.

We come now to consider the question of his qualifications.

The first thing that Paul mentions here is a "bishop ... must be blameless." The thing that must be understood is that, as a pastor, you will be blamed for many things! What is important is that the accusation must not be true!

Now, listen carefully, whether you are a pastor, staff, deacon, or some other place of leadership, you need to understand, that when things are going great you usually get the praise, but on the other hand, when things start going bad, you usually also get the blame. Ladies and gentlemen, if any pastor spent all of his time trying to answer all of his critics, he would have no time for anything else!

Second, Paul says a "bishop must be... the husband of one wife." I do not have to tell you that this passage of Scripture has been literally crucified in its interpretation.

It has been interpreted to mean that a man that has been divorced cannot serve as a pastor of the local church because "he has two living wives." Those who hold to this interpretation have failed to understand what the Bible has to say about "divorce" and "remarriage."

It has been interpreted to mean that a man cannot serve as pastor of the local church unless he is married. And, I must admit that this interpretation makes about as much sense as the first.

However, there is no doubt in my mind that the primary meaning here is that the bishop should not have two wives. Polygamy was common in Paul's day, and bigamy was certainly prevalent, and much of this was tied to idolatry. Therefore, Paul is not only requiring that the local pastor sever all appearances of idolatry, but he is also showing us the sanctity of marriage.

Third, we are told a "bishop...must be temperate." This also is a word that is often misrepresented. When Paul uses the word, he means something like "even-tempered," "clear-headed," or "balanced." It refers to a man who has nothing that muddies or muddles his senses. A temperate person is "cool, calm and collected," especially in a moment of crisis. He's not credulous, not easily deceived, not carried away by every wind of doctrine (Ephesians 4:14). He is old enough and experienced enough not to be rattled under pressure. You discover this quality in a person's life as you watch them in a crisis situation. A temperate man doesn't fall apart when his world falls apart. He doesn't lose his emotional equilibrium when the rug is suddenly pulled out from under him.

Four, we are told "a bishop... must be soberminded." The Greek word used here literally means "sound in mind." In other words, the pastor must be a person who follows sound reason, and who is not under the control of passion and pressure except from the leadership of the Holy Spirit!

Five, we are told "a bishop must be ... of good behavior." The Greek word here carries with it the idea of patience, forbearance, consideration and personal kindness. It describes a person who considers the whole picture before acting. A gentle leader protects and does not humiliate. He "guards each man's dignity and saves each man's pride." In making a decision he judges both the letter and the

spirit of the law. He is willing to lose even when he is right. He is willing to yield, willing to forgive, willing to overlook. Matthew Arnold calls this quality "sweet reasonableness." The idea is one who is filled with grace.

Six, we are told "a bishop must be... given to hospitality." The Greek word here carries with it the idea of "being fond of people." **Every pastor needs to love people.** Sure, there will be times when he will need to just "get away from it all" for a season, but people are the lifeblood of the ministry.

Seven, we are told "a bishop must be ... apt to teach." This truth is seen very clearly in Ephesians 4:11, where Paul talks about God's gifted men, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." The implication here is that no one is qualified to be in the pastoral ministry that is not qualified to teach and/or to impart instruction to others concerning the doctrines and duties of the church.

Eight, we are told "a bishop must... not given to wine." The Greek word used here simply means that the pastor must not be in bondage to alcohol.

Nine, we are told "a bishop must ...not be violent." **The idea here is a pastor must not be contentious.** In other words, the makes hard decisions while causing the least amount of harm possible.

Ten, we are told "a bishop must ... not greedy of filthy lucre." This simply means that a man must not just "choose" the ministry as a "profession" simply because of the "pay" and "benefits." **Ladies and gentlemen, if a person is thinking of "choosing" the ministry because of the pay, they just might want to look again.** Because if they will figure up the hours spent, they might find that they would be better off doing something else! But let me be quick to say, the rewards far outweigh the pay!

Eleven, we are told "a bishop must...be patient." The Greek word here means "reasonable." The pastor of any church needs to be a reasonable person, someone who you can talk to or reason with.

Twelve, we are told "a bishop must ... not (be) covetous." **The idea being envious of what others might possess.** It is easy for the pastor to look around and see all of the "good" things the people to whom he pastors possess, and then to look at his own lack of material possessions, and become covetous!

Thirteen, we are told "a bishop must ... rule well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity." One of the greatest mistakes that many pastors make is that while they are so busy making sure that other families are what they ought to be, they lose their own.

Fourteen, we are told "a bishop must ... not (be) a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil." The words "not a novice" here means not a recent convert, not someone who has recently been saved. **Sometimes a man is converted one week, and the next week he feels that God has called him into the ministry.** But, listen to me very carefully, he is not ready to pastor a church.

And, last of all, verse 7 says, "Moreover, he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil." The words "them which are without" means those who are outside the church. In other words, if a pastor ever expects to reach out to the community in which he lives, he had better know how to relate the world around him.

To serve as pastor of a church is the greatest calling that a man could ever receive. I would not step down from my position as pastor to be the President of the United States. I am proud of my calling, and am honored to be called your pastor.

