



1 TIMOTHY

SHEPHERDS OF THE FLOCK-PART 2

WEEK 8 | 1 TIMOTHY 3:1-7
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We are continuing our study of 1 Timothy 3 by trying to understand both the role and qualifications of leadership in the church. Last week, we looked at the role of pastors/elders/overseers of the church, and what they are to do in the servant leadership role God entrusted them with. We saw that they are to shepherd the flock of God like Jesus would, through leadership, teaching, and caring for the people of God. Today, as we continue, we will look at the qualities these men must have in order to hold this office. All believers should strive for these godly qualities that are required for the pastor.

It is important to note that if a man does not possess these qualities or continue in these qualities, he is not able to hold the office of pastor. This is shown in the words "must be" in verse 2. This does not mean that a pastor is perfect, never stumbling, but rather that the tone of his life meets these clearly defined standards.

Above Reproach

The first thing that Paul mentions is that the pastor must be "above reproach." This is probably the overarching definition in this passage, with the other qualities showing how he is to be above reproach. The overall feeling of this word means one whose life could not have an accusation brought against him and be found at fault. In terms of godliness and character, he could withstand examination and be found faithful. It implies living an exemplary life for the church in Godliness and Christlikeness.

Simply put, his life is an example of following Jesus. The pastor's life should be one of integrity, faithfulness, and adherence to the word of God. There should be no glaring sin or moral flaws in his life that would call his ability to lead into question. Interestingly, we tend to think more about gifts and abilities when looking for a pastor, and while these are of utmost importance, Paul is more concerned with his character. It is not because we should overlook one's ability, but rather because even if he has all the ability in the world yet fails to have godly character, he is unfit and can often do more harm than good. To help understand what a life lived above reproach looks like, it is followed by a list of characteristics that support it.

The One-Woman Man

The next qualification listed is that he is to be the "husband of one wife." This translation has created a lot of questions over the years as to what it actually means. It could read "the man of one woman" or "a one-woman man." I have been in Baptist churches my whole

life, and it seems that most churches in our denomination historically have defined this as a man who has never been divorced. I want to be clear from the outset that this is not what this is referring to, and in all my years of study, I have never come across a theologian who interprets it this way. There are a couple of reasons that I feel this way. First, there is an easier way Paul could have said a man who has never been divorced, and he doesn't. He does not use the word for divorce found elsewhere in the Bible, and the clearest, literal reading of the passage would not lead to this interpretation. Second, every other quality in this passage has to do with who a man is now, not who he used to be. This would be the only qualification that speaks to his past life, not his present life. Third, it is possible for a man not to be divorced and still not be a one-woman man, as the passage literally reads. He could be an adulterer, flirtatious womanizer, and many other things that keep him from being a one-woman man and yet not be divorced. I think the definition goes deeper than that.

Before I explain what it means, I want to be clear that this does not mean that divorce is a small thing or could not even play into determining whether a man is qualified or not. For instance, if a man has a history of divorce or a recent divorce, he clearly could be struggling to manage his home well (v.40). This could be for many reasons like promiscuity, being difficult to live with, or other lifestyles that reveal problems that keep him from being above reproach and would prohibit him from leading God's people. In most cases, divorces involve guilt on both parties. However, divorce is not the clearest issue here.

If we go back to the literal translation of "a man of one woman," I think we can make sense of this. Some say it has to do with monogamy and speaks against having more than one wife at a time. While this is plausible, many historians argue that, at this time, the idea of polygamy was not even truly accepted among pagans, so clearly, it wouldn't have been accepted in the church. I think Paul is saying that a man must show clear faithfulness to his wife, meaning he has the heart and love for only one woman. This man does not have the reputation of being promiscuous or flirtatious to the point where his integrity is questioned. This is important because pastors are not just to lead men but also women. It must be evident that he will not use his position of leadership as an opportunity for sin, as he has a pattern of faithfulness with his wife.

Self-Controlled

This word speaks for itself. It means controlling oneself, not being ruled by desires and emotions, and not easily giving in to temptation. This is a sign of a spirit-filled life, as it is one of the Fruits of the Spirit.

Sensible (sober-minded)

To be sensible is to be sober-minded or clear-thinking. It involves good judgment and the ability to think through situations and handle them appropriately. It differs from being reactionary and instead is thoughtful and measured. It sees the big picture, and in the Biblical context, I think this corresponds with wisdom, which is the ability to take God's Word and use it appropriately in decision-making.

Respectable

Being respectable involves being able to look at the life of another and see it as honorable. Things are in good order, and their conduct is worthy of respect. Even when one may not always agree with this person, they still see him as worthy of respect because of the way he conducts himself and treats others.

Hospitable

It is of the utmost importance for a pastor to be hospitable. It means they are welcoming, friendly, and willing to open their lives to the church. An open home is part of this, and while a pastor must use wisdom and think of his family while living this way, neither his nor their lives can be cut off from the body.

Able to Teach

Because pastors have been entrusted with the teaching ministry in the church, they must be able to teach. That means they must be able to open the Bible and clearly articulate what it teaches to the body. He does not have to be clever or crafty necessarily, nor does this mean that every elder is as gifted as the others in their ability to teach, but that they can do it effectively. Pastors must not only be able, but also willing, wanting, and empowered by the Spirit to do so. Because those who teach are held to a stricter judgment (James 3:1), they must do so faithfully and seriously. On a side note, one of the reasons that we know that the eldership is reserved for males only is because an elder must be able to teach and, as we saw earlier in the chapter, Paul prohibited women from teaching men.

Not an Excessive Drinker

While the Bible does not prohibit the use of alcohol, there is great warning about it. One of the warnings repeatedly is drunkenness. All believers, especially pastors, must not use alcohol (or any substance) in a way that inebriates, impairs sound judgment, or results in dependence or drunkenness. Remember, his aim is to be above reproach and lead God's people well.

Not a Bully (violent) but Gentle

Because of his position of leadership, he must not use it to bully or be forceful with others. Instead, he is to model Jesus, who was strong, meek, and gentle. This does not imply weakness or passiveness but is a controlled strength that understands power must be wielded wisely and gently.

Not Quarrelsome

Too many people like to argue and fight. Much of our modern TV, news, and talk shows are hours of bantering and arguing. There is enough divisiveness in the world and the church that the pastor does not need to instigate or perpetuate. This doesn't mean that he is not willing to argue or to state his case for truth, but instead is not unnecessarily argumentative or combative.

Not Greedy

The idea here is about being a lover of money, as discussed later in the book. Greed can come from a couple places; not being content with what you have or fear that you will not have enough. This warning is against allowing a desire for money to derail you from ministry and draw your attention elsewhere. Church leadership is not to be used as a tool for the purpose of worldly gain. While churches have a responsibility to provide properly for those that labor among them, this is not the reason behind leading the church. The opposite of greed is to live open-handed, ready, and willing to help those in need. Christians are called to be generous, not stingy, selfish, or loving money.

Manage His Household Well

The proving ground for one's ability to lead the church is the ability to lead a family. If a man cannot manage his own home, he will be incapable of leading the church. His relationship with his wife and children bears testimony to his ability to hold the office of pastor. This is where the aforementioned divorce can come into play. In many instances, divorce is a sign of a home not managed and cared for well.

Not a New Convert

This has less to do with age and more to do with spiritual maturity. A new believer should not be given too much leadership responsibility as it can crush them or lead them to pride by which they think too highly of themselves. Pastoral leadership must only be given to those with a long pattern of faithfulness and who have proven themselves able to handle the responsibilities of the office and calling.

A Good Reputation with Outsiders

The final thing is that a pastor must also be respected among outsiders. It does the church no good to have men who are either not trusted or maligned by the outside world. The church's leadership should be different than the world's, showing a clear picture of the difference between Christian and worldly living.

The calling and qualifications of a pastor are not a trivial matter, and the leaders must hold to them lest they find themselves disqualified. When the church cannot respect and trust the leadership of the church, it cannot function. Christlike qualities should be aspired to and expected of by every member but must be held by the leadership. The church must hold the standard high for those tasked with shepherding God's people, or it will not be a healthy church. Pray for those entrusted to lead you and pray that God's grace would help them to walk in faithfulness and with Christlike character. Pray for their families, well-

