

This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. 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.

Paul wrote letters that we call “the pastoral letters” to Timothy and to Titus who we’ll get to later. These two had followed Paul, and he had left them behind to minister in different places where churches have been established. Remember, there were many different home churches in the different areas and they were in need of pastors to lead those little congregations. They didn’t have a large church like we do in for example Ephesus.

Timothy was left in Ephesus and Titus was left in Crete. Last week, we looked at instructions from Paul to Timothy about the church in Ephesus. Last time you might remember that Paul was giving instruction to Timothy concerning women being quiet in the services. Apparently, many of the Gentile women who were converts were too vocal in the services. We examined the fact that they were probably former members of the Cult of Artemis which had women leading the services and doing much of the speaking in the Temple of Artemis. Adjustments needed to be made.

The services in these home churches were very different from what had gone on in the Jewish synagogues for centuries in which the women were kept apart from the men and they were not to interrupt the rabbi’s sermons nor the prayers of the different men conducting the service. The Jewish women saved their questions for when they got home. They didn’t interrupt and argue with the rabbi and the other men during the service. Paul says that the churches should be conducting themselves in a similar way. Now Paul is going to switch gears and explain the criteria for someone to become a pastor of a church. He says that if someone senses God’s call on their life it is a good thing. It is in fact a “noble” thing. I might add here that just because someone thinks they’re called doesn’t mean that they are called or that they are qualified to be a pastor.

Notice that in some older translations or the New King James Version which I’ve used above, it says that if one aspires to the office of “bishop” it is a good thing. The Greek word for bishop is “episkopos”. The title of Bishop is problematic because it is a title based on church tradition.

When I hear the word “bishop” I think of a guy with a funny looking pointy hat on his head and a shepherd’s crook in his hand. “Bishop” is actually an anglicized form of that word “episkopos”. Say it without the “e” on the front (“biscope”), and you’ll notice that it sounds like “bishop”. But it is not a good translation of what the word “episkopos” actually means. It means a “looker over”. *Epi* means over and *skopos* means to look or watch. These are the men in the church that are to “watch over” things. They are the “watcher-overs”. A more familiar English word for that would be an “overseer”. They are the ones seeing over all that goes on in the church. There are three titles given to leaders in the New Testament. They are described with three Greek words. I’ve listed them here below:

Presbuteros – Elder (like our word “presbyterian”)

Episkopos – “over” “watcher” (like our word “scope” and also “episcopal”)

Poemin – Shepherd (we don’t really have a cognate in English for this word)

The word “elder” tell us who the person is, and the other two tell us what the person does. These are explained clearly in our church bylaws. The word “elder” comes down to the church from the men in Israel who were raised up to assist Moses in the wilderness. They were older mature men in the faith that came to Moses’ aid. The assumption that went with the word is that this person was older and wiser. Our church bylaws say that the title “elder” is the word for type of person that the man is. The term “overseer” tells what the man does, and the word “shepherd” relates to how the man feels. These are three descriptions of the same man. Luke ties these together in Acts chapter 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. (Acts 20:17, 28 NKJV)

We can also see these three descriptions tied together in Peter’s first epistle.

*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; (1 Peter 5:1-2 NKJV)*

I have highlighted the three words so the reader can see that they’re all referring to the same person.

God’s word tells us exactly what this office is and how it operates. Note that this office is differentiated from that of a deacon. These are not deacons. They are elders. Deacons do not have a role in the spiritual oversight of the church. Deacons are “doers”. It is a pragmatic practical calling, and we will cover that next week. It is a calling that involves being entrusted

with the treasure of the church to such an extent that they must have integrity and be of a certain spiritual criteria.

We have three called pastors at Union Grove and we have two deacons. Some churches act as though an elder and a pastor are two different offices. They are not. I've heard some churches refer to "elders" and another group called "teaching elders". An elder in the church is by definition a "teaching elder". The New Testament has no reference to elders/pastors who can't teach. Paul then highlights the qualities, or the criteria, that one called to this position must have. If and when Union Grove needs a new pastor, these qualities are not a choice. They are a condition to the calling of a pastor.

V. 2

Above Reproach: Paul says that this overseer must be above reproach. This Greek word is used three times in this letter of 1 Timothy. This means that there is nothing present in his behavior or conduct for which someone could point the finger or bring any real substantive accusation against Him. Paul then gives a laundry list describing details of this man's character.

Husband of One Wife: He must be the "husband of one wife". This is a term that has been interpreted in many different ways, but I want to try to shed some light on it. First of all, you must realize that Paul was speaking to the possibility of polygamy. At this time, many people, even in Europe, were married to several different women at the same time. I think it speaks primarily to a man's faithfulness in marriage to the one with whom he is with. If he is married, then he is and has been a faithful husband to his wife for a long time. This doesn't mean that a pastor can't be single. It doesn't mean that he can't remarry if his wife dies. If his marriage has stood the test of time, he is a "one woman man". He is to be committed and devoted to his wife.

My own interpretation of this qualifier might be expanded: It would exclude any man who might have been recently divorced. "Recent" could easily mean within the last 10 years. Likewise, his divorce should have been for biblical reasons (basically his wife leaving him or cheating on him). If a pastor remarries, he must exhibit consistency over a significant time period. I would add that a man with multiple failed marriages should not be called as pastor if the divorces or for a reason other than death of a spouse. He isn't pastor material. He may serve the church in many ways, but not as a pastor. He either has personality or character flaws that make him unable to stay in a relationship or he has shown a lack of consistency in making wise choices. This man cannot and must not be the decision maker for a church body.

Sober-Minded: This is a man that can think clearly in the face of any kind of opposition. As a pastor, he will constantly be approached by people who have a problem with this or that. He can't be the kind of man who strikes back in anger. In my short years as a pastor I have had people meet with me to criticize me, disagree with me, tell me I am too political, tell me I am

not political enough, and tell me what a bad job I am doing overall. With God's help I usually remain fairly silent in these situations because I've learned that unhappy people sometimes just want someone to kick. Many decide the pastor should be the one they kick. I suppose this is because they feel safe knowing he will probably not strike back. He must be sober-minded. He is clear minded in looking around and addressing problems in a cool calm manner.

Self-Controlled: He must be a man who can control his temper and his passion. It is inappropriate for a pastor to be the kind of person who flies off the handle. A pastor must not be a hot-head. He must be able to control himself when he is criticized unfairly and inaccurately. Pastors take a lot of flak. He's got to be able to control himself.

Respectable/Of Good Behavior: He is an orderly person and a proper person unto whom respect is due. He must be the kind of man that doesn't demand respect but deserves it. He should have a long history of doing right by people and being consistent in his walk with Christ. This doesn't mean he must be perfect, but he must be a role model of respectability.

Hospitable: This means in the Greek that he "loves strangers". It can be a big inconvenience on a wife if a husband is a pastor. He will open up his home and his life to others. I've learned to be more considerate of my wife and not just show up with unexpected guests. That's rude and should be agreed upon between a husband who is a pastor and his wife. Opening up homes to people was VERY important in biblical times, and hospitality is still an important qualifier for the man who seeks to be a pastor.

Able to Teach: This is a critical skill that a pastor must possess. Some are able to teach a single person or a smaller group, and others can address a large assembly. But, the gift of teaching must be there. If there is no teaching there is no pastor. If there is a shepherd who doesn't know how to nourish the sheep, the sheep will die. Let me add that teaching is a very different skill than pastoring. All pastors must be teachers, but all teachers are not qualified to be pastors.

V.3

Not a Drunkard: This doesn't mean he has to abstain from alcohol, but he can't be addicted to alcohol. I would add this includes any other addiction. Consuming wine was common in biblical times as it was safer than drinking contaminated water, so perhaps this is in great part why they drank wine. The criteria is that a Pastor can not be given to much drink. In my own case, once I became a pastor, I never again took a drink in public. There are many who can't take one sip of any alcoholic drink or they won't be able to quit. These look to leadership to know how to conduct their lives. I can't and should never cause a brother or a sister to sin because of my own liberty in Christ. Whether he likes it or not, a pastor is held to a higher and different standard. He is not qualified if he is an alcoholic.

The Bible doesn't condemn drinking, but it condemns drunkenness. Christians in general must be very careful about not causing others to stumble. It is reckless for a pastor and any Christian to care more about their own freedom and liberty than they do about others.

Not Violent: The overseer is to be gentle. He cannot be harsh or severe with others.

Not Quarrelsome: He won't pick a fight or argue endlessly over things that don't help him in his ministry to others. If some in the congregation are insistent in arguing or discussing points of theology, the pastor must not let this sap him of energy needed energy to counsel couples in trouble, make bedside visits to the sick and dying, preparing messages for the congregation, or fulfilling any of the other duties for which a pastor is responsible.

Not a Lover of Money: Money shouldn't be at the top of his priorities. He shouldn't be chasing profit and more profit. It is through the craving of money that many have gotten themselves in great danger. (I Timothy 6:10) When I was called as pastor of Union Grove, I sold my entire herd of cattle and began to minimize the business ventures in my life. I don't have time to be running businesses and being the head elder in a church.

V.4-5

Rules his house well: Paul is telling the church to inspect a man's fruit. What is his own house like? What is his relationship with his wife and his children? This is how you can find out what is going on in a man's life. If his house is out of control, he has no business overseeing the operations of the church. You can recognize a bad tree by seeing its bad fruit. In the same way, you can recognize a good tree by seeing good fruit coming from it. Look at the presence or lack of fruit in the man's life.

This requires a judgment by the church body as to whether a man is qualified to be an overseer of the church and its people. You **MUST** look at the fruit in his life. An assessment must be made as to his leadership qualities.

Children in submission with reverence: Are his children out of control? If so, he is not qualified to be a pastor. If he can't rule over and influence his own children to do right, then he isn't qualified to tell others how to live. However, If his kids are out of control, but over 18 years of age, their rebellion should raise a cautionary flag, but not immediately disqualify the man.

V.6 **Not a newbie:** In the Greek it says he must not be a person who is "newly planted" in the faith. This doesn't mean that he has to have a lot of experience in pastoring. It just means that he is not a "newbie". It's dangerous to have a newbie in such a powerful position. If he is young and is raised up too quickly, he is a sitting duck for the devil.

v.7 **Has a good testimony to the outside world:** The candidate must be a godly man outside of the church as well as inside of the church. Does he lose his Christianity when he is

interacting with the world? If so, he is disqualified. He must have integrity and be seen as having such by the world outside of the church.

So often, pastors fall by what is happening in their lives outside of their ministry. Paul is telling Timothy to make sure to check the reputation of the man outside of the church because it will give great insight into how he will conduct himself within the church.

I want to end this morning by saying that these patterns of behavior are a good goal for every believer. Don't beat up on yourself if you've failed in some of these areas. Just turn them over to God and ask Him how he desires for you to serve. He has a place, a plan, and a purpose for each of you in this room or you reading this. Seek the Lord and you will find Him. Whenever you choose a pastor, make sure he meets each and every one of these qualifications. If he doesn't, he will not be the right man to "equip the saints" and that is his first and primary objective.

¹¹ And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; (Ephesians 4:11-13 NKJV)

Let us pray.