

Sermon series: Book of Titus

Sermon title: *Putting Elders in Order (Part 2):*

The Qualifications of Elders

Scripture reading: Titus 1:5-9

Clearwater Bay International Baptist Church

June 30, 2018

S.C. Brown, Pastor

We saw last week the whole reason why Paul is writing this letter to Titus. He told us in **Titus 1:5**, "This is why I left you in Crete that you might put what remained into order and appoint Elders in every town as I directed you."

So, last week we took a look at how churches are to be led. They are to be led by what the Bible calls Elders or as they're also called...Overseers and also called, Pastors/ Shepherds. All of these words refer to the same job.

Last week we looked at what Elders are.

What are Elders?

A group of men who are called by the Holy Spirit to shepherd and oversee a local church and teach them the word of God.

Or as Jeramie Rinne says, "*Elders are Jesus's assistants for shepherding his churches.*"

We also looked last week at **why a church needs Elders**. The answer is that Elders are God's idea and God's design for church leadership but as we saw in the Old Testament that it's very practical and wise to have Elders so that the load of shepherding a church is shared between a **group of men who are called by the Holy Spirit to shepherd and oversee a local church and teach them the word of God.**

Well, today we come to the actual qualifications of Elders that Paul gives to Titus. We want to walk through these, not all of them, some of them are pretty self-explanatory. But we need to know what kind of men to look for according to God's word.

Turn to **Titus 1:5-9**

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—

6 if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. **7** For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, **8** but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. **9** He must hold firm to the

trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

So, I want to list these and go through them quickly one by one because some of them we need to understand what they mean.

The first one is one that is mentioned twice and it is

- **Above Reproach.** What does this mean? It literally means cannot be called out on anything or accused of anything.
- **The husband of one wife.** Does this mean that an Elder cannot be a polygamist? Some people take it to mean that a person cannot be divorced and serve as an Elder. The phrase means simply a 'one woman kind of man.' It is a man who is devoted to his wife in every way.
- **His children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.** It's easy to read this as 'his children must be Christians', but that is not what it means. The word believer and the word faithful can both be used. And in the context, it refers to the conduct of the children and how they behave. As we mentioned last week, a man's first priority is his 'little church'....his

home..and a man needs to shepherd his family before shepherding the church.

Next we have **5 vices** or 5 negative things that an Elder is to avoid or avoid an Elder that is this way.

- **Not arrogant**- this means not 'self-pleasing'
- **Not quick tempered**- this means 'simply angry'.
- **Not a drunk**- this means literally, "At wine".
- **Not violent**- "this means 'to strike'. He must not be a fighter.
- **Not greedy for money**- this literally means 'filthy to make money'. Interestingly enough, several Elder passages mention a warning against those who are hungry for money.

Next Paul lists **6 positive traits** that an Elder, Overseer or Shepherd must have.

- **Hospitable**- this means to 'love strangers'
- **Lover of good**- self explanatory.
- **Self-controlled**- this means, 'save the mind' so it seems to have to do with being a mentally self-controlled person or mentally disciplined.
- **Upright**- Someone who does the right thing.
- **Holy**- a word of unknown origin. Translated as holy in English, which means 'set apart'.
- **Disciplined**- means 'strong'; a person who can restrain themselves.

Wow. So when we take a look at all of these qualifications in Titus it can be quite overwhelming. I mean, who can stand up under these kinds of requirements. Certainly not *your* Pastor! It's quite daunting.

Above reproach.

Excellent husband.

Superb dad.

A model of self-control, discipline, character and demeanor.

Must love goodness.

Must love strangers.

Not love money or alcohol.

Now, when I read these this week, it wasn't encouraging! It felt like a lead weight.

But I was reminded that these qualities are something that aren't just required of Elders, but all Christians.

What is the fruit of the Spirit? [**Galatians 5:22**]

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Ephesians 5:1 lays it out pretty clear what kind of standard Christians are to live by.

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.

So, it's not that the standards and qualifications for Elders are so high, but that the expectations for all followers of Jesus Christ are high. In fact, virtually all of the qualities listed for Elders and also for Deacons in 1 Timothy 3 are listed elsewhere in Scripture for *all* believers.

Except, there are a few things that are NOT required of all believers that ARE required of Elders. What are they? What sets Elders apart from others? Everyone has a gift to use to build up the church, but Elders, as Jesus's assistants, are called to a task that not everyone is called to. What is it?

Look at **Titus 1:9**

He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

That's not required of all Christians. That's not required of Deacons in 1 Timothy 3.

Elders are a group of men who are called by the Holy Spirit to shepherd and oversee a local church and teach them the word of God.

Elders, Overseers or Pastors are Bible men. They must be beavers for the Bible. They must 'hold firm' to the word; to hold it closely. They must be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and know the Bible well enough to spot error and rebuke those who contradict it.

Take a look at the Elder lists in 1 Timothy 3 starting in verse 1. It says, *"The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore, an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, ABLE TO TEACH"*, and then it lists some of the same qualifications.

Right in the middle of that list is 'able to teach'. This doesn't mean that a man must be 'preacher' but that he must know the Bible well enough to instruct and spot error. You want to know how to spot an Elder, it's that guy that always says, *"The Bible says....."*

An Elder is a man who is called by the Holy Spirit to shepherd and oversee a local church and teach them the word of God.

Why is this qualification so important?

Why not highlight some other quality like strength or ability to delegate or equipping or something else?

Why single out this one quality of being able to teach the word of God?

Because Jesus's assistants aren't perfect. In fact, they don't have much to say. They're not too bright actually. The Chief Shepherd is full of infinite wisdom, knowledge, insight, power and strength.

You do have a *perfect* Elder, a *perfect* Overseer and a *perfect* Shepherd and his name is Jesus Christ. But Jesus' assistants are not *perfect* and that is something we all need to remember.

We need to be careful to elevate man too much! This is another reason why it is a good idea to have several Elders leading a church. No man is perfect and is limited in giftedness. He's a sinner. But several Elders can balance each other out.

Jesus's assistants must know the boss well and they must know the manual well.

The under-shepherd is to constantly point the sheep to the Chief-Shepherd. The assistants are to constantly point the flock to the Lead Pastor.

How do Elders do that? By continuously going to the Book: Continuously combing the manual. Why?

Because they don't know what they're doing!

That's why we want to be a church that is all about the Bible. That's why we want to be people who are Beavers for the Bible. That's why we want Elders to lead our church: **men who are called by the Holy Spirit to shepherd and oversee a local church and teach them the word of God.**

What we really need is Jesus Christ!

So, we need shepherds who will lead us to follow him.

Who is your shepherd?

Who's leading you?

Who are you following?

Are you following Jesus Christ or are you your own shepherd?

Are you a part of a church that is pointing you to Jesus Christ or are you going to a church that's telling you to 'be better'?