

The Marks Of A Blameless Man

Titus 1:5-9

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Titus 1:5-9 is a classic text. It says, “For this reason I left you...” referring to Titus “...in Crete, that you should set in order...” notice that phrase “...the things that are lacking...” or “unfinished” “...and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you—if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money...” those are the negatives; now the positives “...but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just...” or “righteous” “...holy, self-controlled...” and most important “...holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine...” or “teaching” “...both to exhort and convict those who contradict.”

In verse 5, Paul gives two reasons why he left Titus on the island of Crete. Paul wanted Titus to “set in order the things that are lacking.” The NIV renders this that Titus was to straighten out “what was left unfinished.” From this phrase, we get our word “orthodontics” or “orthopedics.” So Paul wanted Titus to straighten out what needed to be finished.

Paul had been on the island of Crete, but for some reason, he had to leave the island and its churches, so he is asking Titus to stay there and to straighten out what needs to be finished in the churches.

The second thing he wants Titus to do is to appoint elders. He said, “Appoint elders in every city as I commanded you.” Why was this important? Because the church cannot raise higher than its leadership. And Jesus Christ is the chief shepherd. And a pastor, which means “shepherd,” is always under Jesus Christ, who is the shepherd of the sheep. Pastors are under-shepherds. And pastors must be men of integrity, called by God, gifted by God and men of character to lead the people of God into the truth of God’s Word. So the church’s leadership is very important.

It’s also important because in the churches on Crete, false teachers had come in. So they needed strong, Biblical leadership to stand against these false teachers. In Titus 1:10, Paul says, “For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers.” Therefore there was a need for good pastors in the churches because of false teachers.

What the spiritual leaders are called are described in verse 5 as “elders.” The Greek word is “presbuteros,” and we get our word “Presbyterian” from it. What it conveys is their maturity and their dignity. It doesn’t mean that a pastor has to be an old man; it means they should be mature. There are two places in the New Testament where the qualifications of a pastor, elder or bishop are given. The first one is in 1 Timothy 3, and the second one is in our text. The Timothy passage is more extensive and also includes deacons, which Titus doesn’t deal with.

So Paul is saying here that it is important for these spiritual leaders, who are called “elders,” to be appointed in the church. They are also called “bishops.” Verse 7 says, “For a bishop must be blameless.” Paul uses “elders” in verse 5 and “bishop” in verse 7. The Greek word for “bishop” is “episkopos,” and we get our word “Episcopalian” from it. And it is based on a compound Greek word that means “oversight.” So the bishop’s job is as an overseer.

But there is no basis for the idea that a bishop is over a group of churches or a group of other pastors, as it is today in some branches of the church. That’s not Biblical. A bishop is not higher than an elder or a pastor. They are called “elders” and “bishops” and are to be overseeing the work of God.

The third title—and the one we’re most familiar with—is the word “pastor.” It is used in Ephesians 4:11: “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.” In the Greek, it is hyphenated as pastors-teachers; it is one word. So a pastor must be a teacher of the Word of God. If you don’t have the gift of teaching, then you are not to be a pastor. That’s very important.

The word “pastor” means “shepherd.” When the Lord commissioned Peter, He said, “Feed My sheep” (John 21:17). God’s people are sheep. By the way, it’s not a flattering title; sheep are dumb, defenseless, weak and prone to wander off the path, get lost and unable to find their way back. So they need a shepherd.

There is a threefold ministry of a shepherd: to feed, as in teaching the Word of God; to lead by example; and to protect from the wolves. The terms elders, bishops and pastors are used interchangeably for the same person or office in the church. And there are only two offices in the church that are described in the New Testament: pastors, elder or bishops and the deacons.

In the book of Timothy are the qualifications for deacons but they not found in Titus. In 1 Timothy 3:8-13, it says that a deacon must be reverent, sober and the husband of one wife. Then Paul describes what a deacon is. The word “deacon” literally means “servant.” Or we would use the word “slave.”

The difference is that the pastors, elders and bishops deal with the teaching of the Word and the spiritual oversight of the church, while the deacons deal with the menial aspects of serving in the church. They serve the pastors in the church.

It’s interesting that the word translated “deacon,” in 1 Timothy 3, literally means “to stir up dust.” They were so busy running around the church helping and serving that they were stirring up dust everywhere they went.

The number one requirement for these spiritual leaders was to be blameless, verse 6 of our text. “If a man is blameless...” Then he uses it again in verse 7: “For a bishop must be blameless.” That is the paramount, overarching mark of a spiritual leader. They are to have a “blameless” life.

What does that mean? It doesn't mean that they are to be sinless. Thank God for that, or we would have no pastors in the church today! Because pastors are people like anyone else. That's why the job of pastor is very challenging. To live what you preach is not easy. It's one thing to preach; it's another thing to live what you preach. That is not easy.

So if "blameless" doesn't mean sinless, what does it mean? "Blameless" literally means "not to be taken upon." It means that no just cause for censor or criticism can be proven against you. The word is "unquestionable" or "integrity." It means you are unimpeachable. It means that you live in such a way that if anyone were to accuse you, you live above that accusation. Your life is so lived that no accusation can stick. You have a Teflon character; everything slides right off. One translations says, "not marred by disgrace." Everything about a pastor's life should be above reproach. They should be living in unquestioned integrity.

Paul tells Titus that the spiritual leaders who he appoints must be blameless in three areas or categories. The first is blameless in their marriage and family life. What a challenge! "If a man is blameless..." or lives above reproach "...[he needs to be] the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation..." or "riot" "...or insubordination." So it's a good idea for a pastor to have only one wife.

If a man's marriage and family are not right, he cannot lead the church. The home is the training ground for Christian leaders. Satan not only attacks marriage, but he especially attacks the marriage of a pastor. So we should be praying and praying for our pastors; that they would have a strong marriage relationship and that they would be committed to their wife, to one another in the home.

What does it mean to be "the husband of one wife"? First, it does not mean that he has to be married. You can be a pastor and not be married. But I don't recommend it. It's not a good idea. I could not do what I do without my wife. She's not up here preaching every Sunday, but her prayers, her love, her support and her assistance are absolutely essential in my ministry. So it's good to have a wife. But that doesn't mean you have to be married. Paul the apostle, as far as we know, wasn't married. Yet he was called by God.

Second, it doesn't mean that a pastor cannot have more than one wife in his lifetime. I have a pastor friend who is in his third marriage, because his first two wives died of cancer. And it's a challenge to pastor without a wife. I officiated at his third wedding. I told him, "You've gotta stop getting married like this. This is the third time I've seen you come down that aisle! What's the deal, dude?!" The Bible is very clear that if your spouse dies, you are free to remarry. I recommend you only do it in the Lord, but you are free to marry.

But the stickier subject—and different denominations have different ways to interpret and apply it—is whether or not a pastor can have a divorce in his background. It depends on whether or not the divorce took place before or after his conversion. Was he married and divorced before he was saved?

It could be a situation that maybe you were not above reproach because whatever you did could carry with you into your pastoral ministry. It could be that you're better off not going that direction. But if he was innocent, if he was the innocent party in a divorce, then is born again, the Bible says, "Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). His sins have all been forgiven. If then he has been proven to be devoted to his new wife and a man of integrity, I think that's fine.

But some denominations say that this phrase "the husband of one wife" means that he can have only one wife his whole life. Even if his wife dies, they say he cannot be remarried. I reject that. It's clear in the Scriptures that you can remarry if your spouse dies. Then others say that a pastor cannot be divorced and remarried. You have to take each case individually.

What this phrase actually says in the Greek is that he must be "a one-woman man." I think that is intended to convey that a pastor must be committed to, devoted to and only have eyes for his wife. He must be faithful to his wife. In Ephesians 5:25, it says, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church." So a pastor needs to be committed to loving his wife.

David committed adultery with Bathsheba, and it brought a reproach and shame on him and his kingdom. Proverbs 6:27-29 says, "Can a man take fire to his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be seared? So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife; whoever touches her shall not be innocent." It's so very important. So a pastor is to be completely devoted to his wife.

Secondly, a pastor needs to be devoted to his children—we're still in the home and the qualifications here. Verse 6 says, "having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination" or "not accused of riotousness or unruly." Again, this is not saying that a pastor's kids need to "glow in the dark," have halos or angels' wings and float around the church singing Hallelujah choruses. They're not perfect. But they should be respectful and obedient to their parents. How a pastor takes care of his home should reflect how he'll take care of the church. In 1 Timothy 3:12, it says that pastors must be "ruling their children and their own houses well." So the question is whether or not he is managing his own family.

By the way, in Titus 1:6, the word "children" there is plural, so it includes all his children. It also is the word for children which means that they are underage. They should be respectful and obedient to their parents. David messed up in his relationship with his son, Absalom, so he rebelled against his father.

As a husband, ask yourself, "Am I devoted to my wife and no other woman?" And as a father, ask yourself, "Am I devoted to my children and raising them in the way they should go?" Ephesians 6:4 says, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up..." meaning to love them "...in the training..." meaning to discipline them "...and admonition of the Lord" meaning to instruct them. So fathers are to be devoted to their children.

So a pastor must manage his own family well, or he would not be able to take care of the house

of God.

The second category of a pastor is that he is to be blameless in his character and conduct. This is his public life, verses 7-8. "For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God." I like that picture. As preachers, God has entrusted His Word to us, and we must preach it faithfully. "...not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money..." now comes the positives "...but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded..." meaning he masters his mind and thoughts "...just..." or "righteous" "...holy..." or "saintly" "...self-controlled."

Paul lists five negatives that should not be found in a steward, pastor, bishop or elder. They relate to five areas of strong temptation. Billy Graham, speaking to a group of pastors one time, said that there were three dangers: pride—don't fall into pride; money—don't be motivated by money; and sex—be careful not to get involved with other women than your wife, but be devoted to your wife. Those are three areas that Satan will often attack in spiritual leaders.

The first danger is pride, verse 7: "not self-willed." What does that mean? It means that leaders are not to use their position or power to get their own way. It means a man who is headstrong, stubborn or demands his own way without regard for others. He won't listen to either criticism or advice. That's not to be a quality in a man of spiritual leadership in the church.

You could also apply this to being a father. You're "the pastor" of your family; you're a shepherd in your own home. God has given three divine institutions: the family, the church and human government. In all three institutions, you need godly, qualified men.

So Dad, you are the spiritual leader in your home. Are you loving your wife and devoted to training and disciplining your children? You are to be like Jesus, who in John 13:5 washed the disciples' feet. That's servant leadership.

Notice, secondly, his temper: "not quick-tempered." In dealing with difficult and demanding people, there is a temptation to become irritable and impatient. Dads, with their children as well, should not become irritable and impatient. When Moses got angry, took the rod and smote the rock, God called him out for it and said, "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them" (Numbers 20:12). So the pastor shouldn't be blowing off steam and getting angry at people.

The third category is about drink: "not given to wine." This phrase literally means "sitting long at wine" or "being over-fond of wine" or someone who has wine as his companion. It's a good idea if the pastor is not into drinking wine, that he doesn't make that his passion. I would prefer if the Bible literally said, "Thou shall not drink alcohol." But it doesn't say that. Aside from what the Scriptures say, I think it's stupid and unnecessary to drink alcohol. I think we have a lot of other, great things to drink.

In the ancient world, they had either water or wine to drink. And when the wine became

fermented, it became strong drink. All through the Bible is warning after warning of the dangers of strong drink. In Ephesians 5:18, Paul says, "Do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation..." or "debauchery" "...but be filled with the Spirit."

Wine, strong drink or alcohol has ruined many lives. Many marriages have been ruined by alcohol. So why would you even want to go there?

And as a matter of Christian liberty, even if you have the liberty to drink, you may stumble another person, a weaker brother or sister who does not know about that liberty, so you don't want to do that. It's better to live under a greater conviction than to cause someone else to stumble.

In Galatians 5:19-21, the Bible says that "drunkenness" is considered one of the works of the flesh," and those who do that "will not inherit the kingdom of God." And Noah got drunk and sinned in that area. Proverbs 20:1 says, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise." So a pastor is not to be given to wine or "sitting long at wine."

Number four "in verse 7, is "not violent." It also has the idea of not being pugnacious, which means "easily stirred into rage or a fight." It's about striking people and going into a rage and wanting to fight. It's a good idea that the pastor doesn't beat people up.

As a young boy, I was with a pastor and we were doing construction on the church, when he almost got into fisticuffs with someone doing the construction. I was surprised. I know the Bible talks about "laying on of hands" as a doctrine, but that wasn't what it meant.

So the pastor should not be punching people and being violent—no fighting. That's very dangerous. Pastors are not to be strikers.

Number five deals with money: "not greedy for money." In other words, you're not pursuing dishonest gain. It's a motive of greed. That's one of the dangers of pastoral ministry. It is right for a pastor to be supported financially. 1 Timothy 5:17-18 says, "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor..." or "double pay" "...especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.'"

But it also says in 1 Peter 5:1-2 that pastors should not be doing it for the sake of money. "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: Shepherd..." talking to the pastors "...the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away." These are very clear instructions for a pastor's devotion to his calling to feed and shepherd the flock.

After these vices comes a breath of fresh air or the six, positive virtues, in verse 8. Number

one, he must be “hospitable.” He must have an open heart and an open home. Lovers of hospitality is the word “phileo.” It means you love strangers; you reach out to people.

And number two, you are to be “a lover of what is good.” The King James translation says, “a lover of good men,” but it’s not in the Greek. It’s in some manuscripts. But the phrase means more generally that he “loves what is good.” So he’s loving the righteous and hating the evil. It’s a love and submission to God and to His Word.

Number three is that this man should be “sober-minded.” It means a man who has self-mastery. He’s sensible in his judgment; he doesn’t allow himself to go to radical extremes or tangents. He’s disciplined in his lifestyle; he lives modestly.

Number four is that he is “just.” That means he is righteous or upright in his dealings with people. He is a man of virtue.

Number five is “holy.” That means he is saintly or set apart for God. He lives his life in a godly way. One of the best compliments anyone could be paid is that they are godly. It means they are godlike and are living for God.

And number six is that they are “self-controlled.” In Galatians 5:23, self-control is a fruit of the Spirit. So we need to be under the influence and control of the Holy Spirit. But in Galatians 5:18, it is a command; it is all-inclusive, for everyone. And it’s in the passive voice, or “Let the Spirit fill you.” And it’s in the present tense, or “Be filled with the Spirit continually.” So “Do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.” That means we are to let the Holy Spirit control us.

Whether you are a man or woman, a pastor or a lay person, all of these qualities, which are supported in other Scriptures, should be found in all of us. We are to let the Holy Spirit fill our hearts so that there will be submission, songs and praise to the Lord. We’ll be joyful, thankful and submissive.

First we had the categories of marriage and family, verse 6; then second, character and conduct, verses 7-8; and now, third, we have blameless in belief, verse 9. This is a pastor’s church life and his relationship to the Word of God, which is paramount. It says, “holding fast...” or “hanging on tenaciously and not letting go of” “...the faithful word...” or “the Scriptures” “...as he has been taught...” that means “by the apostles,” and we’ve been taught by them in the Word “...that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.”

So it’s very important he be committed to the Bible. The number one character of a pastor should be that he is committed to and devoted to the Bible. He is to be a man of the Word. He needs to have a high view of Scripture.

Make sure your pastor has a high view of Scripture. If I were to leave this congregation, my prayer is that the next pastor has a complete, unwavering commitment to the Bible as the Word

of God. That's the life of the church.

You ask, "Well, what's a 'high view'?" 2 Timothy 3:16 says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." So a pastor should believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible. That means the words, and all of them in the Bible, are God-breathed. Peter said in 2 Peter 1:21 that "Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

The pastor also holds to the idea that the Word of God is true and reliable. It's called the "inerrancy" of Scripture. I believe in an inerrant Bible; it cannot err, and it does not err. I also believe that the Bible is clear; God said what He meant and meant what He said. And I believe the Bible is sufficient; we don't need more than the Word of God and the Spirit of God changing the child of God into the image of the Son of God. It's seen in that first phrase that he is faithful to the Lord; that he is "holding fast the faithful word."

Secondly, "He has been taught" in the Word according to the teaching, or consistent with the teaching of the apostles. In verse 13, it is called "the faith," and in verse 14, it is called "the truth." So the pastor should be committed to what he has been taught in the Word; he's orthodox.

Church leaders must be orthodox in their view of Scripture. Don't settle for anything less than the orthodox view of Scripture, of God, of Jesus, of the Holy Spirit, of salvation, of the doctrine of the church and even of the doctrine of future things, eschatology. Hold fast to the doctrine that Christ is coming back and to what the Bible teaches.

Why? Verse 9 says, "that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort..." meaning "encourage believers" "...and convict those who contradict." This is the positive use of sound doctrine. The word "doctrine" means "teaching." And the word "sound" is a medical term meaning "healthy" or "life-giving." Sound doctrine brings spiritual health or life. A church or congregation will be healthy if it is being fed sound doctrine.

In Ephesians 4:11-15, where it says that God has given to the church "some pastors and teachers," it is "for the work of ministry...till we all come to the unity of the faith and...to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ."

There is nothing more important than a pastor being devoted to God's Word. The shepherd feeds the sheep the Word of God. The shepherd protects the sheep with the Word of God. The shepherd lives as an example of the Word of God to the congregation. It's so very important.

The pastor is to "exhort," verse 9, which he does with "sound doctrine," and he also convinces or refutes the "gainsayers," from the King James translation, those who speak against orthodox teaching. So he stands against false teachers.

Any pastor worth his salt teaches the Word and warns the sheep of false doctrine and false teaching. A pastor must be strong in the Word, gifted to teach the Word, which has a positive and negative aspect, and of gathering the sheep and driving the wolves and thieves away. It's not about a pastor's physical strength, his educational attainment, his status, his business savvy, his good looks, his youthful vigor or his charismatic personality; it's about his commitment to God's Word.

He is to be faithful to what he has been taught in the Word, has a godly character, has been called by God and gifted by God. God is looking for men to be undershepherds to lead the church.