

QUALIFICATIONS OF A GODLY LEADER

Titus 1:5-9

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Qualification of a Godly Leader

Titus 1:5-9

- 1) Leadership is crucial to the success of any organization. The church is no exception. It is true that everything rises or falls on leadership, and no corporation, no organization, no body of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, will rise above its leadership.
- 2) “Leadership is influence.” If no one is following you, then you are not leading. Today there is a tremendous need for good, godly leadership in the church. We need men who, by their integrity of life, maturity in Christ, competency in theology, and authenticity in ministry, capture the followship of a congregation that know the love and soul of their shepherd. They trust him (a trust that must be earned not demanded) to provide and protect, feed and lead, teach and tend to their spiritual needs.
- 3) As we plant churches across North America and around the world, as we seek to revive dying churches and reenergize plateaued ones, the great need of the hour is biblical, godly shepherds who find their job description laid out in Scripture and not some marketing guide or CEO manual. Contrary to what some leadership experts say, we are shepherds; we are not ranchers, managers or corporate heads out to raise money, build buildings, draw crowds and measure up to the world's criteria for success.
- 4) God believes leadership of the local church is so important that he addresses the issue in detail 4 times in the New Testament: Acts 20:28-38; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Peter 5:1-4. Emphasis in each list falls upon a leader's personal character and theological competency. God is primarily interested in who you are and then what you do. He well understands that the latter will flow from the former.

Transition:

What, then, is God looking for in those who will lead His people here on earth? In his letter to Titus Paul addresses 4 essential characteristics.

- I. He must be a man with godly commitments. 1:5-6
 - Apparently Paul had ministered briefly on the resort island of Crete. On his trip to Rome to appear before Caesar, he made a brief stop that is recorded in Acts 27:7-21, but his words here indicate a time of ministry not noted elsewhere in Scripture.
 - Who and how Crete was evangelized we cannot be sure. We do know, according to Acts 2:11, Cretans were present in Jerusalem on Pentecost.

Perhaps some were converted and returned home to spread the good news about Jesus. The work, however, proceeded slowly on this 146 mile long resort island located in the Mediterranean.

- Known as the mythical birthplace of Zeus; famous for the legendary Minotaur, a half-bull and half-human monster, and deeply immersed in worship of the emperor as universal Savior, these fledgling congregations needed serious attention, and they needed it quickly. Titus was the man for the job and, from his job description and God's expectations for his leaders, we learn what a man with Godly commitments looks like.

1. Be faithful to the church. 1:5

For this reason Paul left Titus in Crete 1) to set in order (straighten out the situation like an orthodontist straightens crooked teeth) things that are lacking and 2) appoint elders as he had commanded or "directed" (NIV). Faithfulness to the church means being the right man for the job and knowing what the job is. Fix and repair what is broken. Put in positions of leadership men who measure up to God's standard and expectations. The health of the church demands this.

- There are 2 and only 2 offices in the church: elders and deacons. Elder (*presbuteros*), bishop (*episkopos*, v. 7) and pastor (*poiman*) are used interchangeably in Scripture to refer to the same office. The term elder is the more common, and almost always appears in the plural in the New Testament when addressing the leaders of the church. However, no specific number is ever dictated and the emphasis in Scripture always falls on their character not their number. Concerning the latter I believe Scripture, by its silence, grants a degree of flexibility within a congregational form of government.
- Faithful to the church means we will mend what is broken, straighten what is crooked and start at the top by making sure good, godly leaders are put in place to lead the "flock of God" (1 Peter 5:2).

2. He is faithful to others. 1:6

Blameless means above reproach. It speaks of one who is above accusation or question as to his personal character and integrity. From it flow all other character qualities. It is so important that Paul repeats it in v. 7. His is a life worth copying. He is an example worth following. He is a model and a pattern of a man of God that no one can question, accuse or charge, with any degree of credibility.

3. Be faithful to your wife. 1:6

- Husband of one wife is lit. "a one woman man." That an elder is not a polygamist is a given. That Paul is not disqualifying the widower

or the never married is most likely. What of the divorced? Here the issue becomes somewhat murky.

- Personally I do not disconnect blameless and one woman man. Hence any man guilty of adultery is disqualified for life from leadership. That any divorcee should not pastor is my own understanding of this verse, though I exercise Christian grace and give room for Christian conscience at this point.
- Bottom line: this is a man who is in love with, committed to, and devoted to only one woman and that woman is his wife. John McArthur says, “An elder must have an unsullied, lifelong reputation for devotion to his spouse and to sexual purity” (p. 28) A lustful, flirtatious man with women other than his wife also would fall on this count and disqualify himself for leadership in God’s church. Addiction to pornography tragically would disqualify him as well.

4) Be faithful to your children. 1:6

- Faithful children addresses family leadership (cf. 1 Tim. 3:4-5). Indeed the family is the proving ground for leadership in the church.
- There is a debate: must a leader have 1) faithful, well-behaved, obedient children or 2) children who are believers? That they are the former is without question. That they are the latter is the expectation. Chapell says this applies to children while they are in the home, and that, “We are not necessarily looking at the beliefs and actions of one child but at the character of the family as a whole ..., our assessment is to be based on observations of children’s conduct and convictions made over time, not on isolated statements or actions” (p. 297).
- While under your watch care, as long as that is, your children cannot be seen as “wild and disobedient” (*NIV*), out of control and rude. A godly leader, a godly dad will do whatever is necessary in terms of time and attention to nurture his children in the training and instruction of the Lord (Deut. 6:4-9; Eph. 6:4).

II. He must be a man of godly conduct. 1:7

- Bishop (*episkopos*) means overseer, one whose function is to give direction and oversight over the church of God. It is easy to see the term is interchangeable with elder (v. 5).
- What is the essence of the godly conduct we must exhibit?

1) Understand the need of a good reputation.

Blameless above approach is repeated for emphasis and because it is foundational. It is essential not optional. It relates to your life both in and outside the church; in your community and your neighborhood, at restaurants and the dry cleaners, where you shop and buy gas.

2) Understand the nature of your calling.

A steward (*oikonomon*) of God, lit “of God a steward,” a household manager responsible to and accountable to God. Ultimately you please Him, serve Him, obey Him. Any man who does not understand this station in the ministry is not fit to minister. When things get tough he will quit, when times are hard he will break and run. No, he gets his marching orders from on high and he looks to God for his approval and applause!

3) Understand the necessity of a balanced life.

In rapid fire succession Paul will now list 11 character qualities of the man of God growing out of his blameless life as a God called steward. The first 5 listed in v. 7 are negative. The following 6 in v. 8 are positive. Not self-willed – arrogant, self-centered and self interested. A proud self-pleaser with no regard for God’s will or the needs of others. Not quick-tempered – easily provoked, one with a short fuse, prone to fits of rage and anger. An angry intimidator!

Not give to wine – addicted, given to drink that causes one to lose their mental sharpness and sound judgment. Addressing the enormous danger and damage of the consumption of alcohol in our day MacArthur writes, “most elders in modern cultures have no justifiable reason for drinking any alcoholic beverages and putting themselves in the way of temptation. They also have a responsibility, even more than other believers, to avoid exercising a Christian liberty that might “somehow become a stumbling block to the weak” and cause a fellow believers to be “ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died” (1 Cor. 8:9, 11; p. 37).

Not violent – a fist fighter, given to acts of violence, a brawler, both verbally and physically abusive and hurtful.

Not greedy for money – “pursuing dishonest gain” (*NIV*). Not one who uses the ministry as a money-making business. Money is not your motive, as 1 Peter 5:2 says, “you minister not for dishonest gain, but eagerly”, 1 Tim. 6:10 says, “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

III. He must be a man of godly character.

1:8

Paul now notes 6 positive, 6 desirable character qualities that describe the man of God and that counter-balance the 5 negatives of v. 7.

1) Pursue the right priorities.

Hospitable, a love of what is good.

Hospitable means a “lover of strangers.” You are one who opens your heart and home to others. You help those in need, whether friend or stranger, believer or unbeliever; race, social status, even lifestyle does not prevent you from loving and helping others. Here the credibility of the gospel is put on display for all to see.

A lover of what is good – a virtue lover, one who has a passion for that which is good, good as defined and described by God (cf. Phil. 4:8).

That which by its nature is good and that which is good for others shapes your priorities, your life.

2) Possess the right perspective.

Sober-minded – self-controlled, sensible, under mental and emotional control. This is a man who has an accurate and balanced view of life. Both in his judgments and his actions he acts with wisdom and common sense. He sees life from God’s perspective and acts accordingly. He is focused with the right priorities in view. This virtue is so crucial to the health of the church that Paul mentions it 5 times in the first two chapters (1:7; 2:2, 5, 6, 12).

3) Produce the right pattern.

Just (upright) and holy (devout). An elder must be someone others can follow in the way they treat others and in the way they live before others.

Just means righteous, fair, equitable and honest in how you deal with others. Credibility in ministry can stand or fall right here, because the just man will reflect the very character of God Himself!

Holy is not the usual word for holiness, though it has the same basic meaning. It carries the idea of pure and unpolluted. This is the man committed to godliness and Christlikeness. He pursues a life untainted by moral pollution or stain. His life is a reflection of the Christ who lives within Him.

4) Promote the right passion.

Self-controlled (“disciplined,” *NIV*) means having control over oneself, in control of your strength. You have complete self-mastery over your passions and impulses, bringing the will under the control of a God you love and trust. Peterson says it is the man who has “a good grip on Himself.” You monitor yourself day in and day out, submitting your life to the x-ray vision and CAT-scan detail of God’s perfect word. It is

the man who looks daily into the reflecting mirror of Scripture but does not “forget what kind of man he was” (James 1:24).

IV. He must be a man with godly convictions. 1:9

Paul now moves from the elder’s personal qualifications to his ministerial and doctrinal qualifications. False teaching will inevitably lead to false living. Wrong belief will inevitably lead to a wrong life. Paul believes we must have definite convictions both about truth and the teaching of that truth. Again, there is no room, not one inch, for compromise.

1) Be devoted to the truth.

Holding fast (pre. tense) – strongly cling or latch on to the faithful word (*pistou logou*) as has been taught (*didachen*).

- It is possible to have the faithful (true, genuine) word but lose it or hold it haphazardly.
- It is possible to hold fast what is not the true and faithful word because you leave what you were taught for something you think is better.
- Being devoted to the truth, holding fast the faithful word, means respecting the Bible as the inspired and inerrant word of God. It means affirming the Bible’s priority, authority, and sufficiency for what we believe and how we will live. It means the minister of God places himself gladly and willingly, and in full submission, under the Word. He is a Word man, a Word minister, a Word constrained and captivated slave. He will preach this Word and only this Word. He would never think of standing before a congregation and doing anything less than proclaiming the Word of God. He will honor what God has said and He will honor how God has said it. Bottom line: he will be an expositor of Holy Scripture.

2) Be diligent to teach.

- Sound doctrine may be the heart of Titus. The phrase occurs 8 times in the New Testament, all in the pastorals, with 5 of those in Titus. Literally it is “healthy teaching” (*hugiainouse didaskalia*). Again, if there is healthy teaching then there can be sick, weak, even deadly teaching. With sound doctrine, healthy teaching we exhort, “encourage” (*NIV*). Faced with false, weak, sickly teaching that contradicts (opposes) by compromise, opposition or neglect, we convict (“refute,” *NIV*).
- The faithful elder is both teacher and defender, preacher and physician. Constantly and consistently he takes up the task to comfort and confront, admonish and attack. To confront and expose false teaching will not make you popular, it will not win you the applause of men. To expose the false teachings, half gospels, and deceptive messages of a Joel Osteen, Benny Hinn, Paul & Jan

Crouch, Ken Copeland, Casey Treat, Greg Boyd, Clark Pinnick, John Sanders, and Brian McLaren whose *A Generous Orthodoxy* is no orthodoxy at all. Lest you think this too harsh I would remind you that Paul said in Romans 16:17, “note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.”

- No, ours is a balanced teaching agenda. We exhort. There is our positive theological affirmations. We convict. There is our negative, but necessary, apologetical and polemical refutations. We understand the danger of swallowing theological hemlock, especially when it is sugar coated! Our godly convictions are not for sale. They are not candidates for compromise. However, to take on such an assignment, your life and your message better match up.

Conclusion:

- In his classic *The Reformed Pastor*, Richard Baxter wisely warns: “Take heed to yourselves, lest your example contradict your doctrine,... lest you unsay with your lives what you say with your tongues; and be the greatest hinderers of the success of your own labors.” (MacArthur, 18).
- The faithful pastor must have no part in such a contradiction. For the glory of God and the good of his people, his life will match his belief, what he believes will connect with how he lives. Then he will be a leader worth trusting. Then he will be a leader worth following.