

“Portrait of the Man of God”

(1 Timothy 3:1-7)

Introduction

- 1) Respect for the ministry and the minister of the gospel is not at all clear at this time in America. In his important work, *No Place for Truth*, David Wells noted that in a recent survey measuring social prestige, on a scale from 1 – 100 ministers ranked 52, side by side with factory foremen and operators of power stations (p. 112). On a more positive note, the “Princeton Religion Research Center” reported in March, 1998 that ministers ranked 2nd in terms of honesty and integrity with 59% of those surveyed rating clergy as “high” or “very high” in terms of honesty and ethical standards. Pharmacists, for the 9th consecutive year topped the list with a 64% positive rating. As a point of interest those receiving the lowest positive marks included lawyers and labor union leaders (15%); senators (14%); congressmen, insurance salesmen and advertisers (12%); and car salesmen (8%). [*ABP*, 3-10-98].
- 2) I would want to point out that we should not too quickly dismiss these findings, giving them no consideration at all. After all our text says in v. 7 that we “must have a good testimony among those who are outside,” among unbelievers in the world. On the other hand, we must never expect or seek the world’s approval or applause. Indeed as servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, ultimately all that really matters is this: **THAT WE PLEASE GOD!**
- 3) What does the man who pleases God look like? What is the divine, biblical portrait of the man of God? 1 Timothy 3:1-7 provides the answer with the emphasis falling upon four vital areas.

Transition:

The man of God is a man of:

I. Integrity: Rooted in his private life. 3:1-2

- 1) Cotton Mather, the American Puritan, said of our high calling:

“The office of the Christian ministry, rightly understood, is the honorable and most important, that any man in the whole world can ever sustain; and it will be one of the wonders and employments of eternity to consider the reasons why the wisdom and goodness of God assigned this office to imperfect and guilty man!” (quoted in Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 31).

2) Mather is right, and at the root of this office there must be integrity. In particular Paul notes two aspects of his integrity.

1. His motive for service is pure. 3:1

- “A faithful saying” or “trustworthy word” is unique to Paul and the Pastoral’s (5X; 1:15; 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:1; Tit. 3:8). It always refers to an important, basic, and well-known truth. He cites and commends the statement to follow.
- The first “desires” (better “aspires”) means reaches for; this is an outward aspiration for a “good work,” not the ambitious pursuit of a prestigious office. The second “desires” means a passionate, consuming want: again its object is the “good work.”
- Bishop (*episkopos*) – overseer (cf. Acts 20:28-35; Tit. 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-4; also 1 Thes. 5:12-15; Heb. 13:7, 17; Jam. 3:1). Pastor, elder, overseer used interchangeably of those who lead the church of God.
- John MacArthur, “The man truly called to the ministry is marked by both an inward consuming passion and a disciplined outwardly pursuit. For him the ministry is not the best option, it is the only option. There is nothing else he could do with his life that would fulfill him (*1 Timothy*, 96.)

2. His manner of life is praiseworthy. 3:2

- Blameless (*NIV* “above reproach”) – not open to warranted attack or justified criticism in terms of the Christian life he lives. In general and in particular he is blameless, not sinless; no accusation against his character will stick. This is his constant and consistent pattern of life.
- *John Chrysostom (347-407)*: “The minister’s shortcomings simply cannot be concealed. Even the most trivial soon get known. ... However trifling their offenses, these little things seem great to others, since everyone measures sin, not by the size of the offense, but by the standing of the sinner.” *Gregory the Great (540-604)*: “He who is required by the necessity of his position to speak the highest things is compelled by the same necessity to exemplify the highest things.”¹
- Temperate – clear headed, self-controlled, thinks wisely and with balance.
- Sober-minded – prudent, thoughtful, well disciplined in mind. He sees life as God sees it and orders his priorities accordingly.
- Of good behavior – (*kosmios*) well disciplined in life, respectable, well ordered (not chaotic); consistently has his act together.
- Hospitable – lit. “lover of strangers,” he has an open heart and an open home; friendly and approachable.

¹ *Leadership*. (Winter, 1997), 59.

- III. What kind of man is he? The kind I can point my 4 sons to and say go and be like him. The word in a sense is an umbrella for the character qualifications which will follow. Verses 2 – 7 will provide the specifics of this praiseworthy life.
- P.A. A genuinely blameless and praiseworthy life is an outgrowth of one's private life. Who we are on the inside will eventually make itself known on the outside. Integrity in character will show itself in integrity in conduct.

Transition: The man of God is a man of integrity rooted in his private life. The man of God is a man of authenticity reflected in his personal life.

II. Authenticity: Reflected in his personal life. 3:2, 4-5

- 1) No area of a minister's life receives greater attention and experiences a more sustained assault than his marriage and family.
 - One survey reports an average work week of 55 hours for ministers.
 - 80% of ministers believe ministry has negatively impacted their family.
 - 94% of ministers' families feel the pressure of the pastor's ministry.
 - Over half (64%) of your congregation expect you and your family to live at a higher moral standard than they do.
- 2) The simple truth is we do live in a glass house. We do experience a fishbowl type of scrutiny. It comes with the territory and it must be accepted. Whether it is fair or not begs the question. It is reality. Two areas in particular demand our careful attention.

1. He is committed to his wife. 3:2

- Literally "a one-woman man"
- Cf. Eph. 5:33
- Family, friends and foes know you are in love with and devoted to only one woman and that woman is your wife.
 - Never alone with another woman
 - No woman is in your intimate inner circle
 - No lunches with other women
 - No extended counseling with other women
- Remember King David (he lied, committed adultery and murdered).
- If you are never alone with another woman, you will never commit adultery! Be willing to accept the criticism of the world, but maintain that commitment to your wife.

2. He has control of his children. 3:4-5

- 1) Paul employs an argument from the lesser to the greater, establishing the point that the family is the proving ground for leadership in the church.
 - Rules – “to direct, lead, preside” (cf. 5:17)
 - Well – “with excellence”
 - Submission (*hupotage*) – military term meaning “under control”
 - Reverence – “dignity,” proper respect
- 2) Warren Wiersbe, “If a man’s own children cannot obey and respect him, then his church is not likely to respect and obey his leadership” (*Be Faithful*, 41).
- 3) Too many men have sacrificed their children on the altar of a ministry that was not God’s but their own.
- 4) Too many P.K.’s grow up to hate church and walk away from God because the church took their Daddy away too many nights and because he missed too many ballgames.
 - *Reader’s Digest* June 1995 – 4 and 5 year olds surveyed. Which would you choose to give up: your daddy or your t.v.? 33% said Daddy.
 - My own commitment to my four sons and their activities which get put on my calendar.
 - I know of no one who has lost a ministry because of too much time with the family, but I know of far too many who have lost ministry, marriage and family because of too little time with them.

Transition: The man of God is a man of integrity and authenticity. The man of God is a man of:

III. Dependability: Revealed in his pastoral life. 3:2-3

- 1) Matthew Simpson caught a glimpse of the majesty and gravity of the ministry of the Word when he said of the preacher:

“His throne is the pulpit; he stands in Christ’s stead; his message is the Word of God; around him are immortal souls; the Savior, unseen, is beside him, the Holy Spirit broods over the congregation; angels gaze upon the scene, and heaven and hell await the issue. What association, and what vast responsibility!”
- 2) John Calvin would add, “If a preacher is not first preaching to himself, better that he falls on the steps of the pulpit and breaks his neck than preaches that sermon.”

- 3) All that we have discussed is indeed crucial to the effectiveness of the pastoral life of the minister. It is foundational to how he will teach.

1. He is able to teach the scriptures.

3:2

- *Didaktikos* – meaning “skilled in teaching;” (cf. Tit. 1:9 which says “that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.”)
- You must be a student of the Word.
- You must be a growing, lifelong student of the Word. Far too many fail here! Seminary can only get you started, it cannot keep you going.
- You must teach the content of the Bible and the theology of the Bible. It must not be said of your pastorate, “There is a famine for the Word of God!”
- Martin Luther puts it in the correct context when he reminds us,

“Let us then consider it certain and conclusively established that the soul can do without all things except the Word of God, and that where this is not there is no help for the soul in anything else whatever. But if it has the Word it is rich and lacks nothing, since this Word is the Word of life, of truth, of light, of peace, of righteousness, of salvation, of joy, of liberty, of wisdom, of power, of grace, of glory, and of every blessing beyond our power to estimate.”²

- Pastor Jim Henry (FBC Orlando) would add on a personal note,

“If I had it to do over, I would have put more of a priority on [preaching] earlier in my ministry. I used to do a lot of counseling. I didn’t realize that when I’m preaching God’s Word and applying it to life that I get more done in 35 or 40 minutes on Sunday morning than I could if I’d spent every hour five or six days a week listening to people. I’ve got to do some [counseling] – there is a balance there – but I would have put more priority on preaching.”³

2. He is able to teach by example.

3:3

- Not given (addicted) to wine – not one who sits long at his wine / not a slave to drink. In our day, abstinence would be my counsel.

² Martin Luther, “A Treatise on Christian Liberty,” *Three Treatises*. (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1947), 23.

³ Jim Henry, pastor of First Baptist, Orlando, quoted in *Preaching* (Sep/Oct, 1999), 14.

- Not violent – not a giver of blows, a fighter physically; one easily angered; but is cool and calm even in tough situations. He is not the guy who will fight at the drop of a hat and is willing himself to drop the hat. Wiersbe says, “short tempers do not make for long ministries.” (*Be Faithful*, 41).
- Gentle – considerate, kind, gracious, one who easily forgives.
- Not quarrelsome – peaceful, uncontentious, one who is willing and ready to listen. One who avoids, if possible, disunity and disharmony.
- Not covetous – lit. “not loving money,” not greedy (cf. 6:9-10). Few get into ministry for money but too many later become overly concerned with money. Never let money be your priority, your passion.
- A. W. Tozer understood the importance of the life we live, the example we set, and the message we must proclaim.
 “We must not imagine ourselves commissioned to make Christ acceptable to big business, the press, the world of sports, or modern education. We are not diplomats but prophets, and our message is not a compromise, but an ultimatum.”⁴

Transition: The man of God is a man of integrity, authenticity, and dependability. The man of God is a man of reliability.

IV. Reliability: Respected in his public life. 3:6-7

The ministry has suffered in public opinion because the public life of too many ministers has been scandalous and shameful. Adultery, involvement in pornography, financial scandal, divorce and simple rudeness has marred the reputation of those who herald the gospel. Fellow ministers, this ought not to be. Again Paul sounds a two-fold warning for the wise servant of Christ.

1) He avoids the places of temptation. 3:6

- Novice – lit. “newly planted,” e.g. a new convert. Why? The danger of “pride,” the root sin which captured the heart of the devil and brought him down.
- Christian maturity requires time and experience. The process cannot be rushed. New believers are not spiritually qualified to be pastors.

2) He aspires to have a good testimony. 3:7

- Respected even by the lost.
- Illustration #1 – Charlotte and I going to dinner on a Sunday afternoon in Dallas. The response of the waitress concerning Christians.

⁴ A. W. Tozer, 1946. Quoted in *PrayerNet Newsletter*. (Feb. 21, 1997)

- Illustration #2 – Response of young North Greenville student who is a waiter. Worst customers: Baptist preachers (rude, demanding, cheap). Best customers: Homosexuals, lesbians (they were kind, gracious, and generous).

Conclusion

Jonathan Edwards said it well; “I go out to preach with two propositions in mind. First, every person ought to give his life to Christ. Second, whether or not anyone else gives him his life, I will give him mine.”⁵

⁵ *Leadership*. (Winter, 1997), 59.