

In Search of Shepherds - The Character pt2

REVIEW: We are in week four of our Search for Shepherds. Along the way we have looked at the biblical timeline and development of the church's leadership which has been elders/overseers the entire way. The form of how the church operates has been consistent over time and across cultural boundaries.

We scratched the surface in regard to what elders do. What is their role or function, how do they operate. The only part we looked at with any detail was praying for the sick. We will be coming back to what elders do later in the series.

The reason what they do comes later is because Paul set things up and made it clear that WHO an elder IS, is more important than what they do. And as most if not all of us know from experience, what you do, flows from who you are. In fact, Jesus put it this way, "The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks." - Luke 6:45 Basically, garbage in...garbage out. So we know that WHO an elder is, is the basis for what he does. This is why we are slowing way down to look at the character that Paul outlines for us in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

INTRO: Now, as we begin today, you have a few ways to look at these next several sermons. The first way is that this doesn't apply to me. I am too young in my faith, or I don't know the Bible well enough to be an elder, or whatever. Then you can tune out, and just listen to the voices in your head for the rest of the sermon, or take a little nap.

The second way you can look at these messages is that these apply to elders, so I want to know what elders should be like. I want to think about the future of our church, and who I think meets this criteria that God has given us for ascertaining a man's maturity level to lead the church. This is a better way to look at these sermons, if for no other reasons you are ignoring the voices in your head, forgoing the nap, and listening to my milky smooth, melodic voice.

However, the best way to view and understand these sermons is, yes, with an eye to understanding who might be qualified to fill the role of an elder. Let's not forget, that these qualities are qualities that are supposed to be present in EVERY Christian's life. So while the elders need to excel and have their lives characterized by these qualities (not have perfected all of them), all of us need to strive to have our lives marked by these qualities. This is a picture of a mature believer, so it is for all of us. So yes, think of who in our church qualifies as meeting these standards, but also think of yourself, and if your life is typified by these marks of maturity. And avoid being too hard on yourself, or too soft.

TRAN: Lets dig in. 1 Timothy 3:2

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I. Review

A. Last week we looked at an elder being above reproach

1. The point of what Paul was saying was that elders should have a good reputation
2. We looked at how a good reputation was a requirement for the seven chosen to serve in the church in Acts 6
3. Same was true of Timothy when Paul chose him to accompany him on his missionary journey
4. We also talked about ways to know if you have a good reputation

B. We also saw that an overseer needs to be faithful to his wife

1. We noted how that is a good translation of the Greek
2. We covered the possibilities of what the Greek could mean, and ruled all out but this one possibility
3. The bigger point that Paul was trying to make is that an elder needs to be sexually, and morally pure
 - a) How can he be faithful to the church if he is unfaithful to his wife
 - b) And given the world they lived in, this was a tall order
 - c) We often think we have it bad
 - (1) The Ancient world was much like Las Vegas
 - (2) I have been told that because prostitution is legal in Las Vegas, the prostitutes can be rather aggressive
 - (3) That would give you a better picture of what these men were up against

II. Picking up where we left off, an overseer is to be temperate

A. It fascinates me how the translators of the Bible pick their words sometimes

1. Just a quick primer on translation: there are two schools of translation
 - a) The first is very literal - it is a word for word translation
 - b) The second is a little more interpretative - more of a thought for thought
 - c) Think of these two schools of translation as a sliding scale - some are very literal, some are less literal, some are very thought for thought
 - d) Examples: The NASB is very literal, the NIV is more in the middle - leaning toward literal, and the Message is very, very thought for thought
2. The odd thing to me is when we get to the list from Paul, the translators seem to take a very literal approach to translating the words
3. The problem with that is these words are pregnant with subtle meaning, and so the literal word usually does not do the idea justice
4. And so it is with our first quality: temperate

B. The Greek term carries the idea of being restrained, or being stable

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1. We often apply the word temperate to drinking
 - a) This man does not drink a lot
 - b) But it really does not make sense if the term is restricted to drinking when in verse 3 it says that an elder is “not given to drunkenness”
 2. Did you realize that even the English word does not mean lack of drinking
 - a) It can be applied to it
 - b) But that is not the meaning
 3. The English definition is: showing moderation or self-restraint
 4. So we need to think in wider terms than just alcohol, and realize that this is a word that characterizes their entire life
 - a) In life, they show restraint
 - b) In life they are moderate
 - c) In life they are stable
 - (1) So for example: This man will not be stressed or worried when life seems to get crazy
 - (2) This man will not freak out over the Supreme Court’s Ruling a few months ago, or the deal with Iran - worrying that the world is coming to an end
 - (a) Might they register their well thought out opinion; of course
 - (b) But they do not get all up in arms over the direction this world is taking
 - (c) They do this largely because they understand that this earthly home was never meant to be our source of security - our security is found in Christ
- C. So what does a temperate man look like - what are some ways we can describe him?
1. A temperate man is a man of faith
 - a) A mature man, a man that you would want to consider for the position of elder is a man that acts on the promises of God
 - b) Consider these examples from the book of Hebrews
 - (1) “By faith Abel offered...a better sacrifice” (11:4)
 - (2) “By faith Noah...prepared an ark” (11:7)
 - (3) “By faith Abraham...obeyed” (11:8)
 - (4) “By faith Abraham offered up Isaac” (11:17)
 - c) These men all acted by faith
 - (1) A faith that was never realized in their lifetime
 - (2) Hebrews 11:13
 - d) So in the same way, a temperate man believes God’s promises and acts in faith - not knowing what the future may hold

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2. A temperate man is a man of hope
 - a) Just one verse for this: 1 Thess. 1:3
 - b) Their endurance, their steadfastness was inspired by hope
 - (1) The reason they are steady
 - (2) The reason they endure is because of the hope they have found in Jesus Christ
 - (3) That is what their lives are based on
 3. A temperate man is a man of love
 - a) See the pattern? Faith, hope and love
 - b) Love being the capstone for the others - 1 Cor. 13:7-8
- D. How is the quality of temperance developed?
1. Well, if temperance is really about moderation or self-restraint, developing this quality really comes down to faith and hope
 2. Many people claim to have faith, the bigger question is, “faith in what?”
 - a) Our faith is only as strong as the object of our faith
 - b) So an idol made by human hands has little to offer in way of genuine faith
 - c) Even just saying in a general sense that you have “faith in God”, what is that faith in?
 - (1) Did God promise something that you are believing Him for?
 - (2) Or do you just have this nebulous idea of faith in God
 3. To develop temperance, you need to trust in the trustworthy
 - a) You need to know, understand, and have full confidence in the promises that God gave us
 - b) So where is your trust at?
 - (1) How are you coming in this area?
 - (2) Do you need to grow your trust in God?
 - (3) Do you need to grow your trust in His promises?
 - (4) Keep in mind, even the disciples, who spent time with Jesus, had moments of doubt
 - (a) So this does not mean you don’t have a moment of doubt
 - (b) It simply means that your life is characterized by trusting in God’s promises, so that regardless of circumstances, you continue to walk the path He has set
- III. Second, an elder is to be self-controlled
- A. Again, the translation of this word is interesting
 1. “Self-controlled” is not a bad translation
 2. However, the word carries more of the idea of your thoughts than your actions
 - a) Other translations use the word prudent

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- b) In fact, the Greek word is related to the word for wisdom
 - c) Which makes it understandable why this focuses more on thoughts than actions
3. Let me give you an example from Gene Getz' book entitled *The Measure of a Man*
- a) Gene Getz used to teach at Moody Bible Institute, in Chicago
 - b) While he was there, Dr. William Culberson was the President of the school
 - (1) The boys dorm is named after him
 - c) Another notable from MBI was Dr. Wilbur Smith (he has a building named after him too)
 - (1) Dr. Smith said this of Dr. Culberson "One of this man's greatest strengths was the ability to listen to everyone express opinions and then give the correct answer with clarity and great wisdom."
 - (2) This is a good example of the character quality we are looking at here - prudence, or self-control
- B. Paul has a great description of this quality in Romans 12:3 (please turn there)
- 1. When Paul says, "think of yourselves with sober judgment" the word for "sober judgment" is the same word as "self-controlled" in 1 Timothy
 - a) Think prudently, sober, rightly, sensibly about one's self
 - b) Romans 12 gives us a better picture of what Paul has in mind in 1 Timothy
 - 2. By the way, this characteristic of maturity is not given just for elders, but this is the most frequently named characteristic given for all Christians
 - a) We are all to think rightly, soberly, prudently
 - b) Especially about ourselves
- C. This quality, like many of the others is dependent on other qualities
- 1. A prudent person is a humble person
 - a) They are to think of themselves with "sober judgment"
 - b) That mean they do not think of themselves as higher than others
 - c) It also means they do not degrade or think of themselves as worthless or lower than others either
 - (1) Which would mean that their self image is derived from their relationship with Christ
 - (2) Because of Christ, because they are a child of the King, they are valuable
 - (a) They are not more valuable
 - (b) They are not less valuable
 - (c) Because Christ died for each person just the same

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- d) Turn to Philippians 2:3-4
 - (1) They have humility of mind
 - (2) They look out for the needs of others
 - (3) But they do not neglect their needs either
- 2. A prudent, self controlled person is filled with gratitude
 - a) He understands the grace of God
 - (1) Without God's grace he would still be lost in his sins
 - (2) But it was "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"
 - b) That is a focal point
 - c) That is an anchor
 - d) He does not hold on to what benefits him, because only God's grace matters
 - (1) Like Paul when he gave his list of advantages
 - (2) The only thing in the end that mattered to Paul was Christ
 - (3) He was filled with gratitude and was willing and able to let go of the other things for Christ
- D. Prudence is not a position of weakness
 - 1. In fact, turn to 2 Timothy 1:7
 - 2. God's Spirit does not make us timid
 - a) As if the humility and the self control are so reserved that we cannot ever assert ourselves
 - b) Being a Christian does not make a person weak
 - c) Meekness is not equal to weakness
 - 3. God's Spirit gives us a spirit of power, love, and what??? (self-discipline - same Greek word)
- E. Turn to Titus 2:6-8
 - 1. Paul just instructed Titus, in verse 6, to teach the young men to be "self controlled" (prudent)
 - 2. In verses 7-8, Paul expands on that by showing Titus how to teach them to be prudent
 - a) It is not just by words, "Be prudent!"
 - b) It is by example that we are taught
 - 3. Allow me to give you this by way of example
 - a) In the last 5-6 years of doing mission trips we learned the bead ceremony, and have kept that going every year on mission
 - b) There have been a couple of times that I have had kids who do not have a father in their life for one reason or another say to me, "You are like a father to me."
 - (1) I take that as a huge compliment

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- (2) It means that I have filled a role in their life, even temporarily, and given them an example of for life
- (3) And let me tell you that being told “You are like my father,” gives you cause for pause
 - (a) It is a humbling experience
 - i) You are grateful to be able to play that role
 - ii) You are humbled that someone would see any effort you made on their behalf and feel that it raises to the level of what a parent does
 - (b) It also will cause you to rethink your own behavior and actions
 - i) When temptation comes, and you think about this teenager that is looking up at you as a father - that will make you think twice before you do anything stupid
- 4. A person of prudence, should be an example for all those around them
- F. Prudence, and for that matter any of these qualities for eldership, are never meant to be lived out perfectly
 - 1. I tell you this often in this sermon series, only because it bears repeating
 - 2. These are qualities that should be the normal pattern of behavior for all of us, but especially for elders
 - a) Could an elder at some point do something that is not prudent?
 - b) Sure. But in being mature, being a role model, when their error is pointed out to them, they will realize their error
 - 3. So while being told that you are a role model for someone is an amazing honor, and gives you a great feeling
 - a) Perhaps better would be this statement
 - b) “I know you make mistakes. I do too. But you are still my role model.”
 - (1) A statement like that means that the person understands grace
 - (2) A statement like that means they leave room in the relationship for imperfection
 - (3) A statement like that means they realize that WHEN (not if) I mess up, WHEN I sin, it is something that is outside of my character
- G. So how do we develop this quality of prudence?
 - 1. First understand that prudence comes from a balance of our thoughts about ourself
 - a) Swing the pendulum too far one way and you have arrogance, and view ourselves too highly
 - b) Swing it too far the other way and we think we are nothing

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2. While I am not a fan of finding other things to “blame” for our wrong thoughts, there are certain factors that can contribute to us having an imbalanced perception of ourselves
 - a) Perhaps you faced circumstances that were beyond your control - the family environment you grew up in, genetic factors, bad experiences in school
 - b) Or maybe you have been taught incorrectly - someone consistently told you, you were worthless, you want so badly to eliminate self from the equation of life that you have worn down your own self worth and value as an image bearer of God; your view of forgiveness wrong, trying to make yourself worthy for God by becoming nothing
 - c) Parents that praised you so much that you have an inflated ego; or perhaps worse parents that never praised
 - (1) Which, by the way, between those two, never praising your child is worse
 - (2) If you withhold praise and attention from your child, fearing they will become conceited, what you wind up doing is create kids that are starved for attention
3. So if you have one of these things that has caused an imbalance in your view of yourself, here are some suggestions
 - a) First, talk to someone that you trust, that is prudent
 - (1) Work on talking through issues
 - (2) Set up goals for balancing your view of yourself
 - b) Second, go back to the gospel, for the gospel balances both imbalances
 - (1) The gospel tells us that we are sinners in need of a Savior and we have no hope outside of Christ
 - (2) But it also tells us that upon putting our faith in Jesus Christ, we are accepted into God’s family, and there is nothing that removes the blessings of being a part of God’s family
 - (3) The gospel has a way of bringing us to our knees in humble dependance - thus reducing or eliminating pride
 - (4) And the gospel has a way of helping us find our value in the place it matters the most - through Jesus Christ

CONCLUSION: There are two more character qualities from the maturity list. Character that all of us need to seek after, and character and maturity that typifies any man that would be an elder.