

In Search of Shepherds - The Character pt3

REVIEW: We have been in search of shepherds in Scripture. We have looked at the development of the position of elders in the pages of Scripture. We will not take the time to go over the chronological development again - you can get the first two messages in the series if you missed out on them. The one thing we saw that bears repeating from the chronological development of elders is that the position was “supra-cultural” or it fits in any culture. It started in the Jewish churches, but as the church grew, and began to include Gentiles, the same system was used in the Gentile churches as well.

We just scratched the surface of what elders do. We will get back to that, but the Bible puts a much larger emphasis on WHO an elder is over what an elder DOES.

In the last two weeks we have looked at the character that we should be looking for in a man that serves as an elder. So far we have seen that an elder is to be “above reproach” meaning having a good reputation. Second an elder is to be faithful to his wife. We took a while to dissect that one to make sure we did not follow one of the false trails about the meaning of that phrase. Third, an elder is to be “temperate”, meaning to be restrained or stable. And finally we saw that an elder is to be self-controlled, meaning prudent or sensible.

INTRO: So this week we will continue on the list of character requirements. If you have noticed, I have slowed way down to make sure we understand what these requirements are. We are only taking two or three at a time to make sure we give them a solid treatment. I want us to be able to recognizing these qualities in people when we see them, and recognize when these qualities are absent.

- I. So our first characteristic is kind of a fun one when you understand the meaning behind the word - the word in 1 Timothy 3:2 is “respectable”
 - A. Personally, I enjoy blowing away stereotypes of the typical “man of the cloth”
 1. Most people, both inside and outside the church are usually a little surprised at how I dress
 - a) And I don’t dress this way to make a statement or anything
 - b) I do it because it is comfortable and practical
 - (1) To be honest, I would preach in even more comfortable clothing if I thought it would be acceptable
 - (2) AND if I did not here the voice of my father in my head saying, “you are wearing that to church???”
 2. What’s been even more fun is rubbing shoulders with people in the school system and giving them a different view of Pastors

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- a) Sadly, because everyone stereotypes, and we even stereotype people that we don't really know, it is fun to show people, face to face, that pastors are not all the "crazy Christians" they might see on TV
 - b) In fact, I enjoy being more on the logical/intellectual end of the scale to show that Christians, and pastors are not irrational, backwards people that believe in superstition
- B. I bring that up because it factors into the word picture behind the word "respectable"
- 1. The translation of the word "respectable" is actually a good translation
 - 2. However, it loses some of its punch because we lose the word picture that we get from the original language
- C. The Greek word is "kosmios"
- 1. It gets variously translated as "good behavior" or "well-behaved"
 - a) It speaks of a man that is living a well ordered life
 - 2. It is where we get our word in English for cosmetics
 - a) Turn two books to the right, Titus 2:9-10
 - b) That last word, "attractive" (depending on your translation) is a related word
 - (1) What Paul is telling slaves of his time is that their behavior in their lives should make the gospel attractive
 - (2) Their lives were to be "cosmetics" to the gospel
 - 3. Is that not a great word picture!
 - a) The lives of elders - and by extension, any Christian (remember, I could point you to several other passages that would tell us that all Christians should behave this way - the elders are just supposed to exemplify the things) so our lives should be cosmetics to the gospel
 - b) Our behavior should make the gospel even more attractive
 - c) The gospel all by itself should be the most attractive thing we have ever seen, or understood
 - (1) But what makes it even more so is seeing people LIVE IT OUT
 - (2) So I am going to go off script here a little - yes, we are studying what elders are supposed to be like, but this applies to us all, and I want to describe some ways we can live out the gospel
 - (3) Christians often get raked over the coals for our stands on social issues, and understandably so if all we do is object - allow me to explain
 - (a) Rather than objecting to abortion alone, consider helping at a pregnancy center, or being a foster parent for a child, or adopting a child - be pro-active in your objection to abortion
 - i) That puts cosmetics on the gospel

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- (b) Rather than objecting to gay marriage, reach out, and have friends that are gay. Do not make the issue of homosexuality your litmus test for being friends
 - i) People should be saying of us, “I can’t believe they oppose gay marriage!!!”
 - ii) “But they sure are nice to that gay couple down the street. You know I saw them having a BBQ together last week.”
 - iii) That is cosmetics on the gospel
- D. If you remember all the way back to our series on the book of Ephesians, Ephesians had an important word in it - “walk”
 1. Walk worthy of the calling you received - 4:1
 2. Walk no longer as the Gentiles walked - 4:17
 3. Walk in love 5:1-2
 4. Walk as children of the light - 5:7-8
 5. Be careful how you walk - 5:15-16
- E. So how do you become a person that is like cosmetics to the gospel?
 1. Here is a question we don’t often think about - what about how we dress?
 - a) Is what I wear intended to draw attention to myself - either by being elaborate, or by being shabby?
 - b) When it comes to appearance we need to keep in mind the principles of Scripture of modesty, but also the cultural considerations as well
 - (1) For example: Every time we take a mission trip, I have to tell the group what they can and cannot wear - what might be culturally acceptable here may not be in other cultures - especially Christian culture
 - (2) And not just modesty, but what a shirt may say on it - you might be surprised how quickly you can ruin your message by what you wear
 2. What about the house I live in? Did I buy it to impress the neighbors, friends and family, or to glorify Jesus with my house?
 - a) By the way, with each of these questions, keep the focus on you
 - b) No judging others - because you may not know their motive, even if they have a large house
 3. Is my speech something that is pleasing and attractive to the gospel?
 - a) Am I using it to build other people up? Or tear them down?
 - b) This would include swearing
 - (1) We think this is a small thing
 - (2) But does swearing really put cosmetics on the gospel?
- II. Our second characteristic for today - hospitable

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- A. The word hospitable means to be generous and caring for others
 - 1. The word hospital actually comes from hospitable
 - 2. A hospital is where people are to receive care both physically and emotionally
- B. The church has been described as a hospital - caring for spiritual needs as well as physical needs
- C. We have seen biblical examples of this kind of caring throughout Scripture
 - 1. Boaz with Ruth
 - 2. The believers in Acts 4 - turn there - Acts 4:34-35
 - a) This is one example of the reality that unusual circumstances create special needs for God's people
 - b) Other places in the NT it was famine, like the one that the church in Antioch sent funds to Jerusalem to help out in Acts 11
- D. Needs may not be famine today, but special needs still come up
 - 1. And when needs arise, God's people need to pull together to be hospitable
 - 2. We have had occasions like this where the church has collected for a special need of someone in our church to show our love for them
 - a) Their car blows up, or their furnace conks out
- E. So hospitality is pretty straight forward and easy to understand, but let's crank this up a notch - turn to 1 Peter 4:8-9
 - 1. Offer hospitality without grumbling
 - a) It should not be something that is forced where we unwillingly submit to help others
 - b) Our face says "no problem, happy to help" and our spirit says, "I could be at a BBQ right now!"
 - 2. This is unselfish love
 - a) We should not respond to others needs because it is our Christian obligation
 - b) We should respond because it comes from the heart
- F. The Bible even calls us to be hospitable to strangers
 - 1. "Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers..."
 - 2. This one can be tricky because strangers may take advantage of your good nature
 - a) So be wise about this one
 - b) I generally operate on the side of it is better to be taken advantage of a little than to not be generous
 - c) But there does have to be common sense and sometimes lines drawn
 - (1) We have had to do that with people coming to the church for help
 - (2) So be wise

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G. I think one of the reasons this characteristic is so associated with elders is because often when we think of hospitality we think of the home

1. We think of having people over for meals or parties
2. We think of keeping people in our homes
3. And back in the first century, guess where the church first met?
 - a) In homes
 - b) They did not have buildings of their own
4. When it comes to hospitality and the use of your home, obviously economics can influence how much you can do
5. But this really should be a mark of a mature leader - the willingness to use his home for the glory of God

H. Becoming a person of hospitality begins with love

1. Love really is the foundation to all the qualities we are talking about.
2. Because it begins with love, it means we show hospitality even in those moments we may not feel like being hospitable
 - a) We don't wait for the desire to grow in us, we act, and allow our feelings to come in line with our behavior
3. Have a plan about hospitality
 - a) Talk as a family about how you can use your resources to show Christ's love
 - b) How can you use your home to show the love of Christ?
 - c) Develop a plan within your economic means to exercise this muscle of hospitality

III. Our third characteristic is "able to teach"

A. Here again, we need to look at other uses of this word in the Bible to better understand what Paul was driving at

1. Too often we think of this requirement as elders have to be able to do what I do - come up front and instruct the church
 - a) They need to be engaging and interesting
 - b) They need to be able to teach
 - c) That manner of thinking about teaching is not so much as to what Paul was focused on
2. The word used here is didaktikos and it is used only twice in this form in the Bible
 - a) It comes from the word didasko which means to teach
 - b) In English we get our words Didache and didactic
3. So we know the word didaktikos is used here, so let's look at the only other use in the NT - 2 Timothy 2:24-25
 - a) If you notice, all the phrases around this word refer to how the teaching should occur

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- (1) Not quarrelsome
 - (2) Be kind
 - (3) Not resentful
 - (4) Gently instruct
 - (5) And right in the middle - able to teach
- b) While skill may be involved, the stress seems to be more on our character in the teaching
- (1) It seems as if Paul is using this as a character quality
 - (2) And that would make sense since the list of qualifications in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are all about character
 - (3) Otherwise Paul might have said that they need to have the gift of teaching - if skill was in mind
4. So allow me to give you an illustration of a time in which I successfully instructed gently
- a) And before I do, I have little doubt I can give numerous illustrations that I didn't handle well either
- b) While on our mission trip to Kentucky a few years ago, the young man that was running our trip was not "instructing us adults gently" in the ways he felt the trip should be going
- (1) To put it bluntly, he lit into us because he felt we were interfering in the student's abilities to lead the trip where they were supposed to lead
 - (2) It took everything in me not to fire back at this kid - largely for the manner in which he dealt with us
 - (a) In fact, after the meeting was over, I don't think I spoke another word to anyone because I was more than angry
 - (b) The next morning he and I sat down, and he opened up the conversation with a general question about how I felt the meeting went
 - (c) At that point I was able to tell him my honest opinion gently, but firmly - that he was lucky to escape with his life because of how he treated all of us and how he dealt with us in anger
 - (d) And while I can't say that it was a completely successful time of instruction, the lack of success had more to do with him as a person than my ability to teach
- B. Let's think about the phrase "able to teach" a little more, and see other ways we might not be considering what Paul meant - since we always jump straight to skill
1. Paul never used this Greek word in Titus, but he certainly referred to the idea - look at Titus 1:9 "He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message

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as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.”

- a) He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message
 - (1) In other words, no compromising the message
 - (2) There have been far too many people that want to pick and choose what parts of the Bible, and its message they want to believe
 - (a) We, as evangelical Christians get blamed for this quite often
 - (b) I find that amusing since I have sat across the table from people, pleading with them, as they tell me they don't believe the Bible about this or that, and when I ask them why they believe the Bible that Christ died for their sins, they have no response
 - (c) I admit there are many evangelical Christians that cannot give good answers for why we do not follow certain parts of the Bible
 - i) That comes with more studying - you can't rely on me to give you all the info, you have to read and study for yourself
 - (1) Start with an area that interests you
 - (d) Since I am down this road, let's do this
 - i) Often we hear that evangelicals pick and choose because we eat shellfish or some other obscure OT law
 - ii) Problem one with that argument is it comes from the base that the Bible is a rule book and we open, read what it says and do it
 - (1) WRONG!
 - (2) The Bible is a story that flows from beginning to end, and while God is the same yesterday today and forever, that does not mean that God does not deal with humanity differently over time
 - iii) Problem two with that argument is there is a reason we do not follow all of the OT law - because the law was given to Israel as a nation to govern every part of their life as God's special people
 - (1) Some laws were given simply to set Israel apart
 - (2) The laws that we still follow have been upheld throughout the Bible, into the NT even after Christ fulfilled the law

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- (3) Back to the point, the phrase “able to teach” carries the idea that the person teaching holds to the fact that God’s Word is true, and they do not compromise that
- C. One other way we can consider this phrase, “able to teach” - the person has a solid understanding of Scripture to be able to teach the message to others, AND refute those who contradict the message
1. Look again at Titus 1:9 “He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.”
 - a) So he understands sound doctrine - he has a knowledge of God’s Word
 - b) Does not mean he has to have the whole thing memorized
 - c) But a solid grasp on the message of Scripture
 2. Then they must be able to refute those who oppose sound doctrine
 - a) It does not mean they win every argument they get into
 - b) It means they can point out error and give reasons why something is wrong from the Bible
 - c) It means they are willing to stand toe to toe with someone who is erring, not out of hate, or a sense of I am better than you, I must defeat you - but out of love for the other person
- D. So, a man that is able to teach, has the character of emotional maturity to handle situations with care and gentleness, really believe that God’s Word is truth, and understand God’s Word to teach others
- E. This ability to teach is something that all of us should strive for
1. Hebrews 5:12 “In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!”
 - a) The author of Hebrews is not holding back on those he is writing to
 - b) The fact is, if you have been a Christian for several years, you should be able to teach
 - (1) Does not mean you have to have a classroom, or be the preacher
 - (a) You can teach a small group
 - (b) You can teach just one person - and often one on one is more effective
 - (2) But there should be no reason you should not be able to teach
 - (a) Granted it may not be your gift
 - (b) Perhaps others have more skill, but teaching is more than just skill
 2. To grow in this skill, every one of you needs to be involved in Bible study

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- a) Not JUST personal study (although that is important), but group study
 - (1) Studying God's Word as a group is really the biblical model
 - (2) It provides accountability
 - (3) And I put it before you again - every person in this church needs to be committed in three ways
 - (a) Church on Sunday morning
 - (b) A smaller group Bible study or discipleship group
 - (c) And a regular manner of ministry to your brothers and sister in Christ
 - (d) And I repeat that because there are still several that are not getting it
 - i) You are either ignoring me on this
 - ii) Or "amening" me here, and not following through
 - iii) And sooner or later I am going to have to get out my pastoral 2 x 4 and coming knocking on your door
- b) Second thing you need is to develop emotionally
 - (1) This is so you can instruct gently
 - (2) "A gentle answer turns away wrath"
 - (3) We need to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry
- c) The third thing in growing your ability to teach is learn effective methods
 - (1) Does not mean you have to take a class in how to teach - however, I am convinced we as a church need to offer a class about how to teach
 - (2) Just watch people that are good teachers, see how they do things, pick up tips and tricks along the way

CONCLUSION: While we are talking about elder's qualifications, God calls each of us to these things. So make the commitment to pursue growing these qualities in your life.