

In Search of Shepherds - The Character pt6

REVIEW: We are continuing our search for shepherds. We are using one of the functions of elders as our title - they are to shepherd God's flock. We have been looking through the Scriptures, searching for position of elders in the church, and how God designed for a church to function. We have said, looking at the evidence from Scripture, that elders leading the church is the biblical model. It is a supra-cultural principle that went beyond just Jewish churches, and extended into Gentile, and mixed congregations as well.

Since then, we have been looking at the character of an elder. The Bible stresses the character of a man that would like to lead God's people in the church. As I write this sermon, the Ashley Madison scandal has been hitting hard, even taking down several famous Christian leaders. That would be why God emphasizes character over duties. An elder needs to have solid character and be transparent in their lifestyle. So if it seems like we are stuck on the character of an elder, you can see why. It is of utmost importance.

INTRO: A reminder, that while these qualities are being called for in elders, I can take you to many other places in Scripture where these qualities are called for in all Christians. This list was compiled because elders should be leading the way - they should be the example in these areas. Not that they will always do things perfectly, but this should be the norm for elders of the church.

- I. Our first trait today comes from 1 Timothy 3:3 - "not quarrelsome" or in other translations, "peaceable"
 - A. Have you ever known someone that is quarrelsome
 1. They are all ready to pounce on something you say
 2. They have their arguments all lined up
 3. They really are not listening to you, because they are plotting their next argument against whatever you said
 4. These are the kind of people that start controversies about what color is the dress - if you don't know what I am talking about, no worries
 5. For whatever the reason, these folks love to argue, and love to prove their point
 - B. In his book, *The Measure of a Man*, Gene Getz tells a story of such a man
 1. He was being considered for eldership
 2. The process they use is to collect evaluations from other elders about the man's preparedness to be an elder
 - a) Consistently, this man was marked down when it came to this area of being peaceable, and not quarrelsome
 3. Gene Getz, the pastor, sat down with him to review the evaluations
 - a) Pastor Getz expected an ugly conversation

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- b) What he got instead, surprised him
 - c) The man listened carefully, considered what was said, and thanked them for the honest evaluation
 - d) What the man did next is what I will read to you from Gene's book - this is the man in his own words after he asked his wife if she agreed with the evaluations, and she said "yes"
 - e) READ: *Measure of a Man* p. 161
4. How this man handled this evaluation process displays that he desired to reflect Christ in his life
- a) This is something I think we can learn from
 - b) Too often the church steps back from confrontation about people's behavior and lives for fear of seeming judgmental
 - c) The truth is, more people need to be like this man - open to an honest appraisal of their lives
 - (1) His desire to reflect Christ overrode his desire to only be told nice things
 - (2) He needed the church and his family to act as a mirror to help him see where he was falling short of his goal of being Christ like
 - (3) If we would all keep that goal in mind of being Christ like, the church in America, and the church in Almont would be far stronger
- C. So, being not quarrelsome, or contentious - aren't we all a little contentious or quarrelsome at some points?
- 1. To be honest, yes
 - a) Perhaps we are vulnerable, or insecure
 - b) Maybe we are just plain mule like
 - c) Maybe we have been hurt, or just woke up on the wrong side of the bed
 - 2. Just like most of the character traits on the list, Paul is not looking for perfection, he is looking to make sure these negative things are not habitually a part of a man's life
 - a) Let's face it, this trait would make someone a bit of a loose cannon
 - b) They might be unpredictable as to when they would become quarrelsome, and could cause fights and dissension in God's house
- D. We have to balance this trait out, however - it is acceptable to disagree, or to challenge someone when they are thinking incorrectly
- 1. Take for example: Paul and Barnabas
 - a) They had a now famous disagreement over John Mark accompanying them on their second missionary journey
 - (1) In fact, most English translations downplay the heated discussion

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- (2) It was a serious, sharp argument that they had over John Mark coming with them
- b) In later years we see Paul accepting and even asking for John Mark to come to him
- c) It is possible that this story is to show us that even Paul needed some maturing in his character about being peaceable
- 2. A second example would be Paul confronting Peter
 - a) In this case, it is fairly obvious that Peter was in the wrong and needed to be confronted
 - (1) If you recall from Galatians, Peter was eating with the Gentiles, but when a delegation of Jews from Jerusalem showed up, Peter ate only with the Jews
 - (2) Peter, being a leader, even had other Jews following his example, including Barnabas
 - (a) Barnabas was one of the most gracious men in the NT
 - (b) Even he fell victim to this hypocrisy
 - b) But this shows us that confronting someone was not wrong - and even necessary sometimes
- E. One of the aspects to being peaceable, and one of the defining traits for Christianity is unity - or it should be unity (honestly Christians fail miserably in this area)
 - 1. Jesus prayed for unity in John 17: 20-23 (turn there)
 - 2. Unity among believers is a strong testimony to the world
 - a) It is a reflection of the Trinity itself
 - (1) Here is where a study of the Trinity is so useful
 - (2) Everyone wants to figure out how 3 can be 1 - but there is so many more things we can learn from the Trinity
 - b) The Trinity in no way is un-unified
 - c) If we want to reflect the character of God Himself, the church needs to work on its unity
 - 3. Paul was also concerned with unity - look at these verses with me
 - a) Romans 12:18 “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”
 - b) Romans 14:19 “Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.”
 - c) Ephesians 4:1-3 “As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace”
 - d) Paul was very concerned with being peaceable

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- F. So if this is what we are called to, why do we become contentious, or quarrelsome?
1. The first, and virtually a Sunday School answer, would be our sin nature
 - a) We know the gospel. We know it tells us that we are all sinners (Rom. 3:23)
 - b) It should not come as a shock that in our sinfulness, we can be selfish, and self-centered
 - c) Even as Christians we are still tempted toward the old sin nature, and the deeds of the flesh
 2. Second, we can have bad models
 - a) If you grow up in a family where contention and quarrels are the norm, you will most likely battle with this
 - b) The fact is, you just don't know there is another, and better way
 - (1) God's way is always a better way
 - (2) Even if it means discipling ourselves, even if it means that we don't get our way
 - c) The sad thing is, that children that grow up in that environment will reflect that environment
 - (1) So, for the kids, please listen to me, there is a different and a better way
 - (a) You do not have to handle things by quarreling
 - (b) When Jesus died to save you, He died to help you change to be more like Him - that includes being peaceable
 - (2) And for the parents, or family members here that are setting the home's spiritual temperature, please understand what you are doing to your children!
 - (a) It is your example that is creating in them the very things that probably get you upset in the first place
 - (b) You have to be so careful about the example that you set, about the atmosphere that you create in your home
 - (c) It will get passed on to the kids, and it will perpetuate the cycle
 - (d) Man up, woman up, and ask your family, like the guy in the opening illustration, to help you see when you are using your abilities to harm
 3. The third one is closely related to the last - we can just have bad habits
 - a) Maybe you grew up in a great home where your parents set wonderful examples, but because of society or other factors you still have developed this bad habit
 - b) This is why I tell you to do a self examination, and then man up and woman up

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4. The fourth reason, could be insecurity
 - a) Some people, if they are insecure, can become withdrawn
 - b) Others become domineering
 - c) They cover up their insecurity by trying to be in control of everything else
 5. The last reason is bitterness
 - a) Usually this happens when a person gets angry with one or two people, and then generalizes that angry at everyone
 - b) It then comes out in contentious behavior
- G. Combating a quarrelsome spirit
1. First evaluate - this means man up and woman up
 - a) Ask yourself the hard questions about where this contentious spirit comes from
 - b) Allow others to be completely open and honest with you
 2. Second, confess your sins
 - a) For confession, it does not matter the cause of your lack of a peaceable spirit (only for getting to the root)
 - b) And confess the sin to God
 - (1) That is the act of agreeing with God that it really is sin
 3. Next follows forgiveness
 - a) Ask those that you have hurt to forgive you
 - b) Your family, anyone you work closely with that you have been contentious with
 4. Set goals
 - a) Particularly if there is a person or circumstance that causes you to become contentious
 5. Be accountable
 - a) Have someone that will keep you accountable
 - b) Even your family, like the man at the beginning of the message
- II. Our second quality for today is also in 1 Timothy 3:3 - "not a lover of money"
- A. The word used here for our English phrase is used only twice in the NT
1. It is a very straightforward term
 2. The word comes from two Greek root words - the word for silver and the word for friend
 3. For a combination meaning literally - not a friend of silver
- B. When it comes to the issue of not being a lover of money, we are talking about a heart issue
1. It is a call to be generous
 2. That is what an elder should be - not a lover of money, but generous with the material things God has blessed them with

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- C. Let me give you an example that may help you diagnose your heart issues concerning money
1. Tipping
 - a) Some people hate that they have to add money to the bill to pay a waiter or waitress
 - (1) That's another 10-20 percent out of my pocket
 - b) I am aware of a church in which the pastor had to lay down the law with his parishioners regarding this very issue
 - (1) After church a large group of them would go out to eat at a local establishment
 - (2) Yet the word among the servers at the restaurant was "Here come the stingy church folk!"
 - (3) That should be a condemnation in itself that a Christian would ever get the reputation of being stingy
 - c) I am unaware of a problem with our church folks being that way, but I will put this out there for you
 - (1) If you can't afford to tip generously, you can't afford to go out to eat
 - (2) Stay home please
 - d) We took the youth group out to a favorite place to eat of theirs (before it closed down) called Flat Top Grill
 - (1) There were about 15-16 of us there
 - (2) With that large of a table, most restaurants add an 18% gratuity to the bill automatically - and this place was no different
 - (3) Two of us adults at the table made sure the kids knew they did not need to add a tip because it was already added
 - (a) However, both of us also, on top of what was added to our bill tipped the server
 - (b) We knew it was a big job to take care of a large group, and both of us felt the need to be extra generous that day in taking care of the one that was taking care of us
 2. Being a Christian and being generous should be inseparable
 - a) We have been given the greatest gift in the world in Jesus Christ
 - b) How could we possibly not be generous in return
 3. But being generous is not just about what we give, it involves HOW we give
 - a) We give cheerfully
 - b) We give cheerfully because God has blessed us
- D. There was a man that was both an elder in his church, and the CEO of a Savings and Loan company

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1. He processed hundreds of loans - many of them for Christian people
 - a) At his institution, the common practice was to ask people to see their budgets
 - (1) Making sure that the budget was balanced and the loan would be appropriately applied
 - b) He said this about his experience, “Over the years I can count on one hand the number of Christians who have God in their budgets”
 - (1) Which tells me that God gets the left overs - if there is anything left over
 2. Research tells us that the average Christian gives about two percent of their income to the Lord (not the church - even though the church is God’s expression on earth)
 - a) Also, of those givers, about 15% tithe
 - b) Which means that they are above the average
 - c) But think about this, it means that some Christians give nothing at all to the church, because the tithe-ers make up the difference
 3. There is only one conclusion - Most Christians are lovers of money
- E. This really comes down to a matter of priorities
1. God or material possessions
 - a) The Bible tells us we can’t serve both
 - b) Jesus told us to “seek first His kingdom, and his righteousness and then all these other things will be added”
 2. It really is a mindset that things on this earth are more important than God and His kingdom
 - a) The possessions we own
 - b) The money in our bank account
 - c) Even the activities we choose to spend our money on
 3. And please understand, I never say these things because I feel like I need a bigger paycheck
 - a) My needs are met, and I have some money to get fun things too
 - b) You would probably be surprised if I showed you my tax return and how much money goes to legit Christian causes
 - c) The only need I have that would be helped in this scenario is having enough money to hire another pastor - not increase my salary
 4. I say these things because research tells us this is the norm
 - a) And if it is the norm in America, that means it may very well be the norm here in Almont, and FCC
 - b) And if that is the case, not just the men that should be considered for elder need to be generous like this, we ALL need to be generous like this

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- F. Please understand that this is not a new problem - it is as old as the world
 - 1. Turn to Deuteronomy 6:10-12
 - 2. Do you see it, God knew back then that in times of plenty, they may forget about Him
- G. So how do we develop a generous spirit and not be a lover of money?
 - 1. Make a list of the most important things in your life
 - a) Be completely honest
 - b) What five things would top that list
 - (1) If God is not one of them, you have an answer right there
 - (2) And do not put God, just because you think you should - remember, be honest
 - c) NOW, evaluate those five things
 - (1) How much time do you devote to them
 - (2) How much money do you devote to them
 - (3) If you devote a small amount of time and/or money to God, why?
 - (a) I'll give you a little hint, the church in America - of which we are a part - is infected
 - (b) We have this idea that "God will understand"
 - i) God will understand if I don't make it for Bible study
 - ii) God will understand that money is tight, even if you have money to add to the growing collect of toys
 - iii) God will understand if I miss my devotions
 - (c) Our idea that "God will understand"
 - i) Is killing us
 - ii) AND it is known by another name - cheap grace
 - 2. After you evaluate your priorities, establish some biblical priorities
 - a) Read the Bible on what it says about money and material possessions
 - b) Matthew 6; 2 Cor. 8-9; 1 Timothy 6 and others
 - 3. After you establish biblical principles - follow them
 - a) Give regularly
 - b) Plan ahead how you will give
 - c) Give proportionately - you are only truly generous when you are giving proportionately
 - d) Model generosity - In - 2 Cor. 8:1-2 the Macedonians gave out of their poverty - we should be the model for giving out of plenty
 - e) Be accountable - something we consider taboo in American society about allowing others to see how we spend our money
 - f) Start now - no excuses about starting when???
 - g) Give by faith, and trust God to meet your needs

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4. These are some ways in which you develop a generous, giving spirit, free from the love of money