

# In Search of Shepherds - The Character pt7

REVIEW: For the last several weeks we have been looking at the character requirements for a man that aspires to the office of elder. We will not take the time to go over all of the requirements as we have looked in greater detail than we might normally, fourteen of the character qualities.

If you recall, we have maintained a few things about these character requirements:

- God is not asking elders to do or be anything more than he asks ALL followers of Christ to do and be.
  - It is just that elders should exemplify these characteristics
  - When you look at a man for eldership, it should be pretty easy to identify these qualities in their lives
- Second, elders will not, nor need to be perfect in these areas.
  - Elders are still sinners living in a sinful world. They may violate some of these requirements
  - The difference should be that if an elder violates any of these character requirements, when it is pointed out to them, or they realize they are guilty, they should be mature enough to go and rectify the situation
  - So for example, if an elder does not deal gently with someone with whom they are working with, as soon as they understand their error, they should be the one to apologize and rectify the situation
  - I need to mention this too, there will be honest differences of opinion sometimes
    - Read Article about school in Oklahoma

INTRO: Today we have to handle another easily misunderstood character quality. So today we will only get through one more in our list of characteristics for elders. And to do this, we have to approach this one in a little different manner than the others. Before we talk about the character quality itself, we need to understand the overall model that this is being drawn from.

This is where we pull together the previous series and this section on elders. The previous series was on God's Great Design. How did God create us to function. As men, as women, how do we function as individuals, as married couples, and as a family unit. This will all come into play, as we begin to talk about the next quality: managing his own house well.

- I. Paul uses what has been termed, the household model to lay out principles for the leaders of a church
  - A. Turn to 1 Timothy 3:4 "He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?)"

# In Search of Shepherds - The Character pt7

- B. Drop down to verse 12 “A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well.”
- C. Let me read Titus 1:6 “An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.”
- D. Okay, a few weeks ago, when I was talking about pitfalls for women, I told you that it is impossible for you to expect that you can make your children godly
  - 1. That is psychological determinism - If I expect a specific outcome, I can make it happen
  - 2. And we said that is absurd
  - 3. Your role as a parent is to work your tail off to teach your children to be godly - read the Bible to them and with them, pray for them and with them, lead by example in the character you want to see in them, the practices of godliness you want them to develop
    - a) You gather all that around to lay the groundwork for your child
    - b) THEN you pray that the Holy Spirit will take the kindling you have labored so hard to gather for your child’s heart, and set it ablaze
- E. So here is my question: Are elders supposed to have perfect children?
  - 1. That’s what it sounds like
  - 2. Yet we know that psychological determinism is a crock - we can’t make them godly, so how do we rectify these two ideas?
  - 3. Glad you asked - and the answer lies in part in understanding the household model

## II. The household model

- A. Some people argue based on Galatians 3:28 “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” - that roles are done away with - especially when it comes to gender
  - 1. If that is true, back in Bible times would a slave cease to be a slave by becoming a believer in Christ? Answer: NO! Read the book of Philemon - Onesimus was a being sent back to his master - even though a believer
  - 2. So would men cease to be men and women cease to be women and their roles eradicated based on this verse? Answer: NO!
  - 3. So the roles that we talked about when we looked at God’s Great Design are still true
    - a) The husband is the head of the wife, and the family - he bears the responsibility

# In Search of Shepherds - The Character pt7

- b) The wife, is his helpmate - the one that comes along side him to help him with his enormous responsibility
- B. When a family comes to Christ, they become sort of a mini church
  - 1. Christ is the head of the church, as the husband is the head of the wife, etc
  - 2. So I want to show you a slide that will help you picture this a little bit
  - 3. This design comes from Gene Getz's book *Elders and Leaders*
    - a) Start from the inner ring and work your way outward
    - b) We start with individuals which make up all of the following units of the church - and they are a part of the church
    - c) Next you have marriage
      - (1) In marriage two individuals come together, forming a new social unit, and when the two become one, they begin another unit, called the family
    - d) In the family, God's love is modeled, children are nurtured into a mature family unit
    - e) As the family matures and reflects Christ, they are the blocks that make up the church - so in a real way, mature families make up mature churches
      - (1) Which explains why we want to do ministry for the whole family
- C. In this household model, Paul is using the family unit as a basis for qualifications for an elder to lead a church
  - 1. Managing their families well is equated to managing the church well
    - a) Further connection to the family, if the elder is married, he has to be loyal to his wife
    - b) He is to love and serve his wife how? Just like Christ loved and served the church
  - 2. With this analogy in mind, we get a better idea of how God wants leaders in the family of God to function
    - a) So, God did not give us one set of leadership principles for marriage, and a different set for family relationships, and another set for the church
    - b) The leadership principles remain the same - the conditions may differ, but the principles are the same
      - (1) So each time you go out a ring (from individual to marriage) responsibility and function gets greater
      - (2) But the basic leadership form is the same
      - (3) The husband is to be a servant leader to his wife (something we have talked about) - again, this does not make the wife subservient to her husband

# In Search of Shepherds - The Character pt7

- (a) Let me give you an illustration I think may blow your mind
- (b) God used marriage as an illustration of Christ and the church
- (c) If we follow that marriage illustration through, we see this in the Trinity
  - i) The Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are all one God, but three distinct Persons - all equal, yet have different areas of responsibility
  - ii) In fact, the Son, submits to the Father
  - iii) In the same way, husband and wife are equal with each other, have differing roles, and are both called to submit to each other, and wives to their husbands
- (4) A father is to be a servant leader to his family (talked about that) - the wife is helper to achieving the same goals in the family - all seeking Christ, and reflecting the unity and harmony of the Trinity
- c) Now, with these same principles in mind, it follows that the same would be true in the church
  - (1) Elders, and if married, their wives serve as father and mothers in the church family
  - (2) They are servant leaders for the God's family
  - (3) If an elder is not married, they can still serve as a father to the church family
    - (a) They will bring different perspectives and skills to the position given their circumstances as to why they are single
    - (b) Paul said that singleness is a gift to the church because they have more time to dedicate themselves to working for Christ
- D. So under the household model, men are the primary servant leaders in the church, the family, and in marriage - all a part of God's design
  - 1. Now, women, as coheirs in Christ, mothers, wives and single ladies serve alongside to assist men in their responsibility to sacrificially lead
  - 2. That may include giving input, teaching, admonishing, explaining, and helping make decisions
- E. This is the reason it is so important that we evaluate that leaders of the church are reflecting Jesus Christ and displaying the fruit of the Spirit
  - 1. If men and women, married or single are not reflecting Christ they cannot lead the church
  - 2. If they are not managing their family well, they cannot manage the church well
- III. Now, let's make sure we understand what this means about managing their family well, and their children not being disobedient
  - A. To do so, let's start with false interpretations of this verse

# In Search of Shepherds - The Character pt7

1. This shouldn't need to be said given what we have previously said about requirements, but this does not mean that a man needs to be married to be an elder
  - a) Just because it talks about elders having a family, it does not mean that an elder can't be single
  - b) We just said it, singles are a gift to the church - and Paul himself was most likely single, and as far as we know, Timothy and Titus were both single too
2. Second thing that Paul was not saying is that one must have children to be a spiritual leader in church
  - a) If singles are able to be spiritual leaders, they ought not be having children
  - b) Paul was simply saying, IF a man is married, and IF he has children, then he should have a well ordered household
  - c) So what if a man begins as an elder, and has no kids, but then starts his family, and his family is not well managed?
    - (1) At that point I think it should be clear both to him and fellow elders or members of the church that he needs to re-evaluate his ability to continue as a spiritual leader
    - (2) Which brings up a question we will deal with now, what if a man has a family that is grown, and the children are wayward, or not believers?
      - (a) Titus says that they are not to be wild and disobedient and they should believe
      - (b) This I believe is due to cultural differences and maturity issues presents a unique situation
      - (c) First, culturally, when the church was running at this point in the Bible, churches were house churches
        - i) Often run by the family whose home people met in
        - ii) Families at this time were larger and more extensive
        - iii) This would put the family in the churches view much more clearly, and weigh more heavily on the elders reputation because the children are in such public view
        - iv) Today, families are more spread out, and the elder's reputation is in less jeopardy due to those cultural differences
      - (d) Second, we all know there is a point at which children can rebel and walk away from the faith
        - i) We pray they will not, we pray they will fall deeply in love with Christ

# In Search of Shepherds - The Character pt7

- ii) But it is possible that they may choose their own path
- (e) A third consideration goes into the words that are used to describe the children “wild and disobedient”
  - i) The word for wild is used of “behavior that shows a lack of concern or thought for consequences of an action”
    - (1) Peter uses the same word with some big descriptors
    - (2) 1 Peter 4:3-4
  - ii) The word for disobedient carries the idea of defiantly disobeying, or rebelling
  - iii) So the kind of behavior we are talking about, and the kind of children in view can be found in 1 Samuel 2:12-17; 22-25
  - iv) This is the kind of behavior in view here, not little children being rascals
- 3. Which brings us to the third thing not in view here - younger children
  - a) By the words used it is obvious it is referring to children that are older and know full well the consequences of their behavior
  - b) These are adult children (again in that society, they would have been living at home - bringing disgrace to their family)
- 4. Fourth, Paul was not referring to normal patterns of child development
  - a) How many of y’all have experienced “the terrible twos”
    - (1) There is something about that number - two
    - (2) I hear tell that the same thing strikes again in second grade
    - (3) And then sophomores in HS and college - do you know what sophomore means? Wise fool
  - b) There are normal patterns of children trying to assert their independence - and that is fine
  - c) But this false interpretation has lead some spiritual leaders to come down pretty hard on their kids
    - (1) They press down on their own kids for the sake of their reputation
    - (2) After all, they wouldn’t want anyone criticizing their parenthood
  - d) Treating your children like they have a higher standard than other children is a breeding ground for rebellion
    - (1) Kids resent having to be good so their parents look good
    - (2) Usually, this backfires and creates the kind of rebellion that you are trying to avoid
      - (a) This does not mean spiritual leaders don’t discipline their children
      - (b) They simply do not raise that standard higher than what they would expect from other children

# In Search of Shepherds - The Character pt7

(c) Let me read you this excerpt from Gene Getz's *The Measure of a Man* (p. 190-191)

B. So what is Paul telling us?

1. I think his point is clear that the true test of the maturity of a man is how he leads his family
  - a) You can have a man that came to Christ later in life - his children are out of the house, and have not been exposed to the Gospel the same way their father has
  - b) Yet, they still live respectable, solid lives, not wild and disobedient living
  - c) That man, as he matures in Christ would still be eligible to be an elder - because he still raised his family well - he just missed out on the gospel earlier in life
2. This is an area that we can think of example after example and be here all day trying to answer each situation
  - a) That's why I believe Paul made the requirements strict enough so qualified, mature people are being considered for elder, yet open enough that circumstances can be considered in individual lives
  - b) His main point with this requirement is that the truest test of a man's ability to lead the church is how he leads his family
    - (1) If he is the sacrificial, loving servant leader of his home - you will see that in his wife, in his kids
    - (2) If he is doing that at home, that is the type of man you want to be running your church - a sacrificial, loving, servant leader to God's family

C. So let's consider one last question: how do we develop this quality in our lives?

1. First of all, earn respect
  - a) That is something that cannot be demanded
    - (1) This is one I have thought about, in that I demand respect from people - meaning, because I work mostly with teenagers, I demand basic respect you would give to any human being, an old person
    - (2) Any respect you give me beyond the basic, common decency, that is the respect I earn
  - b) As a family man, you earn respect by understanding what God requires of you exercising headship in your home
    - (1) Loving your wife sacrificially, serving her, meeting her needs
    - (2) Loving your kids, not provoking them to anger, teaching and guiding, setting the spiritual temperature at home

# In Search of Shepherds - The Character pt7

- (3) When you understand, and do those things, the respect comes - for your wife, from your kids, and also from the church
    - (a) There are men in this church that I watch with their families
    - (b) And what I see is a wife that knows she is loved, kids that respect their parents
    - (c) And I think, those are men to be considered for elders some day
2. Second, ask for forgiveness
  - a) I have told you this over and over, first, you are not perfect
  - b) Second, you will screw up at home - with your wife, with your kids
  - c) The greatest embodiment of the gospel you can be for them is to seek their forgiveness
    - (1) It shows them what the gospel is like
    - (2) It shows them how to live their lives
  - d) While I am not married, I'll give you this example
    - (1) In my first church, something happened, that got me really upset - unrelated to what I am about to say
    - (2) We were waiting for a couple of kids to get back to the van, and they were late from the time I told them to be back
    - (3) When they did get back, because I was upset already, I freaked out on them - I was yelling and screaming - it was bad
    - (4) When I realized what I had done, I remember having to circle back around to those two boys and apologize for my behavior
    - (5) What a better way to teach them about forgiveness then when you recognize when you have failed and you ask for forgiveness
3. For the bold among you, ask your wife
  - a) How can I better serve you honey?
  - b) What am I doing well at for you and for the family?
  - c) What do you see that I could work on in how I love and serve you, or the kids?
4. We kind of mentioned it before, but seek out what God says in His Word
  - a) Get some good books on the subject
  - b) Become a student of being a godly husband and father
5. Pray
6. Set some goals
  - a) When you know there is a weak spot, set some goals with your wife
  - b) Set some goals with your kids
  - c) You will never realize how far you have come unless you have a point of reference to look back to