

# In Search of Shepherds - The Character pt8

REVIEW: We are nearing the end of our look at the character of an elder. Due to the number of character qualities we have covered so far, I will not review them all. That is what the CD archive is for, as well as the internet podcasts.

Last week we looked at the elder “managing his household well. We looked at Paul’s use of the “household model” for looking for elders. Because God designed it for men to exercise headship (as single men - reflecting headship to their sisters in Christ; married men with their wives, men with families to his wife and kids), it means that men also exercise headship in the church.

And I want to make sure that I clear something up right now, as I was thinking about this a lot before writing this message. I firmly believe in a male eldership because of all of these reasons we have gone over. The problem has come in when an elder or the elders take their eyes off of the enormous responsibility that God has tasked them with, and put their eyes on the idea that “I’m in charge” and hold an attitude about being in power. Any man that focuses more on the power of the position over others rather than the HUGE responsibility God has given to him, does NOT deserve to be an elder. When any man realizes how great the responsibilities are: to love his wife like Christ loved the church, to set the spiritual climate for his family, to be a servant leader that loves sacrificially, to put himself aside and focus on his wife, kids and if qualified the church, that is the type of man you are looking for as elder. All sense of male chauvinism goes right out the window when a man grasps the task God handed to him. Or at least it should. And if it doesn’t, that man should not be an elder.

So we are not trying to create a “good ol’ boys club.” We are not trying to promote men and demote women. We are trying to recognize the biblical role that God has handed each of us, and live that out. So for men, with the role of headship, comes much responsibility. And men, we will stand before God one day and answer for how we exercised that headship. So you better be sure you are learning what that looks like, and how to live that out.

INTRO: Okay, moving on in our list. Remember that there are two lists in the NT of qualifications, most of which overlap. However, you will see a few listed differently. By the way, that does not prove that the Bible contradicts itself. It is Paul naming off qualities in no particular order. These are representative of what an elder should be, but neither is designed as an exhaustive list. So turn to Titus 1:8.

- I. “One who loves what is good”
  - A. Now this character quality seems like a “no-brainer” - an elder loves what is good
    1. Of course he does

# In Search of Shepherds - The Character pt8

2. If he doesn't, what kind of an elder is he? Why was he appointed to serve as an elder? Or even better, why does he think he qualifies if he doesn't love what is good?
  3. And maybe the best question of all: "Why talk about this quality for very long? It's a no-brainer!"
  4. Well, what I want us to do is to consider this from two different perspectives
    - a) First, to consider the opposite - loving what is evil
    - b) Second, to look a little deeper at loving what is good
    - c) To do this, we are going to look at Scripture to help guide us - so first go to 2 Timothy 3:1-4
- B. Loving what is evil
1. Look at the number of things Paul says people will love in the last days
    - a) Lovers of themselves
      - (1) Do we see this in society today?
      - (2) Absolutely! "Be true to yourself" "do what is best for you"
        - (a) During that whole mess with the clerk from Kentucky, I read a most disturbing article
        - (b) The premise of the article was that the clerk shouldn't hide behind her conscience but needed to follow the law
        - (c) Yet, the whole concept of gay rights was built on having people follow what they felt was right for them
        - (d) Their very argument nullified the point they were trying to make
    - b) Lovers of money
      - (1) We already looked at how an elder is to not love money, but be generous
      - (2) Do we see this today - certainly - maybe not as bad as it could be - the 80's were worse - 1987's "Wall Street" - Remember the quote? "Greed is good"
    - c) Lovers of pleasure
      - (1) Do we see this today - of course
      - (2) "If it feels good, do it"
    - d) Quickly, are any of these things wrong in and of themselves? Taking care of yourself, money, or pleasure?
      - (1) Of course not
      - (2) It is when we get into the disordered desires area that we falter
        - (a) When any of these things become ultimate we have problems
        - (b) Only Christ deserves to be number one in our lives
    - e) The final thing we see in this list is "not lovers of good"

# In Search of Shepherds - The Character pt8

- (1) Please understand that Paul is describing the last days and saying that people will become openly hostile to what is good - or in essence, to Christianity
  - (2) We are beginning to see that more and more - even in American society
2. So a very good question we all should ask - much less about a person that might be an elder is “To what extent am I allowing myself to conform to the world’s attitudes and actions?”
- a) How much am I focusing on myself
  - b) How much am I focusing on money
  - c) How much am I focusing on pleasure
- C. The way we balance this out is also found in 2 Timothy 3:4
1. Lovers of God
    - a) The word in Greek is one word - a compound word meaning literally “God lover” or “friend of God”
    - b) But how do we love God
  2. Jesus said that if we love God we will obey
    - a) So the way we reflect our love for God is by loving what is good, and obeying what is good
    - b) So let’s look at several things God says is good
  3. Ephesians 4:29 “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, *but only what is good for building others* up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”
  4. Colossians 1:9-10 “For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: *bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God*”
    - a) Our good works here are tied directly to understanding the will of God
  5. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly *equipped for every good work*”
    - a) What equips us for every good work?
    - b) God’s Word - which is why we need to spend lots of time in it
- D. So some questions for evaluation
1. Scripture tells us in Galatians to “do good to all men, especially to the household of faith” - SO do you take advantage of the opportunities to do good to ALL men (Christians and non-Christians)?

# In Search of Shepherds - The Character pt8

2. Do you use your material resources to help others in need?
  - a) Turn to 2 Corinthians 9:6-8
  - b) These verses tie our generosity with material resources back to good deeds
- E. Truly dedicate your whole life to Christ - Romans 12:1-2
  1. “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”
  2. Presenting your bodies as a sacrifice is really a one time, all in event
  3. Renewing our minds is a process of becoming more like Christ
    - a) And it is the way to know God’s will
    - b) Which leads us to good deeds
- F. After you have done your part, you have done the good that God asks, trust God to do His part
  1. Philippians 1:6 “being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”
  2. It is God’s job to see this through to the end
    - a) When you have trusted in Christ
    - b) When you are seeking His will, and to do the good that He asks
    - c) It is God’s job to see it through to completion
- II. The second quality for today comes from Titus 1:8 and the NIV translates it as “upright”
  - A. The meaning of the word is similar but I think richer
    1. It means to be lined up with what God requires
    2. Now, all you english majors, when you are typing a paper, and all the words line up on one side of the page or the other, what is that called: justification
    3. If if the word means “to be lined up with what God requires” that means we are “justified”
  - B. Now, we need to differentiate between two ways the word is used in Scripture
    1. The first way is the one we talk about frequently here at this church
      - a) It describes what happens to us when we are saved
        - (1) It is the declaration that God makes over us which declares us right in the eyes of the law
        - (2) In effect, we have been brought in line with Jesus Christ by faith, so that when God looks at us, He sees Jesus

# In Search of Shepherds - The Character pt8

2. The second way that the word “just” is used in the Bible is to describe how we live after we are saved
    - a) A “just” person would be right or fair
    - b) They would be equitable and impartial
  3. Here is the thing, when we understand and truly experience the grace of God in justification in the first sense (positional sanctification - or initial salvation) that helps us and challenges us to be just in how we live our lives
    - a) We have said these things before here - from the Gospel Prayer: “As you have been to me, help me to be to others”
    - b) We have talked about how our salvation is the foundation and the motivation for us to do good works for Christ
      - (1) Our good works don’t earn us our salvation
      - (2) Our good works are stirred up because of our salvation - we get so excited about what Christ has done in our lives that we can’t help but do what is right in our lives and relationships
- C. Sadly, in this world we see a lot of injustice
1. People that are wrongfully accused
  2. People that use their power, position, or privilege to take advantage of others
  3. We have numerous high profile news reports of bombings lately
  4. Or people that do something very wrong, and are let off on technicalities to where we are wondering, “Where is the justice in that?”
    - a) Before becoming a Supreme Court Justice, Horace Gray back in the late 1800’s had a man that was standing before him for judgment that was about to get off on a technicality. Everyone knew he was guilty, but no one could do anything about his escaping justice.
    - b) Justice Gray said this, “I know that you are guilty and you know it, and I wish you to remember that one day you will stand before a better and wiser Judge, and that there you will be dealt with according to justice and not according to law.”
      - (1) I love this quote - mostly because it differentiates between law and justice
      - (2) There is a higher justice that we all face, one that is higher than the laws here on earth
- D. God gives us the ability to deal justly and fairly every day in our relationships
1. Starting at home
  2. And moving out into the world

# In Search of Shepherds - The Character pt8

- E. Perhaps one of the saddest comments I ever hear is when people say they would rather do business with non-Christians than Christians
1. They have experienced Christians to be unfair, irresponsible, and in some cases, ruthless
    - a) I am even aware of people personally that will not do business with others because they were hurt so badly by a Christian
    - b) It almost hindered their walk with Christ
  2. To be fair, we all know people that throw the baby out with the bath water
    - a) One bad experience with a Christian and they write off all Christians and sometimes Christianity, and even worse - Christ
    - b) I'll admit that I have even fallen in that camp over certain issues - like writing off a seminary because of a bad experience with one of their graduates
  3. Here is the great irony of this approach
    - a) Writing off an entire group because of the injustice of one member of that group is in itself unjust
    - b) It means that we have succumbed to generalizations and stereotypes about an entire group by the faults of one
    - c) We as Christians need to remember this
      - (1) We need to examine ourselves to make sure we are not doing this
      - (2) Because we often tell people we are talking to about Christ not to write off Christianity because of one bad apple, or one bad experience
    - d) And, by the way, when we are guilty of generalizations of groups based on single encounters, it tells us a lot about our immaturity in regards to justice
      - (1) We should deal justly with each person we encounter
      - (2) Giving every one a chance to stand on their own two feet, as it were
- F. So let's look at an example of a just person in the Bible - Matthew 1:19
1. Background: This is the story of Joseph and Mary
    - a) Joseph has found out that Mary is pregnant while they are engaged
    - b) He knows as well as anyone how the town will be set ablaze with questions and comments
    - c) Verse 19 records Joseph's response "Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly."

# In Search of Shepherds - The Character pt8

- (1) The pew Bible has it translated as “faithful to the law” but the word is the exact same word we have been looking at, dikaios, or just, righteous
  - (2) Because Joseph was just, his concern was for himself, but his concern was also for Mary - which makes me believe that Joseph truly loved Mary
  - (3) He knew she had to pay a price for this and he didn’t want to disgrace her
2. God honored Joseph’s justice and told him in verses 20-21 that everything would be alright
    - a) And we all know that one day, the angels sang, the shepherds came and worshipped, and men from the East showed up to give the family great treasures
    - b) It really would be worth it - all because Joseph was a just man
- G. How do we develop or strengthen this quality of justice?
1. First, do not ever forget where our foundation is at and our motivation
    - a) Ephesians 2:8-9 - it is by God’s grace you have been saved, not by works
    - b) And then verse 10 - we are created in Christ to do good works that God prepared for us
      - (1) Two sides of the same coin
      - (2) The first is our foundation - that God gave us a gift so astounding that we hardly can take it all in
        - (a) This is something that should amaze us every time we think about it
        - (b) The Gospel - that Christ died for sinners like you and I, should never grow old
        - (c) We should always feel the depth of gratitude that inspires from the first time we understood the Gospel until now
      - (3) The second is that the Gospel becomes our motivation
        - (a) If you have genuine faith, if you truly understand the Gospel, it motivates you toward justice, and righteousness
        - (b) If you are not motivated toward justice, if righteousness is not a part of your heart and your life’s blood, than in all honesty, you need to examine yourself
          - i) Have you really understood the Gospel?
          - ii) Why is it that you are not in awe of what Christ did for you?
          - iii) Do you have genuine faith?

# In Search of Shepherds - The Character pt8

- iv) I am not trying to be alarmist here, but I would rather push the panic button in you to make you review your life, than let you sit here and THINK that you are a Christian, that you are bound for heaven, and have you find out that, oops, sorry, we were wrong
- v) Take the time to examine your heart, and if you don't understand the Gospel, maybe you are here for the first time, and you know that is what you need, ask!
  - (1) The only way I got to be where I am today is by asking questions
  - (2) The only way these people in this church that know they have trusted Christ as their Savior is by asking the questions
  - (3) So don't be afraid - as they say, the only foolish question is the question you don't ask
- 2. As always, if you want to know your justice level, if you want to know if you are even handed, fair minded, and righteous in your dealings with others, ask some trusted friends and family for an honest evaluation
  - a) Am I impartial in my dealings with others?
  - b) With my wife? My children? My neighbors?
  - c) With my employees?

CONCLUSION: In two weeks we will finish the character of an elder. We have taken a much longer time with the character because God stresses character so much. Even above the job tasks of an elder, God wants men of character. Not perfect men, because if they are perfect they have no need of Him. But men whose character stands out in ways like this, and when they fall short, they are quick to make amends.