

# Titus 1:5–9

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] chapter 1, and we'll be reading verses 5 through 9. This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order and appoint elders in every town as I directed you. If anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer as God's steward must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Please be seated. Well, good morning, and let me again add my word of welcome to Christ Church Chicago. We're so glad that you have joined us for worship this morning. As we continue our series on the book of Titus, it's entitled A Church Worth Joining. Let me first briefly remind you of Pastor Helm's sermon from the opening verses of this book from last week, in which we were reminded that it's really about, first, discovering God's purpose for the church, God's purpose for our lives. That purpose, I don't get to do this often, but if I can quote Pastor Helm directly, that purpose is that God wants to save you through Christ by faith, according to truth, according to truth, that would affect a life of holiness and the assurance of an everlasting presence with him.

Let me say right up front that you can actually have that assurance today. It's yours. All you have to do is confess your sins, give your life to Jesus Christ. I'd love to talk to you about that after service.

But this morning, that purpose I just mentioned now gives way to a plan of implementation, a plan that will accomplish God's purpose and make this or any church a church worth joining.

In our text today, we'll now see what is really step one in that plan. Step one, let's tag step one, leadership matters.

[ 3 : 0 9 ] Leadership matters. It's the 22nd of September, and we're only about a month and a half away from a big election in this country.

Wherever you are on the political spectrum, we all have been inundated with pitches from candidates touting their qualifications to lead us.

One has more character. One has more experience. One has more integrity. One is an outsider. One is an insider. One knows how to fix it, and another knows how to tear it down.

They all say they know exactly what we need. Millions upon millions of dollars spent each election cycle trying to convince you.

First, because of how big and important and consequential these leadership positions are. And then secondly, they know that if there's any hope of them getting the opportunity to lead you, then their qualifications are going to be critical.

[ 4 : 2 2 ] In our text today, there are no campaigns, no debates, no rallies, no million-dollar TV ad buys, no commercials to sell the merits of a particular candidate.

Because God himself, through Paul to Titus, gives us the qualifications and characteristics required for those who would lead his church.

Text calls them elders. Now, before you unplug or disconnect, let me say that while obviously this is about elders and those that lead us, those who are and perhaps will be, this is also a message for every single one of us in this room.

Because the extent to which elders align with, display the qualifications outlined in this text is the extent to which this church or any church will be a church worth joining.

The character and effectiveness of any church is directly related to the quality of its leadership. And you, if you are to realize that purpose we talked about, you have a vested interest in knowing and understanding exactly what God expects, indeed demands, of those who would lead you.

[ 6 : 07 ] Leadership matters. Leadership matters. Leadership matters. Now, by way of definition, let me make sure that we are clear. An elder is one of a plurality of biblically qualified men who jointly shepherd, oversee a local body of believers.

Specific to Christ Church Chicago, and according to our book of church order, those elders are both nominated and voted on by the members.

So, you see, all the more reason that today's text has everything to do with you and those who would lead you.

Let me make just one more note about application to all of us. Let me make just one more. This passage also provides great encouragement.

It's encouraging to all of us in that by laying out these high standards, God is not only stepping towards accomplishing his purpose, he's also showing all of us just how much he loves us, how much he cares for us, and how he is concerned about the welfare of his church.

[ 7 : 29 ] So much so that he has given us a blueprint for leadership that ensures the church's growth, health, and unity.

To the men who are elders, please allow me just a moment to personally pull aside and say, there's not a group anywhere that I respect more highly than the brothers I have the privilege of serving with as elders of this church.

They are godly men full of character and faith who love God and love his people. However, this text is a caution.

It's a stark reminder about what is at stake. Here it is. How you live impacts how you lead.

And how you lead impacts how the church grows. Let's first briefly examine the need for elders.

[ 8 : 39 ] It is apparent that Paul and Titus went to Crete, one of the largest islands in the Mediterranean Sea, and they spent time together preaching the gospel and establishing churches.

Paul departs from Crete and leaves Titus to finish the work they began. In verse 5 of our text, Paul reminds Titus in writing of what he obviously had already told him verbally, that, hey, this is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.

Paul left Titus in Crete to set things in order, and the first priority in making this happen was to find and appoint elders.

That phrase, to set in order, in the Greek is actually a medical term. It was applied to setting a crooked limb.

It's where we get the words orthopedist or orthodontist from. There were crooked things, disjointed things, and unorganized things that had to be set straight amongst the congregations in Crete, and the charge was given to Titus to find elders to help literally put right what was lacking, to set things in order.

- [ 10 : 12 ] Not only does this verse indicate the critical need and priority for elders, it also reveals God's intended organizational structure for the church.

His church is to be led through a plurality of elders. If we were to use some practical parallel, in the military, this order or organizational mechanism is called the chain of command or command and control.

And they will tell you that through it is provided order and discipline, effective communication, operational efficiency, mission readiness, and accountability.

And though practical, all of these attributes have their spiritual equivalent in the church. And Paul says here it will require elders to execute because leadership matters.

Now the significance of eldership is further underscored starting in verse 6 by the qualifications Paul sets for those who would hold this position.

- [ 11 : 27 ] Indeed, the rest of this text is spent dealing with it. These qualifications are not arbitrary or superficial. They are not based on worldly standards of success or popularity.

They are spiritual and moral standards that reflect the character of Christ and the values of the kingdom of God. You will see that most of these qualifications involve character, not ability.

It covers who elders are, not so much what they do. This is less of a job description than it is a character description.

This lesson is important for all of us in that it reveals that character must come first. These qualifications listed have nothing to do with giftedness.

Paul did not say to Titus, hey, I need you to go out and find the most gifted men you can find. So what if you're a great orator? Can emotionally move and motivate people or a prolific writer or musician or singer or painter?

- [ 12 : 43 ] If you have no character, it means nothing. As one who's been in the music industry for a long time, I learned a long time ago that you have to be careful about letting your talent take you places your character can't keep you.

What qualifies a man for spiritual leadership is character, and developing godly character takes time and it takes a genuine relationship with Jesus Christ.

These qualifications for elders, starting in verse 6, really break out into three different categories. There is the maturity and character in your family life. There's the maturity and character in your personal life and spiritual maturity and character.

Paul, however, starts with this broad statement. He starts by saying that an elder must be above reproach.

This is kind of an overarching quality under which all the other qualities fall. It's also listed twice in our text, again in verse 7.

- [ 14 : 02 ] The phrase above reproach literally means blameless. Or without fault. This does not imply perfection, for we know that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Rather, it suggests a life that is free from scandal, immorality, or any hint of impropriety. It's a life that does not give others cause to question the integrity or sincerity of an elder's faith.

It means that an elder must be a man of impeccable character with no one being able to accurately bring a charge against him. He must be a man who is respected and admired with his wife and kids able to affirm that he's the same at home as he is at church.

The same behavior we see in here should be the same behavior we see out there. When an elder's neighbor comes to church, would the neighbor even recognize him?

Because the behaviors are so different. He's one who lives a life that's a constant testament to the transforming power of the gospel.

[ 15 : 25 ] Paul goes on to say here in verse 6 that an elder is the husband of one wife, literally meaning he is a one-woman man.

Now, to be clear, Paul is not saying that a single man cannot be an elder, for if he was, he would disqualify himself and Jesus, for that matter.

He is saying that if he is married, he must be one who is completely, holy, and singularly devoted to his wife. He loves his wife as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

He is faithful to her in word, thought, and deed. My grandfather would say he doesn't wander, he doesn't stray, he always sticks, and he always stays.

So sacred, the bond of marriage and marital fidelity, it tops the list of elder qualifications. He continues on about family character by saying that if he has children, then his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.

[ 16 : 41 ] Paul knew that it was imperative that elders lead their families well. And if they are to lead the church and have respect in the community, they must also lead their households.

His children were a reflection of him. The military knows this well and I learned this in life early on in middle school.

Many of you may know that I grew up with a bivocational father. He was full-time Air Force, military, and he was also a pastor, which meant that I couldn't get away with anything.

Though, I tried. I vividly recall this particular day in middle school when I was acting up in class, I was talking, I was not paying attention, I was being disruptive.

Me. I know you can't believe it, but it was me. I was warned several times about my behavior by the teacher to no avail and I assumed at any time now I would be making that walk down to the principal's office.

[ 18 : 02 ] which would complete my planned escape anyway from a class I didn't want to be in. Only this time I wasn't sent to the principal's office.

Huh. School ended and I headed home only to see that my dad was already at the house.

This can't be good. and I looked and there was another strange car in the driveway. I went in and there was my dad in the living room with another man sitting there in the living room talking.

I found out later that this man was my dad's commander, his boss. the school didn't bother to send me to the principal's office or even call one of my parents.

The school called my dad's boss about my behavior. Well, I can't tell you the rest of the story.

[ 19 : 16 ] partially because I think I've mentally blocked out what happened next. Suffice to say that it was made clear to me that if my dad was going to stay in his position of leadership, then the military had an expectation that he was able to effectively lead his family.

Paul is saying the same thing. He's not talking about a guarantee of salvation for an elder's offspring. Only Jesus can do that. But what it does reflect is the elder's responsibility to lead his family in the ways of the Lord to model godliness and to instill in his children a respect for God's commands.

It's those elders who will lead God's people and his church. True ministry may one day extend beyond your family but certainly not before it's established within your family.

Starting now verses seven and eight, Paul goes on to describe the personal character's traits required to be an elder.

These are listed as those things he must not be and those things he should be. For an overseer, just another word for elder that you'll see used at times interchangeably, as God's steward, he must be above reproach.

[ 20 : 55 ] There's that phrase again. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined.

Let me see, for the sake of time, if I can succinctly run down at least the negative attributes elders must not possess and why.

An arrogant man only thinks of himself and is too stubborn to lead. A quick-tempered man is easily provoked and too hot-headed to lead.

A drunkard has no self-control and is, frankly, too incoherent to lead. A violent man is always looking for a fight and is too contentious to lead. A greedy man is well too greedy to lead.

He wants what he wants and as much of what he wants as he can get. Notice now at verse 8 the contrast.

[ 22 : 03 ] But then comes six beautiful foundational virtues that are polar opposites to what we just talked about. He is hospitable.

He literally loves strangers. He has a genuine concern and love for the brethren putting the needs of others before his own. He's a lover of good.

He loves goodness, virtue, justice, and is ready to do what is beneficial to others. He is self-controlled, meaning he is self-mastered and not swayed to extremes by his own fluctuating emotions.

He's not controlled by any other influence but the Holy Spirit. He's upright. He walks according to God's law. He's fair. He's just, honest, and above board in his behavior and dealings with both God and man.

He's holy. He's right towards God. He's clean, moral, committed to godliness, and righteous living. He's disciplined.

[ 23 : 11 ] He possesses the moral strength to curb or master his sinful drives and impulses. He has control over his body, mind, and life, and he guards his behavior both when alone and with others.

Matthew Henry once said, how unfit are those to govern a church who cannot govern themselves? The final qualification and actually only skill that Paul lists here in verse 9 is that an elder must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught so that he may be able to give instruction and sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

The elder must be grounded in the word, settled in doctrine and faith, knowing what he believes and having his beliefs founded in the word.

He has the responsibility to guard the truth of the gospel, ensure that it's accurately taught within the church and then also protect the church from false teaching and teachers would try to infiltrate the body.

You'll hear much more about that when Pastor Bing talks next week about why elders are needed. Look, teaching really falls into three categories.

[ 24 : 42 ] others. The first category is dangerous. It's false, inaccurate, heretical teaching that poisons and damns.

The second category may not be false, but it is just as bad and unhelpful. It is fluff that has all the nutritional value of cotton candy.

my dad used to say it's longhorn preaching with a point at the beginning, a point at the end, and a lot of bull in between.

it's sweet to the taste, but it cannot sustain life.

The third is teaching that builds, edifies, and strengthens, because it is true. At times, this teaching is unpleasant and unwanted, but it's no less needful.

[ 25 : 45 ] Only the man that tenaciously holds tightly to the truth of the scriptures will be able to deliver this steady stream of healthy teaching to the sheep.

John Calvin is often quoted as saying, an elder really needs two voices, one for gathering the sheep, and the other for driving away the wolves.

Hold firm to the faith, because leadership matters. Now, this list is not about sinless perfection.

If so, nobody here would qualify for leadership. It is, however, about living one's life and humble reliance upon the Holy Spirit by a set of holy standards that demonstrates a constant pursuit of God and his purpose, and sets an example for others to follow.

As you look at these qualifications, my dear brother and sister, I know it would be easy and perhaps convenient to believe that none of this applies to you since he's talking to elders, but you don't get off the hook that easily.

[ 27 : 02 ] What you need to realize is that most of this list should apply to every believer. these standards are just for elders, though they are to be the example.

They're for all of us. They're a picture of the kind of people God is calling all of us to be. People of integrity, people of humility, people of self-control, people who love what is good, people who are committed to sound doctrine.

These qualities represent standards, we all should daily strive for. Saints, this is the kind of leadership that Paul envisioned for the church.

This is the kind of leadership that can transform a congregation, a community, indeed a nation. This is the kind of leadership that reflects the heart of Christ and the power of the gospel.

This is the kind of leadership that makes a church worth joining and as the church, it is the kind of leadership we should all desire, support, emulate, and pray for.

[ 28 : 22 ] I pray that if you haven't already, that you would find perhaps today or somewhere through this series notice that this church, Christ Church Chicago, would indeed be a church worth you joining.

For those of you who have already made that determination, may this message be both an encouragement to you about how much God loves his church, but also a sobering challenge about what it takes to maintain it.

Leadership matters to all of us. Let's pray. Dear Lord, we thank you for your love for us and for your church.

church. We thank you for the leaders you have given us, and we pray that you would continue to keep them, guide them, strengthen them.

Help us all strive to meet the standards you have set, not out of a sense of duty, Lord, but out of a desire to be more like you. Thank you for your grace that covers us when we fall short, and your Holy Spirit that empowers us to keep on going.

[ 29 : 49 ] May this always be a model of your gospel, and always be a church that demonstrates it is a church worth joining.

We love you, Lord, and we commit ourselves afresh to you. In your son's name we pray.