

Qualifications of Church Elders - part 5

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Preacher: Pastor Ken

[0:00] All right, please turn in your Bibles to, wait for it, Titus. Titus. Titus 1, verses 5-9.

This will be the last week that we deal specifically with these verses. And don't believe me? Come back next week and you'll find out. So the books of Timothy and Titus deal with the issue of leadership in the church.

Which is very important. We need godly leadership. That should go without saying in the church, but unfortunately that is not always the case.

Excuse me a second. Can you hear me? I feel really loud. Am I really loud to you? Can you turn me down? Just speech. It could be this mic too.

All right. Sorry about that. When I get excited, I want to be able to raise my voice. And if I raise my voice and blow you off the walls, that's going to be no good. So, as I said, Timothy and Titus, they deal with the issue of leadership in the church.

[1:14] Which is very important to have godly leadership. And that should go without saying, but unfortunately that is not always so clear and obvious.

And really the church as a whole, not just this church, but all churches, those who are in Christ, need to return to the Bible and its establishment of leadership.

In our day, we see churches compromise on the word of God in order to appease worldly norms and expectations. Churches water down biblical expectations to fill leadership roles.

It's the idea of we need a warm body to fill this role or that role. And even though you don't quite qualify, you'll do. And it's unfortunate that we are taking those compromises and watering down expectations that God has clearly given.

Churches take decidedly unbiblical positions on matters to appease onlookers. How do we appear to the world? What is the perception that people have of us?

[2:21] Do they see us as loving and accepting or do we need to make some changes? And in so doing, we're going to kind of cut out portions of Scripture. What we've been looking at in the qualifications of elders over the last several weeks is one of those areas that churches are ready to make compromises on and ready to kind of push aside for the sake of appeasing the masses.

I know I've mentioned this before, but I want to go back to May 1st, 2024. At that time, at a meeting of the United Methodist Church and their churches and representatives, they voted in a landslide 692 to 51.

That's a big margin, by the way. They voted 692 to 51 to allow LGBTQ clergy to serve in the church. And that reversed a 40-year denominational rule forbidding self-avowed homosexuals from being ordained or appointed as clergy members.

And even more importantly than that 40-year standing rule in the UMC, it was spitting on the eternal Word of God, which condemns homosexuality and would not certainly permit such to serve in the capacity of pastors or in clergy positions.

Other churches in America that permit the alphabet soup agenda to settle in their pulpits and to be displayed on full display with their flags waving from the church rafters or the flagpole out front include the Episcopal Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Mennonite Church USA, the Presbyterian Church USA, the United Church of Christ, and I will not continue to go through a list that just continues to get longer, seemingly by the day.

[4:29] And I want to avoid the very easy thing it is to look and point and say, oh, you're doing this wrong and doing this wrong and almost in a way condemning churches and Christians of these practices.

God has not given to us the right to judge others. He will deal with it in His time when they stand before Him. But one thing we must do is we must look at these occurrences.

We must see what's going on on this landscape and the churches as a whole, and we must be careful to not become like the church in Ephesus.

In Revelation 2, verse 4, Jesus is speaking to the church in Ephesus. He says, I have this against you, that you have left your first love. You have left your primary love.

You have left that which is of most importance that you loved. And obviously, he's referring to himself. He's referring to the Word of God.

[5:43] Can you imagine that? A church leaving their first love? Many churches today have abandoned their first love for the opportunity for 15 minutes of fame or acceptance as the church who loves, welcomes, and affirms all.

Don't believe me, drive down Sanford, not that I hold the Unitarian Universalists as a church, but what you see, the churches follow that suit where they put out the banner of we accept all and like what the six, seven points there that are out there of talking about affirming and we believe in climate control and no human is illegal and blah, blah, blah.

Basically, putting it out there that all are welcome, all are affirmed, and all are loved. And that's the agenda that is being pushed and promoted and adopted by many churches, so-called, in America. And it's not just stopping in America. It is going international as well. In Revelation 2.5, Jesus issues a warning to that church in Ephesus.

And to these churches as well. Remember, therefore, from where you have fallen, repent and do the works you did at first.

[7:02] If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place unless you repent.

There's a warning to churches who are turning from God, turning from his word to serve the masses, to serve society and its agenda and norms and mores.

Repent or your lampstand will be removed. So back to the United Methodist Church for a second. In an interview, a guy by the name of David Meredith.

I forgot what his position is in that church. He may just be a clergy member for all I don't know. He makes a statement from May 1st, 2024, that landslide vote.

With the approvals and acceptance of the things today, we're beginning to see the unwinding, unraveling, dismantling of the heterosexism, the homophobia, the hurt, and the harm of the United Methodist Church.

A leader in the United Methodist Church is basically praising that vote and saying, we're seeing all the hurt, the hate, the homophobia, all the harm that came from the United Methodist Church because of that is now unraveling and going.

[8:30] There's a lot to unpack in that comment. I mean, surely, I'm sure there's some needed repentance in the church, I'm sure. Churches are not perfect.

People in churches are not perfect. And sometimes you can see from the leadership or from people in the body of Christ, hurt and harm done to other people, whether intentionally or otherwise.

And so it's possible that maybe some true repentance did indeed need to take place. But there is definitely some clear kowtowing to the world, bending down, worshiping the agenda that is so taking our society by storm in every area.

But really, there's no greater concern than the fact that the United Methodist Church, as a denomination, has abandoned the Word of God. And as a result, the Lord will remove their lampstand from its place.

As we've seen in Titus 1, 5 through 9, it's very important that the church have qualified leadership at the helm. And the Apostle Paul identifies three areas where a man is to serve as an elder and how they're to serve as to be above reproach in their family life, in their personal conduct, and in their teaching.

[9:56] The qualifications are not particular to church leaders as they're expected from all believers. I had a conversation with somebody not long ago, actually this morning, related to this very issue.

And it is this. These qualifications that are given for the elders are what all believers should be striving for.

But they are qualifications that the elders are particularly supposed to have. So I just want to make that clear, that the elders are expected to have these qualifications.

All believers should be striving for them. You may or may not have them. You may fall short with one of these qualifications or a couple of these qualifications.

And that is okay. It is striving for. It's the process of sanctification. But God raises up and ordains leadership that possess these to serve as models to be emulated.

[11:03] They must be possessors of these qualifications, bar none. No exception for an elder in the church. An elder must be the husband of one wife and have children who are obedient in the home.

Now that's not to say that an elder can't be single. I mean, yes, that can happen. You know, but the elder who has, who is married and has children, would be husband of one wife committed fully to that relationship and have children who are obedient in the home.

An elder must not be arrogant or given to anger or ruled by alcohol or abusive in any way or seeking wealth at any cost. An elder must be hospitable, zealous for good works, in control of his passions and desires, upright, holy, and righteous inside and out.

But as important as these qualities are, we now arrive at the most important of the list. As it is what leads to the previous qualities being present in the life of an individual.

So let's go ahead and read Titus 1, 5 through 9. One more time. Paul writes, Here it is, verse 9.

[12:45] 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 most important qualification of them all because in order for the others to come through, this must be true in the life of an elder. In order for an elder to be above reproach in these areas that Paul maps out for Titus, that elder has to hold firm to the truth of the word of God.

Have to believe it and have to be committed to it. The church cannot be governed in any other way than by the word. And the elder should hold fast to it.

It should hold firmly to it. Not only being well instructed in it, but being constant in living it. In order for an elder to be an effective teacher of the word, he must be unwaveringly loyal to Scripture.

That word hold firm, those words hold firm could be cling to. You know, it's an idea of a desperation grasp. Like this is my lifeline.

[13:58] I cannot give it up. I picture in my mind, if you see like the Coast Guard rescues in the sea, like they've got the helicopter flying over, the rope or whatever hanging down.

You got the guy on the bottom holding on. I imagine holding on in desperation, clinging for life. Like this is my hope to get out of this mess. This is my hope to get to safety and to be saved.

And that's the idea for the elder is that they're to possess and hold true to the word of God and cling to it. It is their lifeline. And ultimately for all believers, that's what we should be striving for.

That the word of God is of so importance in our life that we can't give it up for anything. It is our sure footing. So you're to hold firm.

You're to cling to the word of God. Luke 16, 13 says, no servant can serve two masters for either he'll hate the one and love the other or he'll be devoted to the one and despise the other.

[15:03] And it goes on to say, you cannot serve God in money. And I think that's like related to this because the last, the not, you know, the six not or five nots, an elder should not.

The last of those is to be greedy for gain at the end of verse seven. You're not to be greedy for gain, but you're to cling to and desire the word so much. You're to be devoted to the word.

And that what you're devoted to, you're not, you can't serve two masters. You can't serve God in money. You can't serve God in something else. So if you're going to serve God, you need to be committed to his word.

Hold it tightly and don't let go. And that word, you know, you're clinging to, hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught. You know, that's the written word of God.

And Paul speaks of scripture to Timothy when he says, as the good deposit, you know, speaks of scripture to Timothy as the good deposit entrusted to you. Paul recognized that, you know, Timothy was given a, you know, the good deposit, the gospel ministry, the word of God deposited and entrusted to him.

[16:21] He refers to him as the sacred writings which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. This is the word that we're to cling to, that which can make you wise for salvation.

The word of God is given for the purpose of growing in wisdom and knowledge of Christ. And elders particularly must commit to the word which has been entrusted to them. I was thinking of the parable of the talents in Matthew 25 verses 14 and following.

And you got the master who goes away on the trip, right? And he leaves with one servant, five talents and gives another servant, two talents and gives another servant, one talent. And the servants who were entrusted with five and two talents made five or two more talents. And when the master returned, he said, well done, good and faithful servant. You were entrusted with these talents and you went and worked with them and made more. And the servant given the one talent hid it until the master returned. Didn't do anything with it. What was entrusted to him, he just kind of put it aside and said, when the master comes, I'll give it back. And that one was a wicked and lazy slave.
[17 : 33] So which servant are you? Which servant am I? Am I taking what God has entrusted to me?

Like Paul was telling Timothy, Paul tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 1 that he was given a deposit, he was entrusted the word of God. He was entrusted with us by God. And as Timothy is told to go out and serve and preach and teach and to be ready in season and out of season. All these things that Paul tells him in his letter with what he has been given. Am I being faithful with what God has entrusted to me? Are you being faithful with what God has entrusted to me? Or to you? Excuse me. My notes have died. Have gone away. All right. There we go. So what are you doing with what God has entrusted to you?
[18 : 43] Are you holding firm to it? Are you seeking to live by it? I'm appreciating the Sunday school that we're starting right now.

Today was a little rough. Next week we'll have it up on a screen and we can follow along all together. But we're going to read, we're reading through scripture. And what is it that we learn as we read through the gospels of what it means to follow and obey Jesus? If as Christians, that's what we're supposed to be doing. What's that look like? As you read the gospels, you find out. Paul goes on to reveal the fact that all scripture, in 2 Timothy 3, 16 and 17, all scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. The word of God is given to us. It's a good thing. It's for teaching, for correction, for reproof, ultimately to train us up in righteousness. And so elder, you better be clinging to that. Ian, you're the only one I can look at. Josh isn't here out of conviction. But you better be clinging to the word of God. I better be clinging to the word of God. In the areas in which I am not, I better be called to the carpet on it.

[20 : 04] I trust the elders that I work with will bring that to my attention. But you also need to strive to be committed to the word of God, that you also may be equipped for every good work.

In Acts 20, verse 32, as Paul is meeting with the elders in Ephesus, he commends them to the word of his grace, of God's grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

Paul tells the elders in Ephesus, you need to be given to the word of God. That is what you are commended to, to be built up by it.

And then you go to Revelation chapter 2 and Jesus is warning them, you've left your first love. It is of utmost importance for the elders in every church and for the people in the church to be seeking to know and live what is in the word.

The apostle Peter calls scripture the pure spiritual milk by which believers grow in respect to salvation. That's 1 Peter 2.2. So elders are to love the faithful word of God, respect it, study it, believe it, and obey it.

[21 : 31] And elders are to be trained in the words of the faith, and the good doctrine according to 1 Timothy 4.6, which involves a commitment to the authority and sufficiency of God's word as the only source of moral and spiritual truth.

The truth of the word must be woven into the very fabric of an elder's thinking and living. And elders, to be the example, the model to follow, is to be the one teaching and instructing the body of Christ and showing you how this looks in the life, in your family life, in your personal conduct. John Calvin makes the statement, there are some fickle persons who easily suffer themselves to be carried away to various kinds of doctrine, while others are cast down by fear or moved by any occurrence to forsake the defense of the truth.

Nothing is more dangerous than when a pastor does not steadfastly adhere to that doctrine of which he ought to be the unshaken defender. There's nothing more dangerous than a pastor who's not steadfast in the doctrine of the word of God, in the doctrines that are found in Scripture that we ought to be defending and that we ought to be standing up for and proclaiming unashamedly from the pulpit and in our lives and in our conversation.

It's through the word that a believer grows in knowledge and understanding of the character of God. It grows in knowledge and understanding of the will and purpose of God, of the power and glory of God.

[23 : 10] You grow in knowledge and understanding of the love and mercy of God, of the principles and promises of God. This is all found in the word. It is of most importance that we adhere to it, that we cling to it and give our lives for it.

Romans 12 too says, do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Don't be conformed to this world. Don't be conformed to what society wants you to do or what the most recent agenda that's being pushed heavily in society wants you to believe.

Don't conform to that. Be transformed by renewing your mind. That's easy to give in to. Lots of people give in to that. It's harder to stand against it, especially when it paints you in a bad light. But what does the word of God say? What is good and acceptable and perfect? Well, we know that from what God has revealed. And it's through the word that a believer comes to understand justification and sanctification and glorification.

[24 : 19] And it's through the word that a believer comes to understand the enemy and his powers of darkness. And it's through the word that a believer comes to understand their own helplessness to resist and overcome sin apart from God.

You cannot live in this world. You cannot overcome sin. You cannot, you know, overcome that which masters you apart from God and his word.

We try. Our society does a top-notch job of trying to do it apart from God. But yet people still enslaved to sin enslaved to what masters them.

It has many different names out there for each of us. It is the failure in the area of holding firm to the trustworthy word that is responsible for superficial self-elevating preaching and teaching in many evangelical churches.

sermons. Sermonettes for Christianettes are becoming the common meal for churches today.

There are many people who go to churches and, you know, to sit as long as you have would be almost torturous for them.

[25 : 43] I mean, I'm sure it is for you but you've learned to endure and bear up under this pressure over time. There are people who go to churches and they get a 15-minute snack maybe if there's a snack at all to be had, if the word of God is even opened and read.

You've got to cling to this. This has to be priority in your life. Number one, right here, the word of God. Especially for an elder, especially for those of us instructing you.

And why? Verse nine, that he may be able to give instruction and sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. One thing an elder must be able to do as a teacher or preacher in the church is to give instruction and sound doctrine.

Bottom line, they're to build up the body of Christ to maturity in the faith. That is the job of the pastor or an elder or anyone who steps into this pulpit. The job is to build you up to maturity in faith.

It is to encourage you to grow into Christ, in Christlikeness. Turn over with me to Ephesians real quick. I just wanted to allude to it but I couldn't bring myself to just alluding to it.

[27 : 09] I had to go back and read it. Ephesians four. I'll spare you from reading the entirety of the chapter which is what I want to do.

Let's start in verse 11. Ephesians four, 11 through 16. And he, that is Christ, gave apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness and deceitful schemes.

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we're to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped when each part is working properly makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Bottom line is this. This is the summation of this here. God has given particular people for the purpose of building the church up and growing you into maturity.

So if the sermon is hard or something you don't understand, that's okay. It's your opportunity to learn and understand it. You don't send a kid to school to sit under a teacher to learn things they already know.

[28:57] You don't send them to school to sit under a teacher to not be challenged. Now granted, there are going to be times when that kid, when that student goes to school and they already know what's being taught.

They already know what's being covered in class. Great. You have an easy unit. You have an easy lesson for the day. But you're going to come across stuff that you don't know.

And you're going to be challenged by it. And what do students do when they're challenged? They complain. I don't get this. It's hard.

I hate this. School's dumb. Why do I even need this? All that stuff. Now granted, there may be some subjects that you don't need to know that stuff later in life that you may not specifically use calculus in your life or pre-calc.

I didn't get to calculus. calculus. You may not specifically use that in your life. But the process of going through and learning and challenging yourself to learn something new and to grow in knowledge is something you're going to use the rest of your life.

[30:16] So the content itself may not be applicable or you might feel as dumb why am I learning this blah blah blah. But the process is something you will take with you the rest of your life of learning hard things and being challenged and growing.

And let me tell you what that comes into the sanctuary as well. When the pastor preaches a hard message that seems to quote go over your head that's your opportunity to grow.

That's your opportunity to ask questions. Guess what? I'm here to help you understand. And if you don't understand something don't just say oh I didn't get that I'll just keep going.

Ask. Talk to me after the service or during the week or send me an email or whatever. I want to help you grow and understand and know because the more you know the more you're growing the more you're growing the more like Christ you can become.

If you choose to just sit there and be like eh whatever it's not for me this is above my head man you're really hurting yourself and the opportunity you have. We must build up elders are to build up the body of Christ to maturity and the faith.

[31:36] Alright I'm going back to Titus. Kind of. I'm not going to read it again. There is no reasonable sensible Christian man who would take the role as a pastor teacher on himself without the Lord's calling.

Can I tell you that? No sensible person takes this position on themselves unless they've been called by God. And I think I just need to really reference James 3.1 where he says not many of you should become teachers my brothers for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. Let me tell you something. There's a reality in scripture and we're told about this in Hebrews 9 that when we die we will all stand before God in judgment. We live only one life and when this life is over we will be before God in judgment.

That is a fearful thing for everybody. But those who are teachers, pastors, preachers of the word, not only are we standing before God in judgment, we will be given a harsher judgment, a stricter judgment.

Do you think I want that? No. I didn't sign up for this because I thought oh hey it's great I can put myself before people and they'll think I'm awesome. More often than not I'm not awesome.

[33:10] And what I'm saying I've prayed through this and I've studied this and I feel pretty confident in what I'm teaching you and sharing with you because I've got to stand before God and give an account of every idle word that I've spoken.

And neither would a sensible Christian man attempt to fulfill that calling by preaching or teaching whatever ideas may come to his own mind. I can do nothing but preach and teach the sound doctrine of the word of God.

It's not about me it's about him. my desire is when I leave this pulpit I want you to see how big and great and awesome our God is. It's not about you know oh that was a good sermon you know like praise God because it's not me.

This is his word and if he's speaking to you great. Another thing an elder must be able to do as a teacher or preacher in the church is to rebuke those who contradict sound doctrine.

I like the way John Calvin alludes to it he states the pastor ought to have two voices one for gathering the sheep and another for warding off and driving away wolves and thieves.

[34 : 26] There's both it's a both and aspect. Teach the sheep and help them be nourished and grow. Protect the sheep and firmly rebuke those who do not have sound doctrine.

in 2 Peter 2 verses 1 through 3 you might want to turn there it's a longer passage but Peter warns of the ever present threat of false teachers.

2 Peter 2 verses 1 through 3 false prophets also arose among the people. He's talking about the people in the Old Testament. He's talking about Israel. Peter is talking about something that is present in his time.

These false teachers who introduced these destructive heresies that will ultimately lead the truth will be blasphemed because of these people.

And we might look at them and many people might look at them as well-meaning, well-intentioned individuals. Well they may be well-meaning, well-intentioned individuals. You don't know the heart of man so how do you know.

[36 : 02] But here's this, that teaching is destructive and cannot be allowed. It is the job of the elder, of the pastor to speak against it and to protect the sheep from erring and straying.

And false teachers in the church, they can exist in different forms. They're not all teachers, but they are enemies of sound doctrine and therefore of God and His people. And it's from the authority of scripture and conviction of sound doctrine that an elder can both exhort the believer and rebuke those who oppose the Word of God.

He's to proclaim and defend God's Word. In the eyes of many people, believers and not, to denounce false doctrine is to be unloving, judgmental, and divisive. To call out false teaching or to call out a false teacher from the pulpit, I have been, I have had people talk to me and say how they thought that was wrong, that I stepped out of line.

That was not my place. Well? John Calvin says it is your place. Well, John Calvin can say it's my place too and he's right. But they also are not the ones standing up here and having, knowing that they're going to be given a stricter judgment to come.

And if I'm not protecting the sheep, I'm not doing my job. So, yeah, it may seem unloving, judgmental, and divisive, but it's out of love and concern for the sheep and the flock that I'm over.

[37 : 43] Compromising Scripture in order to make it more palatable and acceptable is not speaking the truth in love. It's speaking falsehood and it's the farthest thing from godly love. The faithful elder tolerates and teaches his people to tolerate only sound doctrine.

And the faithful believer is like the Jews in Berea. You know, Acts 17 verse 11, where they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

I challenge you and I always challenge you and I continue to challenge you from whatever I say from up here or over there or anything you hear me say because I'm a pastor and an elder, right? Check the Scriptures to see if it's so.

And if not, let's have a conversation. But I exhort you with 2 Timothy 4 verses 2 through 4, particularly you, Ian Robertson, and Josh Randall, if you ever hear this, preach the word, be ready in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, and exhort with complete patience and teaching.

For the time is coming when people will not endure a sound teaching. By having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

[39 : 03] Father God, I thank you for your word. Lord, I thank you for men who lead in the church and are uncompromising on their stance in the word of God.

They cling desperately to it. It is of most importance. Lord, help us to continue to teach sound doctrine. Help us to be true to what your word reveals to us.

And Lord, even those who are sitting in the pews, as they have opportunities to teach and counsel others, Lord, help them to hold firm to your word and to be unwavering to its truth, to recognize and identify false teaching and to speak against it and not be quiet about it.

Oh, but most importantly, Lord, help me, help Ian, help Josh as we guide and direct the flock here at First Baptist Shapley. Lord, help us to know the truth of your word, to be committed to it, to see danger and warn the flock about it. And Lord, to see, to build them up in the body of Christ to maturity in the faith for your glory. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.