

The Essential Model Of Elders

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[0 : 00] According to the Bible, what we refer to as the call of a pastor or the call of an elder is far more external than it is internal.

So how do you know if God has called you to be a parent? Well, if he blesses you with a child, you know. He's called you. Well, how do you know if God has called a man to be a pastor?

Well, indeed, there's going to be an inward working of God's Spirit. There's going to be a desire there for the work. Even if it's a reluctant desire, it's a desire nonetheless.

Paul wrote to Timothy, whoever desires the office of an overseer desires a noble thing. And surely we need more men in churches who are willing to actively take the lead and desire the work of shepherding God's people.

Well, undoubtedly, that is a necessary and an essential part of it. But the certainty of a man's call involves meeting particular qualifications, displaying giftedness that shows not that he's capable in and of himself to perform the task, but that God has uniquely given him a gift to communicate the Word.

[1 : 15] It takes being recognized for the task by a congregation. A man doesn't establish his own eldership, in other words.

Instead, the church recognizes the clear display of God's work in a man's life. So we ought not immediately begin to think when it's time to establish more leadership in our church, our first thought ought not to be, well, who says that they want to do it?

The first step should be an examination of the church of who is actually already doing it. Who meets the objective qualifications given by the Lord?

And then we move forward from there. That's really what this text is about. If the call of a man is more external than it is internal, then this particular passage, along with a few others, helps us to understand what the objective and external qualifications are.

And the text before us reveals that elders are model Christians. That's really the basis of it. They're just model Christians with a unique gifting from God to lead the church.

[2 : 33] And what is described in these verses is it's not a list of requirements for capable men to try to live up to so that we would appoint someone who seems gifted and hope that they figure it out along the way.

No, it's actually a list of qualifications that faithful men are already living up to. And the church simply recognizes what the Lord is doing in their life.

Paul's primary concern as we dig in here, Paul's primary concern, and really the summary title of these qualifications, is that an elder be above reproach. We see it in both verses 6 and 7.

Look at it with me. He immediately begins, So that's kind of the big umbrella under which everything else that he writes here falls under.

Is this man above reproach? Is he actually a model that is fit for imitation? It means to be unimpeachable.

[3 : 42] Above reproach doesn't demand perfection, but it suggests a kind of person against which an accusation would be surprising or out of character.

It means that one lives their life in such a way that those looking for a way to condemn them cannot find a reasonable way to do it.

That's really what it means. It's not perfection. It just means what characterizes their life is a life of actual godliness. That even if you tried to accuse them, you'd really have to jump through some hoops to do it.

And according to Paul, being above reproach is essential to church elders because they act as God's servants to God's people. Look at it again in verse 7.

For an overseer as God's steward must be above reproach. William Mount said they are not watching over a human institution.

[4 : 46] They are stewards over God's house. Why is it that we have to be so concerned with this above reproach, this model? Because it's not because they're building a business.

It's that they're stewarding the people of God for the glory of God. And so God demands of them that they actually be above reproach.

Elders above reproach are models for the congregation. And the text gives us three categories which living above reproach qualifies a man to be a pastor. He is a model of leadership, a model of character, and a model of gospel commitment.

And that's what I want to spend the duration of our time thinking about this morning. First, let's see that an elder is a model of faithful leadership. A model of faithful leadership.

Look with me at verse 6. 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.

[5 : 57] So the first category in which a potential elder must be above reproach is in the area of leadership. And Paul lets us know that the training ground for pastoral ministry in this sense is actually in the home.

To recognize a man's ability to faithfully lead the church, a congregation must examine how he loves and cares for and leads his wife and children.

And the parallel passage to this is found in Paul's first letter to Timothy. He writes in 1 Timothy 3, he must manage his own household well, with all dignity, keeping his children submissive.

For if someone does not know how to manage his own household, Paul says, how will he care for God's church? We stop and we think, well, that makes sense, doesn't it?

If we're going to ask a man to actually give oversight to the people and the work of Lakeside Bible Church, if we're going to ask a man to shepherd the church here, shouldn't he be able to prove that he has shepherded well his family?

[7 : 06] That he has given proper oversight and faithful leadership to his wife and to his children? Yeah, it makes a lot of sense, doesn't it? Now, we need to be careful that we don't apply this passage too rigidly.

Paul didn't mean that a man must be married and must have children before he could be appointed as an elder in the church. That's not what he intends to say. Paul himself was unmarried.

The best we can tell, Timothy and Titus were both unmarried. And so if that's what Paul meant, he immediately disqualified himself from the very position with which he held in church leadership in these churches and as an apostle.

So it's not that he means that. You don't have to be married. You don't have to have children. But he's appealing to the fact that the most common scenario, really both then and now, is that most men in the church would be married with children.

And so he tells Titus, examine their leadership in the home before appointing them to such a monumental task in the church. And according to the criteria that he lists here, really two questions need to be asked about a potential elder.

[8 : 20] The first question is this, is he a faithful husband? Is he a faithful husband? Look again at verse six, if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife.

In other words, Titus, look and see how he treats his wife. Is he faithful to her? Does he fulfill the demands of God's law in regards to being a husband?

Of course, as many of you may know, it's long been debated in churches and in theological circles, what exactly Paul meant by being a husband of one wife and what marital conditions or circumstances would actually prevent a man from serving as a pastor.

Let's think about that for a moment. Did Paul really mean that a man who has been married twice is indefinitely disqualified? Is that perhaps what he means here?

Did he really intend to say that a previous divorce was disqualifying regardless of the particular circumstances or whether it was before or after his conversion or whether or not significant time has proven genuine repentance and restoration in the church?

[9 : 41] Does it mean that simply the act of a historical divorce in a man's life indefinitely disqualifies him from the task of serving as a pastor in the church?

And I don't think so. You may disagree. That's fine. I don't think that's what he means. Very literal translation of this is a one woman man.

It gives the sense of demonstrating exemplary faithfulness and commitment to one's wife. In other words, I think what Paul is concerned with is he's far more concerned about a man's marital fidelity than he is about a man's marital history.

And that's not to say that marital history is irrelevant because it's not. But it isn't automatically disqualifying either. At least that's not what I think Paul means to say here.

To fulfill the qualification of a one woman man has everything to do with how a man loves and treats his wife. Is he known to avoid circumstances that would cultivate sexual temptation?

[10:54] Or is there suspicion that he actually has little self-control and restraint in that area? That's a better question to ask what was the nature of his divorce 20 years ago.

Is he faithful to the life that he has? Is he flirtatious with other women? Is he guilty of indulging in pornography?

Is he careless with what he watches on TV or scrolls through on his phone? Is he a one woman man? You say, well, he's only had one wife.

That doesn't mean he's a one woman man. You say, well, he's never been divorced. Well, that doesn't mean he meets the qualification. Is he actually faithful to his wife?

Does he lead her well? Does he care for her? Does the way that he loves and cares and treats for his wife show that given the position and authority of an elder in a church, he's going to love and care and shepherd the church?

[12:06] How does he match up to the Bible's teaching for husbands? About Colossians 3, husbands love your wives and do not be harsh with them. Is he harsh with his wife?

You know, if he's willing to be harsh with his wife in front of the church, can you imagine what the harshness goes to when it's not in front of the church? Remember what Peter said to elders, that you're to exercise oversight, not domineering over the people, but living as an example to them.

Is he domineering? Is that really the character of his marriage? What about Ephesians 5?

Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church, gave himself for her.

In other words, does he lay down his life for his wife? Does he lay aside his own wants and desires?

Does he sacrifice his own dreams in order to care for his wife, in order to love his wife, in order to lead faithfully his wife? Does he love her like Jesus loves the church?

[13:11] Or at least is he patterned that way? 1 Peter 3, 7, Husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman.

Does he show his wife honor? Is he grateful for her? If a man doesn't love and care for his wife, what would make anyone think that he would properly love and care for the church?

Does he prove covenantal faithfulness? It's an important qualification here. Because again, the training ground for pastoral ministry, according to the way Paul lays it out to Titus and Timothy both, is the home.

And so the first place Titus is to look is at a man's marriage. What does it look like? There's two ways to see that. Is he showing that he is capable of shepherding the church?

That's one side of it. The other side of it is, is he living in disobedience to the Lord in this way? And if he is, don't appoint him to leadership in the church. If he's in disobedience, how is he gonna help the church?

[14:21] It doesn't matter how gifted he is. It doesn't matter how charismatic his personality is. It doesn't matter if he could take a startup business and make it excel beyond your imagination. That doesn't matter.

What matters is, does he love his wife? Does he shepherd his home? Does he care for them? Is he obedient to the Lord? If he's not obedient to the Lord there, he's probably not gonna be obedient to the Lord in the church either.

Is he a faithful husband? Secondly, is he a faithful father? Is he a faithful father? Look again with me at verse six. 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.

Titus was to look for men who are above reproach in their parenting. And honestly, I think I wrestled with this part of the text more than any other this week, just trying to figure out what exactly did Paul intend for us to understand here.

The instruction is very similar to what he wrote to Timothy, except he adds here something that he didn't tell Timothy. He says that the children of an elder must be believers.

[15 : 35] Well, it's worth noting at least that the word that's used here translated as believer can just as appropriately be translated as faithful given the context. That may even be a notation that you see right there in your Bible.

But at the end of the day, it really doesn't make much of a difference. In either case, Paul still seems to be conditioning an elder's qualification on something that could possibly be out of his control.

Well, how exactly are we to understand that? How are we to think about that in regards to our own church? How rigid of an application are we to apply when thinking about church leaders?

There's a few thoughts I want to offer to you as we reason through it together. The first is this. I think it's significant that Paul did not apply this same restriction in the qualifications he lists in 1 Timothy 3.

And so the question then is, if it was essential in Crete, why wasn't it essential in Ephesus? So does he really intend then for us to look at Crete and say, well, all of a man's children must actually be converted before he can be appointed to be an elder?

[16 : 50] I'm not sure that's exactly what he means. I think it's also unlikely that Paul intended to say that they must be converted, his children, but he doesn't apply the same restriction to the man's wife.

Why would he say his children must be converted, but he doesn't actually make the same application to his spouse? And I think when it comes down to it, we have to remember that the evaluation ultimately is of the potential elder, not his family.

You understand that, right? What the church and what Titus is evaluating here in this passage is the man, not his family. And so the belief and behavior of individual family members was important insofar as they reflected his faithfulness in managing his own household well.

I think that's the point here, that his children need to be faithful, they need to be believers, and if they're not, the church needs to ask some serious question as to why.

Is his children unbelieving because he's been a lousy parent? He's not been faithful to disciple his children in the gospel. He's not restrained the evil in his household, or does he have a wayward child because we're prone to have wayward children from time to time?

[18 : 12] And is he brokenhearted over that, and has he done everything that he can do to woo that child back using the scriptures and teaching them the truth of the gospel? I think that's the question that we need to be asking. We're evaluating the man, not each individual of his family.

And I think that's a sense of what Paul has to say here. He's not looking for a problem-free home. That's not what he's looking for. Neither is he asking Titus, I think, to consider the actions of an individual member of the family as much as he is looking at the general patterns of a man's home. Brian Chappell said this, good leadership is not determined in the absence of difficulty, but in the prudent discipline and handling of problems when difficulties come.

Patterns of disbelief and unruliness in a man's household should cause questions about his aptitude for church leadership. But occasional or exceptional difficulties well handled should not disqualify.

Rather, they are precisely what do qualify. Turn with me to 1 Samuel 2. Now the sons of Eli were worthless men.

[19 : 31] They did not know the Lord. So if we were to translate that in the context of Titus 1, they were unbelieving and they were guilty of insubordination and debauchery.

Okay, that's the dynamic of Eli's sons. Thus the sin of the young men was very great in the sight of the Lord for the men treated the offering of the Lord with contempt.

So Eli's the high priest. He's got two sons that are serving as priests. He's not restraining their evil. They are worthless men. They do not know the Lord and they're cheating the people of God as the people would come to the tabernacle and they would offer their sacrifices.

They're cheating them. They're acting crookedly to benefit their own selves. They're treating the offering of the Lord with contempt. Later on, when Eli actually does have a minor confrontation, he acknowledges that they're actually prostituting themselves at the entrance of the tabernacle.

This is gross sin. There is no doubt that they're unbelieving and they're guilty of debauchery. And yet Eli doesn't do anything about it. He doesn't restrain their evil.

[20 : 35] He doesn't discipline them. He doesn't rid them of their place in the priesthood. He doesn't deal with them according to the law of God. In fact, if you get to a little bit later on in chapter

two, you find that he gave them a good talking to.

That amounts to what Eli did. He said, no, no, boys. Don't do that no more. And that was it. And then we get to chapter three and look what happens. You understand the way that the story goes. God begins to call the young man Samuel in the middle of the night. Finally, Eli realizes that it's the call of God and he tells him to listen to the Lord.

Look at verse 11 in chapter three. Then the Lord said to Samuel, behold, I'm about to do a thing in Israel at which the two ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. On that day, I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house from beginning to end.

and I declare to him that I am about to punish his house forever for the iniquity that he knew because his sons were blaspheming God and he did not restrain them.

[21 : 48] And the punishment for Eli and his house is severe. But God wasn't angry with Eli because his unbelieving sons acted like unbelieving sons.

He was angry with Eli because Eli did nothing to restrain the evil and discipline them according to God's word. And I think that's the sense in which congregations are to evaluate a man's parenting because generally speaking, faithful men will produce faithful children.

There will be exceptions to that rule and the congregation must weigh his ability to pastor on how he deals with those situations. But I think he's really warning against an Eli kind of situation here. You don't want a pastor who leads the church to discipline your kids but sweeps his own kids' sins under the rug. Don't want that. That's not going to be helpful.

And if a man doesn't disciple his own kids, how will he ever disciple the people in the church? Is he a faithful leader? Well, how do we know?

[22 : 59] It's not based on the way he runs his business. It's based on the way that he runs his home. It's he shepherded them. A man that fails to love and lead his wife and kids must not be appointed to lead the church no matter how gifted he is.

The elder will model spiritual leadership in his home showing that he can actually do it in the church as well. All right? That was the longest of the three, okay?

He's a model of faithful leadership. Number two, he's a model of godly character. Back to Titus 1. He's a model of godly character. Look with me at verse 7. 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, disciplined.

Now, I want to be careful not to miss the forest for the trees here by painstakingly working through each one of these categories that Paul lists. I'm not going to do that.

[24 : 09] We'll make mention of each of them but I'm not going to spend a lot of time on them. I'll leave it to you. Really what Paul's doing here is he's painting a portrait of godliness. What does a godly man look like?

The characteristics even listed here, they're representative. They're not even exhaustive. So, in other words, not everything that should be true of an elder is actually listed here in the qualifications in Titus 1 nor are they listed in 1 Timothy 3.

These are representative lists. For example, spiritual disciplines like prayer are absent from the list though surely we would never appoint someone to shepherd the church who is not a man of prayer. Nothing explicit is said regarding his commitment to the church and its ministries though we would never appoint someone who is half-hearted in their attendance or in their service to the church.

So, we don't need to look at this list as if it is everything that should be considered but rather we're looking at it as general characterizations of what a godly man actually looks like in the church.

[25 : 22] And it's not difficult to see Paul's intention. All throughout this letter he's contrasting one type of person with another type of person. Look with me at verse 12 in chapter 1.

He says of one type of person one of the Cretans a prophet of their own said Cretans are always liars evil beasts lazy gluttons and then he says and this is true this testimony is true and you get the picture that as this letter is being read and the church is on Crete that nobody's being offended to this probably.

They're probably sitting there saying yep he nailed it that's exactly why most of the men are in our nation. He's presenting a picture of a person isn't he?

They're liars they're evil beasts they're just terrible people. Well then he gives another example in chapter 2. Look at verse 7. He tells Titus show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works

and in your teaching show integrity dignity sound speech that cannot be condemned so that an opponent may be put to shame having nothing evil to say about us.

So if we take the bird's eye approach through the letter of Titus we see Paul very clearly he is contrasting two characterizations here. There is the unbelieving person or at least what is reflective of an unbelieving person in this kind of behavior and here is what is reflective of a genuine believer someone who is growing in their knowledge of the Bible and being sanctified by the Spirit.

[26 : 52] And these two lists here in verses 7 and 8 are the same thing. The negative traits portray a prideful selfish man known for being hot-headed and drinking too much.

The positive traits on the other hand depict a humble disciplined man known for being kind and loving righteousness. He wasn't asking Titus to evaluate a man's actions in a given moment but he's considering what generally characterizes a man's life.

And perfection again is not the standard. Perfection wasn't the standard for his home. Perfection isn't the standard for his character either. Otherwise we would only have one shepherd in any of our churches and it would be the Lord Jesus Christ.

There would be no reason for us to appoint anyone else. The standard is above reproach. And there's a sense in which watching the way a man deals even with his own sin and failure is necessary to understand the true depths of his Christian character.

Let's quickly look at the traits here. First he gives a list of negative traits. He says in verse 7 that an overseer must not be arrogant literally pleasing himself.

[28 : 17] This person tends to be domineering in leadership always wanting to satisfy his own agenda regardless of the needs of anyone else.

That's what characterizes his life. He says he's not to be quick tempered which is the opposite of the characteristic of God's nature which is slowness to anger.

If a fruit of the spirit is temperance then quick tempered indicates a spiritless perhaps even unbelieving man. He says he's not to be a drunkard which is not merely a reference to overindulgence but the kind of behavior that's associated with drunkenness being out of control out of your mind.

He says he's not to be violent which carries the idea if you have an older translation it carries the idea of being a striker or a brawler lashing out at other people in anger.

In other words an elder should be able to diffuse tension rather than striking out physically or verbally at someone else. Finally he says he's not to be greedy for gain referring to an individual who desires to be rich beyond their own needs and is even willing to use the church as a means of personal financial gain.

[29 : 51] This is the picture of someone you don't want to appoint. You say but he can preach it doesn't matter. He's only been married once it doesn't matter.

If he's greedy for gain he doesn't need to be your pastor. If he's violent he can't leave the church church. There's the characterizations here. Then there's the positive traits.

He must be hospitable which is simply living a life that is open for others to be a part of it. He's not closed off. This isn't a jab at introversion.

It may be something that a natural introvert would have to work harder at than an extrovert but it doesn't mean that he's just kind of quiet nature. That's not what it means. It means that he's just open.

His home is open. His time is not reserved only for his family and friends. His time is reserved for everyone. He is welcoming his home. The doors of his home are wide open.

[30 : 56] He's hospitable in his nature. Number two, he's a lover of good which means he's motivated, energized by good works. elders. The elders should desire to do good things for others rather than performing out of a sense of obligation.

Do you see the difference? There's the person who does whatever they're asked to do and then there's a person who loves to do what God has called them to do. A lover of good things, of good people, and of good works.

A faithful elder never wants to do as little as possible because they're a lover of good. Thirdly, he's self-controlled which is used all throughout the letter to contrast Christian behavior with culturally accepted practices and ideas.

He actually has control of his faculties. He's upright which is living righteously according to God's law. He's holy which is being entirely devoted to God and his word.

He's disciplined which refers more so to spiritual disciplines than physical. He is committed to a rigorous application of biblical habits. This is the picture that Paul is painting.

[32 : 12] Here you have a man that is a portrait of godly behavior and here you have a man that is not. Don't appoint this man. Look for the men who meet these qualifications whose lives are generally characterized this way.

Again, giftedness isn't irrelevant to the conversation but it's not the primary reason for recognizing elders either. The overall message of this letter is that the true gospel produces godly living and it was necessary for Titus to appoint men whose lives reflected the transformative power of Christ so that as they preached on Sundays to their church as they evangelized the people on the island of Crete and in the individual towns in which they lived there was credibility to the message of the gospel because the life of the messenger matched the truth that he was proclaiming.

How will the unbelieving world take seriously a man whose life doesn't actually characterize what his preaching says that Jesus does?

An elder's example should be to put Jesus on display for the congregation and also for the watching world. His life should be worth imitating in other words.

1 Peter 5.3 referring to the elders Peter says be examples to the flock. Hebrews 13.7 Remember your leaders those who spoke to you the word of God consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

[33 : 57] Philippians 3.17 Brothers Paul says join in imitating me and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.

In other words follow the men who are following Christ and how do you know if they're following Christ their life will show it their faithfulness to their home will show it their faithfulness and godly character will show it their passion for the church will show it their shepherding work even without the office it will show it find those men follow those men let those men lead the church he's a model of faithful leadership he's a model of godly character finally he is a model of gospel commitment he's a model of gospel commitment verse nine 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 so the final qualification here or at least the categories that Paul is dealing in is that a man must be wholeheartedly committed to the gospel of

Jesus Paul isn't saying that an elder has to be a theological egghead with a comprehensive knowledge of every facet of doctrine that's not what he's saying that might be helpful but it's not required in fact we can actually discern from this letter when we get into chapter three that an individual who is obsessed with doctrinal nuances will end up dividing the church rather than lead it in fact look at chapter three look at verse nine in chapter three avoid foolish controversies things that are not of primary importance in other words avoid genealogies the dissensions quarrels about the law for they're unprofitable they're worthless and as for a person who stirs up division as a result of this emphasis in their life after warning him once and twice have nothing more to do with him knowing that such a person is warped he's sinful he's self condemned that's strong isn't it he's saying he's saying avoid the guys that all they want to talk about their pet doctrines what he means by trustworthy word is the fullness of the gospel message in
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not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration, the renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ, our savior, so that being justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

[37 : 33] Now look what he says in verse eight. This saying is trustworthy. There's the word again. And I want you to insist on these things.

What is the trustworthy word is taught? It's the gospel of Jesus. It's the gospel that every one of us are condemned in our sin. We are hopelessly lost and without God, and there's nothing we can do to earn our way back to his favor.

We can do all the good things that we can try. We can do all the church services. We can give all the money that we can give. We can do our best and try our hardest, and it won't matter.

The gospel is that God, in his great love for us, sent his only son, and then he sends his spirit to regenerate us, and those who have faith in the sacrifice and the resurrection of Jesus Christ are then given the mercy of God, reconciliation with God, not on the basis of who they are or of what they've done, but solely according to his mercy and grace, which he lavishes on us.

And Paul says, find the men who aren't concerned about fighting with everybody about every possible doctrinal nuance. Find the men who are wholeheartedly committed to the gospel message and put those men leading the church so that the church will be committed wholeheartedly to the gospel message.

[38 : 57] That's what he's saying. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word. He must hold firm to the gospel of Jesus. What he says regarding instruction or in sound doctrine, it's a medical term.

In fact, this may be a note in the footnotes of your Bible even. It could appropriately be translated healthy doctrine. And his point there is that an elder's doctrinal emphasis should produce spiritual fitness leading to external displays of godliness, not spiritual anemia that reflects a full head and an empty heart.

There's an emphasis that we're looking for and it's an emphasis and a commitment on the gospel first as a matter of first importance. We all know people that are passionate about pet doctrines. I have my own. But have you ever known someone who would love to debate you about the Bible, but they're the last people to ever sacrifice for someone else or evangelize the lost or give up their freedoms for the good of the church?

That's not the kind of person you're looking for. It doesn't matter how thick the books of theology are that are sitting on their desk at home. Sometimes, this is the result of a pastor who sets the same kind of example.

[40 : 28] And God help me if I ever start to care more about what your brain thinks and less about the gospel that actually transforms your life. Calvin said, the pastor ought to have two voices.

One for gathering the sheep and another for warding off and driving away wolves and thieves. And the scripture supplies him with the means of doing both.

What is a pastor supposed to do? He's supposed to be a man of the book. He's supposed to preach the Bible to the people in his church and to courageously stand against the people who would pervert it.

That's his point. He needs to know his Bible well and he needs to be able to teach it to believers and unbelievers alike. He needs to be committed to the trustworthy word even if the wolves and the sheep hate him for it.

This is the one place in the New Testament that speaks of giftedness regarding pastors. They've got to demonstrate a God-given ability to instruct the church and to fight against those who contradict the Bible because they will come.

[41 : 52] And as we'll see next week in this chapter, they're going to come from outside the church and then as we reflect on Acts chapter 20, they're going to come from inside the church too. You need to make sure that the people leading the way are people that know the Bible and know the truth and know what's worth dealing with and what doesn't have to be dealt with.

Let me finish with this. Tim Chester said in relation to this text, here is what you should look for in a leader. Here is what you should aspire to as a leader.

And it's what you should pray for regarding your leaders. When we understand that elders are simply models of faithful Christianity, what we read about in their qualifications begins to become much more personal, doesn't it?

You say, I'm really tired of us dealing with this whole church government and pastors and what they need to be and all this stuff. Let's get on to something better than this. But this is for you. At the end of the day, outside of a giftedness to teach at the end of the day, an elder in a church is just a model Christian.

The qualifications listed here are not exclusive to the elders. They must be a part of the elders' testimony because it's what every Christian should be pursuing in regards to the way that they live and the character of their life.

[43 : 23] Everything in this text is commanded of all believers at other places in the New Testament. Every single word of it. Even the word of commitment to the trustworthy gospel.

Even the word of commitment to sound doctrine. Even the ability to build one another up in Christ through the gospel. That belongs to all of us. So you don't get a pass on this text.

All of us have to take this serious. There's an essential element of gifting and calling, but that doesn't mean everyone else gets a pass on godliness. Not everyone in the church will be called upon to lead it.

But every Christian should live a life that is qualified for it. So ask yourself the same question that you might would ask a potential elder in our church.

Do you love your wife? Are you faithful to her? Like really faithful. I know your marriage has all the appearances of faithfulness, but really when it comes down to it, are you really a one woman man or is your mind all over the place when it comes to women?

[44 : 38] Are you discipling your kids? Are you restraining the evil? Are you discipling your young kids? Are you restraining the evil of your older kids? Are you keeping the gospel in front of them?

If someone were to characterize your life, would you fit more like the Cretans on Monday to Saturday or would you look more like what Paul is encouraging Titus to be?

What about the word? Do you care about it? Are you faithfully studying the Bible? Are you spending time growing in your knowledge and in your prayer and trusting the Holy Spirit to shape your life the way that he sees fit?

Those things don't just apply to me or to anyone else who may serve this church. It applies to each one of us because we all belong to Christ and that is the thing that he has called us to be.

Faithful believers, faithful Christians. And then together as a church, we need to keep our eye out for those who demonstrate the ability to faithfully shepherd our congregation.

[45 : 38] because as we saw last week, it's an essential role in the church and it's a role that at least in part the congregation is responsible for.

So watch for those men in our church. Encourage those men in our church. Confront those men in our church if necessary. Build one another up in Christ.

Thank you.