

## Introduction:

Over the next two months, we are going through a very exciting process. Our present shepherds are asking to look out among our number to see if we have any qualified to serve this congregation as additional shepherds or deacons. With that in mind, today, we want to overview the roles and qualifications of these two offices within the congregation. In this lesson, we will examine the appointment of elders, shepherds, pastors, bishops, overseers.

## Discussion:

### I. The Role of Shepherd

#### A. Consider the terms used to describe this role and what they would mean for the role.

1. In most churches today, a very common word for the guy preaching the sermons is “pastor” (ποιμήν, poimen). The term comes from **Ephesians 4:11** in several translations (KJV, NKJV, NASB, NIV, NLT, RSV). However, notice he is different from the “evangelist” or the one proclaiming the message or preaching the sermons. When you recognize the connection of that term with “pasture,” you will not be surprised to learn that “pastor” is another word for “shepherd.” This can be seen in other translations (ESV, YLT, DBY). As a shepherd, we can see that this role is one of leadership, guiding, feeding a flock.
2. From **I Peter 5:1-4**, we discover that those who shepherd a flock of God are also called “elders” (πρέσβυτερος, presbuteros). The concept of “elder” is a person with experience, and therefore counsel and wisdom.
3. In **Acts 20:17, 28**, we see these men are “overseers” (ἐπίσκοπος, episkopos). This term is also translated “bishop” in the KJV, ASV, NKJV. This is a term that demonstrates management and authority. It is their job to oversee the work, growth, and members of the congregation.
4. Therefore, when we talk about appointing shepherds, we are also talking about pastors, bishops, elders, overseers. Each of these terms describes the exact same role of oversight and leadership within the congregation. Please notice it is distinct from the preacher. I am not a pastor, elder, or shepherd here.

#### B. The shepherds of Israel

1. In **Ezekiel 34:1-6**, God rebukes the shepherds of Israel. When we see His rebuke we learn the role of shepherd among God’s people. Notice the list of jobs the shepherds were supposed to do.
  - a) Feed the sheep.
  - b) Strengthen the weak.
  - c) Heal the sick.
  - d) Bind up the injured.
  - e) Bring back the straying.
  - f) Seek the lost.
  - g) Lead with gentleness and meekness.
2. One of the main aspects of this passage and its surrounding context is the shepherd is there to serve the sheep rather than the sheep there to serve the shepherd. The wicked shepherds viewed the sheep as a means to the shepherds’ own satisfaction. They ruled with harshness that caused the sheep to be scattered. Being a shepherd did not provide rights, but responsibilities in service to the sheep.

#### C. Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

1. Finally, in **John 10:11-18**, Jesus, our Chief Shepherd establishes the example for this role. The key is sacrifice. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, was willing to lay down His life for His sheep. His under-shepherds are not to be mere hired hands (only in it for the money, if you will). They are to be shepherds who follow in their Master’s footsteps, stepping between the sheep and the wolf (the roaring lion).
2. When we consider this (and the other points), we see why the men who serve the congregation in this role are worthy of such honor, respect, and submission as seen in **Hebrews 13:17**. The word translated “keeping watch” literally means “without sleep.” And that is what this role is about. It is about those who devote their lives to caring for, sacrificing for, watching out for the sheep. We have an enemy on the loose attacking the sheep. Like our Savior, the shepherds are devoting their lives to help us remain safe from and overcome the attacks.

## II. Qualified to shepherd the flock of God

- A. We could spend weeks and weeks trying to dig to the bottom of each and every one of the qualifications listed in **I Timothy 3:1-7** and **Titus 1:5-9**. However, for our purposes, we simply want to be reminded of a brief overview of these qualifications. Certainly, if you have deeper questions, feel free to speak with one of our present elders for further guidance. Rather than digging deep into every single qualification, let's notice four main principles supported by the lists, organizing the qualifications into these main points.
- B. *He is an irreproachable man.* Perhaps the overarching principle for the qualification of a shepherd is seen in **I Timothy 3:2** and **Titus 1:6, 7**. "Therefore an overseer must be *above reproach*." "If anyone is *above reproach*...For an overseer, as God's steward, must be *above reproach*."
1. The way Paul makes the claim to Titus is insightful. On the surface it may seem Paul lists the same qualification twice. That is not so. This is what is called an *inclusio*. That is, it begins and ends making the same point. Like a parenthetical statement, what is in the middle is an inclusion. In this case, everything in between the repeated statements about being above reproach is further defining that single claim.
  2. With that beginning, what follows in **Titus 1:8ff** seems to be unpacking even further what it means to be above reproach. Thus, the qualifications are explaining what a person who is above reproach looks like.
  3. At the heart of it, above reproach means no one could lay a charge against the man. Of course, we know this doesn't mean he is sinless. Then no one would be a shepherd. Keep in mind Peter was a "fellow elder" according to **I Peter 5:1**. Therefore, the point here is not whether we can drag up a skeleton in a man's closet. No doubt, we could. The point is about maturity. We are looking for men who have grown to a level of maturity in Christian faith and living that we are certain they can be followed to God.
  4. Notice the statement in **I Timothy 3:7**. The elder is irreproachable or blameless within and without the church. He is to be thought well of by outsiders. Of course, this does not leave the qualification of a man up to the sinful fickleness of worldly people. Many outsiders will not think well of a man who tries to teach them the gospel. That doesn't make him unqualified. But a man seen as an unscrupulous business dealer, unfaithful husband, unethical boss or employee by outsiders is not above reproach.
- C. *He is a tested and proven man.* That is, he is a man who has demonstrated his character and leadership in perhaps the hottest of crucibles: the home.
1. Notice, the test is not business acumen or corporate leadership (though he may have done well there also). The test is not financial success and prowess. The test is the home.
  2. He must be a man of one woman (**I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6**), or husband of one wife. This is not a statement about polygamy, that is, a man hasn't met this qualification merely by only legally binding himself to one woman. This is about devotion and loyalty. Let's face it, marriage can be hard. This is a man who has remained faithful in his commitments.
  3. If the traditional understanding of **I Timothy 3:11** is accurate, then we see the wife of the shepherd (as well as the deacon) is to be dignified and faithful in all things, not slandering but being sober-minded.
  4. Further he manages his household well, having children who are faithful which is further defined as "not open to the charge of debauchery and insubordination" in **Titus 1:6** (clearly in that passage part of his irreproachability, people can't even make a charge against him through his children) and in **I Timothy 3:4-5** as "with all dignity keeping his children submissive."
  5. In his letter to Timothy, Paul explains why this is the testing ground. If a man can't manage his own household in the social realm, how will he manage God's in the spiritual realm?
  6. According to **I Timothy 3:6**, not only is he to be tested and proven in the crucible of the home, he is not to be a novice (KJV, NKJV, ASV) or recent/new convert (NASB, ESV, RSV). The explained reason is he might be puffed up with conceit and fall into the devil's condemnation. That is, the young, inexperienced, untested man given the role of an older, experienced, and proven man might let this role go to his head. Filled with pride, he may fall into sin and condemnation.
- D. *He is a mature man.* In both of the letters, as Paul further defines the irreproachability of the elder, he provides two different, yet very interesting lists of mature character traits that both appear to have intriguing rhetorical structure.
1. First, let me highlight that these are character traits of mature Christianity, not character traits exclusive of shepherds. Note **Titus 2:1-8**; several of the same terms are used simply to describe the character goals of all Christians.
  2. Notice the rhetorical structure of the list found in **I Timothy 3:2-3**. Paul makes 9 statements. The first four actually make a very good contrasting parallel to the last four, leaving one in the middle to stand out. When the structure is outlined, it looks like this:

A: Sober-minded  
 B: Self-controlled  
 C: Respectable  
 D: Hospitable  
 E: Able to Teach

A': Not a drunkard  
 B': Not violent, but gentle  
 C': Not quarrelsome  
 D': Not a lover of money  
 E': ????????

- a) Instead of being a drinker, the elder is sober-minded.
  - b) Instead of being violent, the elder is to be self-controlled. Paul does make a slight break from the rhetorical structure adding a comment in this second part of the list that the elder is to be gentle.
  - c) Instead of being quarrelsome or contentious, the elder is to be respectable. Seeing how Paul uses the idea of not being quarrelsome in **Titus 3:1-2**, I think we can see how it contrasts with respectable.
  - d) Instead of being a lover of money, the elder is to be a lover of strangers (which is the literal translation of the word translated "hospitable"). That is, instead of hording what financial gain he has to himself, he is a servant of others, sharing what God has given him.
  - e) This leaves "able to teach" smack in the middle of these corresponding lists without a paired statement. We'll come back to this statement, because this position of prominence sets it apart.
3. Paul uses a different rhetorical or literary structure in **Titus 1:7-8**. It is called a chiasmic structure in which the first word pairs with the last, the second with the second to last, and so on, once again leaving a middle term not paired with anything else. When the structure is outlined, it looks like this:

A: Not self-pleasing (ESV: "arrogant," KJV, NKJV, NASB, ASV: "self-willed", YLT says "self-pleased")  
 B: Not quick-tempered  
 C: Not a drunkard  
 D: Not violent  
 E: Not greedy for gain  
 F: Hospitable  
 E': Lover of good  
 D': Self-controlled  
 C': Upright  
 B': Holy  
 A': Disciplined

- a) Rather than being governed by self-will and pleasing himself, the elder is disciplined.
- b) Rather than being quick-tempered, he is governed by holiness. This may not seem like an obvious contrast, but notice **I Timothy 2:8**. Men are told to pray lifting holy hands contrasted with being angry and quarrelsome.
- c) Rather than being a drunkard, the elder is upright. Again, this may not seem like an obvious contrast. However, the word translated upright means just (KJV, NKJV, NASB, ASV) and righteous (YLT). This calls to mind the Proverbialist's teaching in **Proverbs 31:4-5** in which the king is told not to drink wine or strong drink lest he pervert justice or righteousness.
- d) Rather than being violent, the elder is self-controlled.
- e) Rather than being greedy for gain, the elder loves what is good. This calls to mind what Peter says about shepherds in **I Peter 5:2-3**. The overseer does not do so for shameful gain but because he wants to be an example for good. And, of course, Paul unpacks this a little more in **Titus 1:10-11** explaining that some are teaching error in order to make shameful gain.
- f) This leaves hospitality smack in the middle without a contrasting statement. When this kind of structure is used, the usual purpose is to highlight the unpaired statement in the middle. In other words, when Paul wrote to Titus, each of these character traits was important, but the one he elevated above all others was hospitality.

E. *He is a convicted man.* The elder is a man whose faith and doctrine have been tested and he has come out on the other side of it convicted. Certainly, all men must continually approach scripture with fresh eyes. But the elder is one who will not be tossed about by every wind of doctrine like a spiritual child (cf. **Ephesians 4:4**). This doesn't mean an elder never changes his mind about anything. It simply means the latest fads don't

move him, a new and neat argument isn't going to completely rock his world. He is staid and steady and has learned to dig deep in study before being swayed.

1. According to **Titus 1:9**, the elder holds firm to the trustworthy word as taught, surely Paul means as taught by the apostles. Not only does he hold it fast, he is ready to instruct his flock in sound teaching.
2. But Paul takes it a step further. Not only will he teach those willing to listen, he is able to refute those who contradict. He doesn't wilt in the presence of doctrinal confrontation, but stands up for the Lord's truth when others oppose it.
3. Just to highlight how important this is. Remember the rhetorical structure we noted in **I Timothy 3:2-3**? "Able to teach" was left dangling all on its own without a paired contrast. This was a means of emphasizing this qualification. In a rhetorical way, Paul was saying, "All of these other qualifications are important, but make sure he is able to teach above all."

#### Conclusion:

One of our present shepherds will have more instructions about our particular process before the close of the assembly. But I know they will be asking you to look out among the men in this congregation. Do you see irreproachable men who have been tested and proven in their families, mature and convicted? Then submit their names on the forms the elders are providing.

Before we close, however, let's back up and take note. How amazing is it that any person could be described among us by these characteristics? **Titus 3:3** explains where each and every one of us started. We were sinners, controlled by our passions, led astray. What is it that leads people from **Titus 3:3** to this level of maturity that can allow someone to shepherd the people of God? Don't misunderstand what it is. It is not because there are simply some awesome people among us who have worked hard and proven themselves worthy of this role. Keep reading in **Titus 3:4ff**. The reason we can even go through this process is because of the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit. By the grace of God, passion-driven sinners can become disciplined, mature, shepherds. This is why Paul claims in **Acts 20:28** that the Holy Spirit had made those Ephesian elders overseers. Yes, we do recognize the great example of men like this (cf. **I Peter 5:3**). However, let us be amazed at the gospel that is the power of God for salvation (**Romans 1:16-17**) and the word of God's grace which is able to build us up and give us the inheritance among all who are sanctified (**Acts 20:32**). I don't know where you are spiritually, perhaps you think you could never be the kind of person we've described today. Jesus and His gospel can change you. Why not surrender to Him?