

## Shepherding The Church – Part Two

### **The Essentials of Stewardship**

1 Timothy 3: 2-3

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Pastor Francis Bezzam

*<sup>2</sup> Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, <sup>3</sup> not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.*

If you had to ask Jesus the question, “Lord, do you love our church, what would he say?”.

Paul’s letter to the Ephesians captures the relationship between Christ and the church.

*“.. Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, <sup>26</sup> that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup> so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish”* Ephesians 5:25-27

Our Lord gave himself up. Not for any sin or wrongs he had done. But for our sin that stood as high crime before a Holy God. By his sacrificial love, he bought the church with his own blood.

God tells Moses in Exodus 11:7, *“..the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel”*.

God makes a distinction between the church and the world. God makes a distinction between the saved and unsaved, the believing world and the unbelieving world. The unbelieving world is dead to God and the church is alive to God in Christ. The New Testament authors give us a picture of the relationship between Christ and his Church as one of a groom and her bride or a husband and a virgin. A holy and pure relationship.

Paul writes to the church in Corinth this way *“For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.”* 2 Corinthians 11:2. You see similar language in the book of Revelation *“Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself*

ready; <sup>8</sup> it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure” Revelation 19:7-8. In Revelation chapter twenty-one – “*And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*” Revelation 21-2

This morning, we are going to look at the essentials of stewardship. Last week, we began a sub series on the subject of Shepherding the Church from 1 Timothy chapter three. An overseer is God’s steward. *Steward* can be translated house-manager or custodian. Paul writes this letter so that the church would know how to conduct themselves in the household of God. Household or house is connected to the word *steward*. In the first century, stewards were those individuals who had been entrusted by the owner of the house to manage his affairs. Stewards were also people who managed a farm or estate on behalf of the landlord or people who took care of the financial matters of the city.

Jesus talked about *stewardship* in Luke 12. “*Who then is the faithful and wise manager (steward), whom his master will set over his household*” (Luke 12:42). God requires stewards to be faithful. “*it is required of stewards that they be found faithful*” (1 Corinthians 4:2). Faithfulness begins with little things. Jesus said “*One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much*” (Luke 16:10).

No wonder Paul lists the first essential qualification for an elder is faithfulness in his marriage. This is crucial because if the elder, pastor, overseer or the minister of Gospel is to preach and teach that Jesus Christ gave himself up his bride – the church, then his own marriage is to be an illustration or demonstration of the Gospel.

The overarching qualification is that the elder is to be a man above reproach. And to be above reproach is to be a faithful husband. Paul says the man is to be *the husband of one wife*. This is literally translated as a “one-woman man” or “one-wife husband”.

How should we understand this requirement?

1. Paul does not say the elder is a man who *must* be married. Rather he must be a one-wife man if he is a married man. So, single men are not excluded from aspiring to be elders.
2. Some interpret this phrase to mean that Paul is saying this to prohibit polygamy. Surely at the time of this letter, which is about mid-first century, the Greeks and Romans lived in gross sexual sin and marriage was undermined by frequent divorce, widespread immorality. Wealthy men had three women at any given time. The man

would have a wife, a mistress and a woman at the local temple. However, this phrase does not mean Paul is speaking to prohibit polygamy.

3. Some have understood this phrase to mean the elder should be married only once in his lifetime and anything else is disqualifying. Paul does not that say anything about remarriage here in this text. Remarriage can happen for a few reasons. After the death of a spouse or after a divorce due to sexual sin or abandonment (Matthew 5:32, 19:9, 1 Corinthians 7:12-15). Remarriage is not necessarily a dis-qualification. These are present tense qualifications for the aspiring elder or elder. Is the man fully, totally committed to the wife he has now? Is his love for her growing and does he seek to serve her sacrificially? If the man is in the habit of marrying and remarrying that would be disqualifying.
4. A good way to understand this phrase is written by Alexander Strauch, in his book *Biblical Eldership*. Strauch quotes commentator Philip H. Towner who says, “*the point is not how often one can be married, nor precisely what constitutes a legitimate marriage (that the marriage of the candidate is legitimate is assumed), rather how one conducts himself in his marriage*”.

A one-woman man implies and excludes all deviations from faithful, monogamous marriage including polygamy, homosexuality, and questionable relationships. This is phrase simply means that the man is faithful and true to one woman. Two well-known authors John MacArthur and Phil Ryken say that this qualification extends to moral and sexual purity of the man. Sexual relations outside of marriage would be immediately disqualifying. Sadly, recent statistics show that the divorce rate among Christians is about 40-50%. As a general instruction for all husbands not just for elders, the New Testament authors instruct on how husbands ought to treat their wives – “*Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church*” (Ephesians 5:25). “*Husbands should love their wives as their own bodies*” (Ephesians 5:28). “*Husbands love your wives and do not be harsh with them*” (Colossians 3:19). “*..husbands live with your wives in an understanding way showing honor*” (1 Peter 3:7). So, the first qualification is that of the man’s fidelity and his role as a husband devoted to his wife.

The next four qualifications are *sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable*. To be *sober-minded* is to be balanced mentally and emotionally, to exercise a sense of restraint from excesses.

To be *sober-minded* is to be balanced mentally and emotionally. This is a man who is watchful, disciplined, circumspect or vigilant about his own soul. Deacons are to be soberminded (1 Timothy 3:11). Older men are to sober-minded as well (Titus 2:2).

To be *self-controlled* is to show restraint, to be prudent, to show an objective perspective when faced with issues and disagreements.

To be *respectable* is to show a level of prudence or discretion. This is the word *kosmios* in the Greek. We get the word *cosmetics* from this word. In the previous chapter Paul instructs the women to wear respectable apparel. Same word. In Paul's letter to Titus, Paul writes that employees should be respectable by adorning the doctrine of God. (Titus 2:10).

The next qualification is that the elder must be *hospitable*. This is the word *philoxenon* – friend of strangers. You probably heard the word xenophobia – fear of strangers. Hospitable is the antonym of xenophobia. The elder should not be neutral nor have apathy for strangers but be a friend of strangers. And what a wonderful gift hospitality is! The Bible is filled with examples and instructions that we are to be a people given to hospitality.

1. The author of Hebrews writes in chapter thirteen, “*Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers*”. Hebrews 13:2
2. “*Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality*” Romans 12:13
3. “*Show hospitality to one another without grumbling*” 1 Peter 4:9

Out of the eleven character qualifications, Paul has one qualification related to competence, skill or ability. The elder *must* be able to teach.

The parallel passage is in Titus 1:9 expands about this essential quality for an overseer, elder or pastor-teacher “*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*”.

Teaching is a unique gift that is associated with the office or overseer, elder or pastor. The elder must have a *positive bias* towards the word of God – the Bible, the teaching of Christ and the apostles' teaching. This phrase “*hold firm*” is also translated as to having a *strong attachment*, being *constantly devoted* to the faithful word. Paul says that the man must hold the word so firmly for two reasons. We saw this in 1 Timothy. *First*, to promote sound doctrine, good healthy teaching. *Second*, to refute to correct false teaching.

In other words, the elder must be able to handle the Scriptures with *skill* and *competence*. It takes hard work to be able to do both. Paul tells Timothy in chapter five and seventeen that the elder who labors in preaching and teaching is to be recognized. The labor is working hard to the point of being tired or exhausted.

Martyn-Lloyd Jones, a physician turned pastor writes the following about this ability. *“Look for an unusual degree of spirituality and look for a degree of assurance with regard to his knowledge of the Truth and his relationship to it. If he is a man who is always struggling with problems and difficulties and perplexities himself, and trying to discover the truth,.. it is clear he is a man who is not called to the ministry”*.

How you treat the Bible will show how you relate to God. The leader must be a lifelong student of the Bible. Does the man have a deep affection for the Word of God? Psalm 119:162 *”I rejoice at your word like one who finds great spoil”*.

We have covered some essentials for stewards of God. Lord willing, we will pick up the rest next Sunday.

Not all believers may serve as elders but all believers are *stewards* in some way shape or form. Peter writes to churches this way. *“<sup>10</sup> As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied (multi-faceted) grace: <sup>11</sup> whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ”* 1 Peter 4:10-11.

As a believer you are a steward of something - a gift to serve, a gift to encourage, a gift to intercede in prayer, a gift to give, a gift to witness to others. Whatever your gift is, you must steward that gift.

----- Discipleship Questions-----

MESSAGE SUMMARY: **Essentials for Stewards.** 1 Timothy 3:2-3

HEAD: These questions help you examine the truth of God's Word.

1. Why is faithfulness to God and in marriage an essential quality in the believer's life and a necessary qualification for an elder? Also, go around and talk about other essential qualities.

HEART: These questions help you wrestle with what you believe.

2. Do you believe faithfulness begins with small steps and reflects the heart of God?

3. What is God convicting you of and to believe in light of this message?

HANDS/HABITS: These questions help you bring the truth into your everyday life and develop behaviors that change your habits.

4. For personal reflection: According to these character qualities is there one thing that needs to change in your own soul or household? What will you do about it?