



First Baptist Church Selmer

"ORDER IN THE... CHURCH!" • DEVOTED LEADERSHIP • 1 TIMOTHY 3:1-7 • 4/7/2024

MAIN POINT

A healthy church is led faithfully by called men of God devoted to a life of shepherding and equipping the people of God.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What are the various positions of leadership at our church? (Think both vocational and volunteer leadership.) Take a look at Appendix A to see the Organizational Chart of FBC Selmer.

What are key qualities you think people in these positions should exhibit?

How important is it that church leaders exhibit these qualities in their public and private lives?

Southern Baptists are fundamentally Congregationalists. This means that elders/overseers (pastors) lead the church in teaching and equipping the people but the final discernment of matters are decided by the congregation as a whole. Pastors, deacons, and committees help to organize and advise the church in matters that involve the church but the congregation then votes to approve or disapprove.

Although the godly characteristics of both the pastors and deacons are similar in content, one main difference separates them. A pastor should be "*able to teach*". Therefore, historically, Baptists have denied the appropriateness of elders or elder boards that are not capable or active in a preaching/teaching role.

The pastor's role is distinct within the church structure for leadership, preaching/teaching, and oversight of the church ministries.

In today's text, Paul's advice focused on the qualifications for and expectations of church leaders. As we'll see, it's important that the message of the church be biblical, and that the leaders of the church maintain a certain character. As we look to pray for and affirm our spiritual leaders, this passage of Scripture gives practical implications for the standard to which God holds His leaders.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 TIMOTHY 3:1-7.

1 "The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. 7 Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil." (ESV)

Why is church leadership a "noble task"?

When it comes to spiritual leadership in the church, God sets apart certain qualities as necessary for that work—a work Paul distinguishes as "noble" (v. 1). After Paul states the noble work of this leadership, he then lays out 16 characteristics these leaders should demonstrate.

Why is there so much pressure and importance placed on church leaders?

In verses 2-7, Paul listed specific characteristics that make it clear a leadership position in the church is not to be taken lightly. These verses don't give a job description for the pastor, they describe the character of a person who would serve in this office. The list is not intended to be exhaustive, but it envisions a person of mature Christian character.

What characteristics of pastors are listed in these verses? Does anything on this list surprise you? Is there anything not included that you're surprised

about?

Looking at verses 2-4, why do you think we should pray for our pastors' protection?

Why would the devil work 'overtime' to disqualify a church leader if at all possible?

Pastors have quite an expectation to hold. On top of that, they must maintain good self-control, be sensible, respectable, and hospitable. They must be good teachers, gentle, not argumentative, not greedy. To add just a little more pressure, their families must reflect the gospel as well. This is why we pray for our pastors' protection.

According to verse 4, what is the connection between leadership in the church and one's home?

Why do you think this distinction is important?

In verse 4, Paul's emphasis is not that a pastor must be married and have children. Rather, if he has a wife and children, the leader is to manage his own household competently and keep his children under control with all dignity. The leader is to exercise proper authority with sensitivity and care in his home. Of course, Paul did not mean the pastor's home is a perfect model with no problems. He stressed that a leader manages his home with dignity, love, truth, and discipline. The principle is that if a pastor succeeds with his own family, likely he will succeed in God's family, too.

Realizing that our pastors are not super-Christians, how can we specifically pray for and encourage them as they balance family life and church life?

What threat does pride (v. 6) have on effective leadership? Why might this be more of a threat to young leaders like Timothy?

Take a look at Titus 2:2-7. What are the similarities and differences between these two lists? Why do you think these traits are singled out?

If you're in any kind of leadership position, your character matters. These qualities aren't given to set a perfect standard for each leader. Ultimately, these character traits represent a person who is pursuing godliness and desires to live in Christlikeness. The transformation that the gospel brings will be evident in these areas of life.

Think about qualifications for leadership in your job. What are the similarities and differences with this list? What does this tell us about what

is important to God, as opposed to what is important to the world?

The primary role of pastors and elders is to be shepherds of God's flock that is under their care. This is not an optional assignment, but a command. It echoes Christ's command to Peter to "*take care of My sheep*" (see John 21:16). To shepherd means "to lead, to guide, and to rule." Just as pastors have a primary responsibility to shepherd the members of the flock, the members have a primary responsibility: submission to their pastors, who have been given the responsibility to lead them. This command indicates a spirit of cooperation, as opposed to dissatisfaction with the leadership. It describes a willingness to support the pastors' leadership and pray for them continually.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Assess your attitude toward your pastors and church leaders. Do you hold yourself to the same standards you hold them to? Why or why not?

What can your group do to encourage our pastors? Come up with an idea today and implement it this week.

Will you pledge to pray daily for your pastor and church staff?

PRAYER

Spend time as a group praying for our church leaders—pastors, full-time and/or part-time staff, by name. Pray that they will feel strengthened and encouraged in their ministry and will continue to exhibit upright, godly character in their jobs and their homes. Pray specifically for our pastors' families, protection, and physical and mental health. Pray that above all, they would cultivate their personal relationship with Christ.

COMMENTARY

| 1 TIMOTHY 3:1-7

3:1. Paul reminded Timothy, a leader in the church at Ephesus, about a second saying he described as trustworthy. These formal statements, occurring five times in Paul's writings to Timothy and Titus, were likely cherished beliefs first-century Christians held and frequently voiced in Sunday worship. The sayings also served as theological benchmarks

regarding Christian beliefs that mattered most to them. The specific saying here was *"If anyone aspires to be an overseer, he desires a noble work."* Throughout the New Testament the words *"overseer," "elder"* (Acts 20:17), or *"pastor"* (Eph. 4:11) refer to a church leader. Today we usually refer to this specific church leader as pastor. Every local church must have leadership as its backbone. A church leader must first and foremost be a person of godly character, which Paul described in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. Some of the same qualifications for leaders are listed in Titus 2:2-7a in reference to all believers. The beauty of Christlikeness can shine in every Christian, and even more brightly in church leaders.

3:2. Paul wrote a long list of qualifications for those aspiring and desiring the leadership role of pastor/overseer/elder. The first requirement is *"above reproach"*, which Paul likely used as an all-encompassing must for anyone seeking leadership in the church. One above reproach has a spotless character with such integrity that no one, whether Christian or non-Christian, can successfully charge him as unfit for the role of pastor, and deservedly so. Paul left no room for moral laxity in the life of a pastor. To specifically teach what living above reproach means, he followed with ten moral qualities for a godly leader's moral character. First is *"husband of one wife,"* a phrase describing a one-woman husband, a man completely devoted to his wife. In the first century, immorality was the norm; Paul demanded that Christian leaders reflect the sanctity of the Christian home.

Next is *"self-controlled,"* meaning sober-minded, clear-headed, free from rash actions. *"Sensible"* describes a person whose judgment is thoughtful, evenhanded, and thus trustworthy. A sensible leader is not erratic or unpredictable in decision-making. *"Respectable"* refers to an orderly, disciplined lifestyle that reflects inner steadiness. If a person's lifestyle is chaotic, how can he create and maintain order in the church? Together these three words picture a leader who is able to conduct himself in an orderly fashion as he performs pastoral duties.

"Hospitable" is the next character quality Paul demanded of a Christian leader in God's church. It reflects the attitude and action of keeping an open house to Christian servants, an especially important service in the first century when traveling believers needed a place to eat, rest, and sleep, as well as hospitality toward needy members of the local congregation. Church leadership is not enough. It must extend into the pastor's home. *"An able teacher"* is the one quality in Paul's list that doesn't necessarily apply to believers generally but to pastors particularly. God calls and equips pastors to skillfully teach correct doctrine, refute error, and build up the Christian flock in God's Word.

3:3. *"Not addicted to wine"* is Paul's first negative qualification. The pastor must control a thirst for wine. Getting drunk is unacceptable behavior. Better would be to avoid it altogether. Additional negatives are *"not a bully"* and *"not quarrelsome."* A man who bludgeons believers to do what he wants, who chooses fists over reasonable arguments to get things done, doesn't have the right stuff for church leadership. Instead of looking for a fight, the pastor must be *"gentle,"* or kind, forbearing, and willing to show flexibility to others' points of view. *"Not greedy"* is another negative requirement of a church leader. Greediness is bad; generosity is good. Pondering get-rich schemes obviously contrasts with having God's people and their spiritual needs utmost in the leader's heart.

3:4. Paul next turned to the pastor's home life. In verse 4, his emphasis is not that a church leader must be married and have children. Rather, if he has a wife and children, the pastor manages his own household competently and keeps his children under control with all dignity. The pastor is to exercise in his home proper authority with sensitivity and care. Of course, Paul did not mean the pastor's home is a perfect model of home life with no problems. He stressed that a pastor manages his home with dignity, love, truth, and discipline.

3:6-7. The final two qualifications are *"not be a new convert"* and *"have a good reputation among outsiders."* Without spiritual maturity, not necessarily maturity in age, conceit may swell up in a spiritually immature leader's heart. Then the Devil steps in with condemnation, trapping the leader in the grip of trouble, loss, and ruin. Last on the list is that the pastor must *"have a good reputation among outsiders"* (that is, non-Christians). The pastor's good standing and name in the community of unbelievers is important as a witness to them. Consequently, the Devil focuses on setting his trap to bring the pastor and his flock into disgrace with the likely result that unbelievers turn their noses up at the gospel.