



10/8/26

I'm curious to know your thoughts. If I'm being honest, I didn't truly understand the roles of elders in the church until I was on staff and saw how the church is run. I have a much deeper understanding now, but was I just clueless? What about you? How have you seen the roles of the elders and other leaders in the church? And how have you thought about your own role in the church?

*Blessings,
Jonna*

Titus 1:5-16

Why is the office of elder so important? And why are the qualifications for the elders so stringent? This passage is going to tell me why. This is a letter from Paul to a very faithful, godly man named Titus. They had served side by side in the gospel and Paul had now left Titus to serve in Crete, an island in Greece (vs. 5). Pretty to look at, but maybe not so pretty in the heart for many of the believers.

It was Titus's job to go to every church in every town on the island and appoint elders to help run each church. But... that's not something that can be done lightly. If I'm going to boil the qualifications Paul gave to Titus for these elders down to one word, the word is "holy." The elders need to be holy... as the Lord is holy. Holiness is no small thing! Vs. 6-9 tell me what the qualifications are, and vs. 10-14 tell me why those qualifications are so important to protect for that role. Vs. 15-16 tell me what the true heart is for those who want the position without meeting the qualifications.

Vs. 6-9 ~ "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. 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, and disciplined. 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."

Okay... this is a lot like the list of qualifications Paul talked about in his letter to Timothy, but this brings a few extras into it. First of all, Paul gave an overall statement... they must be above reproach. Yikes. That's a lot. It's also important to understand that above reproach means... according to God's standards, not my preference.

Paul still says to be a one-woman man, but here he adds that his children (living in his home) need to be genuine believers, not being wild and disobedient... because that's a sign that the dad isn't managing his household, so how would he manage the church?

Now he speaks to "overseers", leaders in the church. They also must be above reproach because they are "God's stewards." They're not in it for the power or for self-indulgence, using the people for their own greedy purposes. They're in it to serve the living God. Arrogance is out. Arrogance is an abomination to the Lord. No one can serve the Lord genuinely while being arrogant. Being quick tempered is out... Proverbs speaks A LOT about having a quick temper. One such verse is Proverbs 15:18, "A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention." You can't manage a church while causing division and strife in the church. Also, he can't be controlled by alcohol or any substance other than being filled by the Holy Spirit. Clearly, he can't be violent. He can't be in the role just so he can get stuff. That hurts people. That destroys trust.

When an elder or a leader of a church doesn't meet these qualifications, they don't just hurt themselves. They hurt so many people... and some people are so disillusioned by their actions that they leave the church completely and assume this is how God is. The answer is NOT to leave THE church, but to leave THAT church.

The elders and leaders need to be kind and hospitable to everyone, loving what God loves and what He calls good, self-controlled so that they don't let feelings rule their thoughts and decisions, but the word of God is their motivation. They need to love what God loves and hate what He hates. They need to be holy and pure in thought, word and action. And they need to be disciplined, persevering through the hard times, because "If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small" (Proverbs 24:10).

A leader in the church needs to hold to the trustworthy word of God. There will be a lot of questions by people who echo the words of the serpent from the Garden of Eden when they don't like something the Bible says, "Did God really say...?" Leaders in the church need to KNOW what God's word says and make their loyalty to the Lord and His word even when that's unpopular. They need to be able to teach sound doctrine that is solidly based on scripture and not culture or opinion. And they need to strongly rebuke those who contradict what the word says.

Yikes! That sounds harsh! But... when someone is contradicting the word, they are like a person running toward a cliff and taking others over that cliff with them. When confronting someone in sin, our old pastor used to say, "It's more important to me that you and I are friends in 5

years than in the next 5 minutes."

Why is it so important for leaders of the church to be so stringent in these qualifications??? Because Paul was not kidding or being hyperbolic when he said that there would be people who tried to infiltrate the church for all the wrong reasons and to take as many people away from truth as they can. They don't care who they hurt in the process. The overseers and elders and leaders and deacons and all the people who have influence in the church need to guard their hearts and hold firmly to God's word and make the Lord the one they're most loyal to at all times. Vs. 10-14 will give a better picture of the kinds of things they're up against.

Vs. 10-14 ~ "For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth."

There are MANY who are insubordinate... rebellious.

There are MANY who are empty talkers whose words undermine what the Bible says.

There are MANY deceivers trying to lead people away from the truth.

A lot of these people who are NOT above reproach are "of the circumcision party" (Jewish people) but not limited to the circumcision party.

Why do we need our elders and leaders to be above reproach, qualified in all the ways Paul mentioned, especially knowing how to handle God's word authentically? They have to be able to speak into the situation because whole families were being messed with. These people needed to be silenced because they were not speaking for the good of the people or the honor of the Lord. They were doing it all for selfish motives.

They did not have a good reputation. Their own prophets said that "Cretans (people from Crete) are always liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons." Yikes! Paul said, "This testimony is true." 🙄 How would you like to be known for being an evil, lazy liar?

What should the elders and leaders do about it? Rebuke them severely... for a purpose... not to condemn them, but to pray that they hear the rebuke and repent... that they want Jesus more than they want whatever they thought they could get. The goal is that they would turn and be sound in the faith, not getting caught up in myths and manmade rules that cause people to turn from God rather than to Him.

This strong rebuke may sound mean, but enabling the sin is mean. Enabling sin enables more misery in the end, because sin never leads to anything good. Anything that doesn't point me to

the Lord is not worth following.

I need to learn from people who hold firm to the truth of the word, and I need to hold firm to the truth of the word. How will I know that someone is speaking the truth of the word if I'm not studying the truth of the word? The reason whole families are susceptible to being upset by liars who make it sound good but are still lying is that they don't know the truth well enough to recognize the counterfeit.

How many texts and emails do I get in a week that warn me that I owe a bill I don't owe or that I need to get this insurance paid for before it lapses or whatever, and it's a scam? The only way I'll know it's a scam is if I know the truth. They're able to send those emails and they keep doing it to people all over because somebody is buying into the lie. O Lord, please help me to truly know Your word. The effects of buying into spiritual lies are far more damaging than losing money.

Vs. 15-16 ~ "To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work."

All things are pure to the pure in heart. Their reasoning is pure, their motives are pure, their love for the Lord and for others is pure, their teaching is pure, their intentions are pure.

But for those who are polluted and faithless because they have no true faith in God, nothing is pure. Everything they think about and do is motivated by defiled consciences. Let me not be deceived. No one wants to think of anyone like that. We always want to believe that deep down, people are good in heart and have a working, healthy conscience. It's shocking but true that some people really don't. And they know how to dress it up.

In her message for our women's study this week, Christy brought up how a fisherman catches a fish. He puts bait on a hook. The bait is there to entice the fish to bite, but once it chomps down on the worm, it finds a hook in its mouth. That's what happens when we think all people are really good at heart. They declare that they know God... but their works give them away. Their works through words or actions prove that they truly reject Him. Paul calls them detestable and disobedient, unfit... disqualified for any work that would truly honor God. Don't put them in positions of leadership, however small, and do put those in leadership who will speak against the liars.

O Lord, I see here one really important starting point for me... I need to choose to be loyal to You and Your word above all things. I need to be someone who has all the qualities of a leader in the church, not so I can have a title but so that I can honor You. And I need to follow those who have the qualities of a holy, godly leader. This is IMPERATIVE for a church. O Lord, let these be the defining characteristics of our leadership. I know perfection won't come until heaven, but help our leaders to keep their eyes on You, relying on You and Your word for all the doctrine, discipline, and direction of our church, our Kingdom Outpost. Amen.