

Biblical Leadership (Part 2) – 1 Timothy 3:1-7

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1 Timothy 3:1-7. We're in the middle of a mini-series about the foundations of a solid church, because solid churches don't just happen. Just like solid buildings don't just happen. They're *built* on bedrock and *stand* on bedrock. Or they don't stand at all.

And solid churches *inspect* their foundations every now and then. And reinforce them if necessary. Like we're doing in the new CDA building these days. Some of the foundations are being dug up and reinforced. Because the purpose of the building requires it. Just like the purpose of a church requires it.

And one of those foundations is biblical leadership. Elders.

Solid churches are led by a group of elders

Not the pastor alone, not the congregation as a whole, and not a hierarchy of leaders somewhere else. Solid churches are led by their *own* elders. Every church and every town according to the New Testament. (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5) Not that they're the only leaders, but the primary ones. Supported by a group of deacons, and empowering a group of pastors.

And we found last week that it's . . .

- **Based on three primary passages**
 - 1 Timothy 3:1-7
 - Titus 1:5-9
 - 1 Peter 5:1-5

All describing the qualifications and responsibilities of elders.

Elders . . .

- **With three main titles**
 - Elder – a term of authority and maturity
 - Overseer – a term of protection and oversight
 - Shepherd – a term of leadership and care

Three main titles with an emphasis on . . .

• Elders plural

Not a single elder, or solo pastor, but a group.

- Where decisions are made by consensus
- Where each person has an equal voice and equal authority

Not necessarily equal influence, but equal authority.

And last, solid churches are led by a group of elders . . .

• Comprised of men

And men only. Because . . .

- Paul refers to them as husbands
- Paul uses male pronouns
- Paul doesn't permit women to do what elders do

Which is teach men and have authority over men. The two primary *responsibilities* of elders.

None of which means that women are chopped liver or less than. It's simply the way God

has designed and ordained that the church be led. And solid churches trust it and do it. That was Part 1.

Part 2 is a continuation of all that. Starting with the qualifications of elders.

Solid churches are led by a group of elders who are . . .

• Qualified, gifted, dedicated, and likeminded

Leave any one of those out, and the foundation cracks. So let's take each in turn.

They have to be **qualified** according to the three main passages. The most comprehensive of which is 1 Timothy 3.

[1] The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer [elder], he desires a noble task. (ESV) A high calling. A significant role.

[2] Therefore [given such a desire] an overseer must be above reproach [living in such a way that no one can make a legitimate accusation of sin against him], [above reproach, and] the husband of one wife. Which speaks more to his fidelity and devotion than it does to his marital status.

If a man has been married for 20 years to the same woman, but is having an affair, is he qualified? Clearly not. On the other hand, if a man is called to be single, is he *disqualified*? I don't think so. Otherwise Paul himself couldn't have been an elder. Let alone Jesus.

It's a qualification that speaks to a man's fidelity and devotion in life, more than his status in life. But marriage, no doubt, is one of the best ways to *gauge* such devotion. A quality that's crucial for leading a solid church. More on that in a minute.

So v2 again – *[2] An overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded* [as in level-headed and serious about life], *self-controlled, respectable, hospitable* [welcoming], *able to teach* [teach the Word; disciple the saints], *[3] not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.* Not greedy or controlled by it. Put all that together, and he has to be godly.

[4] He must manage his own household well [demonstrating good leadership], *with all dignity keeping his children submissive* [he has to parent well; he can't lower himself to the ways of the world in anger or abdication], *[5] for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?* Lead and manage it?

[6] He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit [pride; thinking he's all that] *and fall into the condemnation of the devil* [the adverse influence of Satan; because pride gives him an opportunity]. *[7] Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace* [shame and humiliation for his ungodliness], *into a snare of the devil.* A means of dragging him down even more.

It's a high calling. With high qualifications and high risk. Risk for the elder and risk for the church. With a few more qualifications found in Titus 1 and 1 Peter 5. All of which are listed and defined on the **handout** you were given. 19 of them. 19 prerequisites to be an elder.

No wonder solid churches are led by men who meet them; men for whom these things are the norm. Not that they're perfect, but striving. In the strength that *God* provides. And the *grace* of God when they fail. Solid churches are led by elders who are qualified.

And, **gifted**. Gifted to lead. Gifted to shepherd. Gifted to attract people and garner a following. Gifted to manage the church and oversee it, v5. Gifted to get their head around the scope of it all. Which means a man might be a good elder in a small church but not a larger one.

What's more, *gifted* elders are able to see over the horizon and cast vision. *Gifted* elders are able to step out in faith and trust the Lord. Gifted elders are able to teach and explain the Word; and defend it in the face of opposition. **Titus 1:9** – *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.* Solid churches are led by elders who are gifted.

And third, **dedicated**. Dedicated to the Lord, dedicated to his Word, and dedicated to the *church*. The church universal and the church local. *His* church. The church in which he worships. The church where he's fed. The church he loves. He has to be dedicated to it. Just like he's dedicated to his wife. Don't miss the connection; the reason for that qualification.

Elders have to be willing to spend and be *spent* for the church. Like Paul. Willing to be inconvenienced by the church. Willing to lay down their life for the church; giving up what *they* want for what the *church* needs. Solid elders in solid churches are dedicated.

And last, they have to be **likeminded**. Likeminded biblically; holding to *the word as taught*. (Titus 1:9) Likeminded theologically; in how they interpret the Word and put it together. Likeminded in their convictions; in how they apply the Word. Likeminded in their perspectives; on life, and culture, and people. Elders in solid churches have a strong chemistry.

Not that they have to agree on *everything*, but most things; the important things. And they certainly can't be at *opposite* ends of the spectrum. Otherwise their unity will wane, their joy will cease, and the church will suffer. It might not be noticeable at *first*, but time will tell.

4 criteria for solid elders in solid churches. Qualified, gifted, dedicated, and likeminded.

Second, and 6th overall, solid churches are led by a group of elders . . .

• **Appointed by other elders**

Appointed. Not voted on by the church; not chosen by somebody outside the church; but selected and installed by the elders *in* their church.

Paul says in **Titus 1:5**, speaking to Titus – *This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.*

As an elder himself, referring to Titus – because he was given the *responsibility* of elders; like teaching *what accords with sound doctrine*, being a good example, and reminding the people how to live (Titus 2:1,7; 3:1) – as an elder himself, Titus was also responsible to

choose *other* elders. Indicating that elders are appointed by elders.

Same for the example of Paul and Barnabas in the Galatian churches they planted. **Acts 14:23** – *When they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.* As the *first* elders of those churches, Paul and Barnabas appointed others. And solid churches do the same. Elders appoint elders.

But not without the affirmation of the church; like when we put the names of prospective elders in the ebulletin to make sure we're not missing something.

And not without a rigorous vetting process; from an extensive application and multiple interviews, to a 6-month trial period where they *sit* with us before we even bring them to your attention. And we certainly don't lay hands on someone apart from the leading of the Holy Spirit.

All of that for just a 3-year term. Because the role is so important, the risk so high, and the responsibility so big. Elders appoint other elders.

Third, and 7th overall, solid churches are led by a group of elders . . .

• **Including the Senior Pastor**

I've mentioned this several times in passing, but I want to be clear. The elder board of solid churches includes the Senior Pastor. He's not an *employee* of the board, he's first among equals. *One* of the elders. *Together* in the work of ministry and leadership.

Anything else leaves the Senior Pastor dreadfully alone, shamefully overburdened, and constantly looking over his shoulder. There are plenty of fightings within and fears without that accompany pastoral ministry, the whims of a separate elder board shouldn't be one of them.

More importantly, there's a *biblical* basis for why solid churches include the Senior Pastor as an elder. It goes like this, three parts.

– **All elders are shepherds**

We saw that last week in 1 Peter 5:2 speaking to elders. *Shepherd the flock of God that is among you*, he said. Implying that all elders are shepherds.

And some of them . . .

– **Some elders are called shepherds**

Or pastors. To designate and call a man a pastor, is to call him a shepherd. By definition.

Ephesians 4:11 – *He [Jesus] gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers [or in Latin, *pastors and teachers*], to equip the saints for the work of ministry.* Pastor means shepherd. And since a shepherd is an elder according to 1 Peter 5, the pastor is an elder.

And third . . .

– **A few shepherds labor in preaching and teaching**

Like it says in **1 Timothy 5:17** – *Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.* Who are the elders who labor in preaching and teaching? Pastors.

So while all elders are *shepherds*, some are actually *called* shepherds. Pastors. Fulfilling their role by preaching and teaching in addition to leading and caring. And therefore, are included on the elder board.

That doesn't however, that *all* pastors on staff are on the elder board. We think it's best to have a majority of *non-vocational* elders on the board, and not all pastors are gifted to serve in that respect. Or have the capacity to serve as an elder. To lead and care for the entire church, as well as preach and teach in their respective ministry. But the Senior Pastor should, and therefore *is* included.

And last, solid churches are led by a group of elders . . .

- **With three main responsibilities**

That's not to say that elders can't do anything else, they just can't abdicate their responsibility to do *these* three things. The first of which, is . . .

- **Establish and oversee church doctrine**

That comes from passages like Acts 15 (2,6,22-23,28-29). Where elders, along with the Apostles at that time, established doctrine at the Jerusalem Council. And 1 Tim 4:6, where Timothy, an elder himself, was *trained in good doctrine* and told to *keep a close watch* on it. (1 Tim 4:16) Oversee it.

And most of the time, per the example of Paul, as he traveled about and planted church after church, that training and establishment of doctrine comes from the Senior Pastor. He's the point of the spear.

Like when we started our church, and I took our elders through the Statement of Faith. I wanted to make sure they were up to speed, on the same page, and knew *what* to oversee. Then we worked through my ordination paper just to reinforce it.

Now, after 20+ years, we continue to spend time in the Word, learning together. And keep our ear to the ground to oversee what's taught *throughout* the church. Not that we look for things wrong, but encourage and support our pastors and directors in all they get right. And invest in them for the future. Sometimes through formal education, and always through discussion, discipleship, and reading.

That's the first responsibility. Establish and oversee church doctrine.

The second, is to . . .

- **Carry out church discipline**

Like in Titus 2:15, where he's told to *exhort and rebuke with all authority*. It's a form of discipline. As is 1 Corinthians 5:13. Where Paul tells the church to *purge the evil person from among them*. The epitome of church discipline.

Is it easy? No. But a necessary means of protecting the purity of the church; and reputation of the church; and fame of God's name in the church.

And it's the responsibility of the elders to both *initiate* church discipline, and carry it out. Because they're the shepherds of the flock, with oversight of the flock.

And third, the third main responsibility of elders in solid churches, is to . . .

- **Provide church direction**

In other words, they lead. They cast a vision and chart a course to get there. They look ahead to anticipate difficulties; or take advantage of opportunities. From buying buildings and purchasing schools, to raising up pastors and sending missionaries. Starting new ministries and expanding others. They provide direction.

And sometimes, it's navigating the stormy waters of our culture. Like Covid. And protests. Riots and unrest. Homosexuality and transgenderism. Politics and elections. Never a dull moment, and never a time when elders can coast. There's too much at stake, and too much to do.

So let me encourage you to pray for our **elders** (photos). Pray for them and honor them. Follow their example and support them. Because they're *keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account*. (Hebrews 13:17) About as weighty as it gets, and bedrock for a solid church.

Prayer – Lord, thank you for the good work you began, and the good work you've done in our church. Setting our feet on the bedrock of your truth, and giving us elders with a heart for you and a heart for us. Bless them and keep them. Fill them and fuel them. And thank you for Jesus, the firm foundation of it all. *The rock on which we stand. In whose name we pray.*

You Are Loved