

# In Search of Shepherds - The Character pt9

REVIEW: By way of review today, I just want to read from the two passages that list out the qualifications of elders. For me to review them all in full, well you would all be here 'til the cows come home. So let's start with 1 Timothy 3:1-7.

- Just a reminder in verse one that any man can seek to become an elder. And that desire is a noble one, as the task is great. Second, the nobility of the task stands in stark contrast to the way we currently find people to run the church. I feel sorry for the church clerk each year as they probably feel like people are running and hiding and jumping out of windows to avoid being cornered and asked to serve in leadership. Big difference between Paul's understanding of this as a noble task, and how we view things today.
- "Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. Now the overseer is to be above reproach (a good reputation), faithful to his wife (a one woman man), temperate (restrained or stable), self-controlled (or prudent), respectable (well behaved), hospitable (caring for others), able to teach (able to instruct gently without quarreling), not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money (generous). He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap."

Titus 1:5-8

INTRO: Today we are going to look at those last two characteristics. Let me remind you again, that these characteristics are not just for elders. It is not like Paul is setting up one standard for regular Christians, and one standard for elders. We are all held to having the same character. Elders are suppose to epitomize these character qualities. Which means, elders are not supposed to be perfect. They may fail in these areas. When they do, because of their strong character in other ways, they are quick to evaluate, and to apologize when it is pointed out to them that they are in the wrong.

We will start in Titus 1:8 - with "holy."

- I. An elder is supposed to be "holy"
  - A. Because we went over holiness earlier this year, most of you should be able to get up here and teach this part of the sermon.

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1. So I am going to pick someone at random and have you tell us all about holiness
  2. Just kidding. But you should remember many of the things we talked about under holiness - so some of this will be a review for you to refresh your memory
- B. When I was in college, between my junior and senior years, my roommate, Daryl Schrock went to Pakistan for a summer long mission trip
1. When he returned he told me of some of the things he experienced
  2. One of which occurred during the observance of Ramadan
    - a) Ramadan is a month of fasting for Muslims which commemorates the first revelation of the Quran to Muhammad
    - b) During that time, Daryl told me he witnessed men performing some sort of a self flagellation where the blood from their self wounding would run down one leg and that side of their pants
    - c) Self flagellation is used not just by Muslims but also has been and still is used by some Christians as a form of beating their bodies into submission
      - (1) It is a way of trying to attain holiness
      - (2) It, in this case, literally beat yourself into submission
  3. It really is a sad thing, because people believe that this will achieve forgiveness for their sins
    - a) It is sad because they believe they can earn forgiveness, and earn holiness by ritual
    - b) There are other misperceptions out there that we need to look at, and or review
- C. Some people think that holiness = perfection
1. I have not known really any Christian that would state this directly
    - a) They all know they are not perfect, and they succumb to sin
    - b) But I have known many a Christian that live as if they expect others to be perfect
      - (1) They praise God on the one hand because they know that God has forgiven their sins and even quote Paul, "I am the chief among sinners"
      - (2) Yet they do not show that same grace they received from Christ to others
  2. Christian that are taught that they need to be perfect in this life usually struggle with guilt and shame when they fail
    - a) So they often respond in one of two ways
      - (1) They rationalize their sin and say that it is not really sinful - that way they don't have to face the guilt

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- (2) Or they just give up trying altogether believing that God can't possibly forgive them
    - (a) And I hope by now, calling this your church home that you KNOW that you are NEVER beyond the reach of God - Amen?
    - (b) If David slept with another man's wife and then had the man killed to cover it up - I think you lose when we play "Who is the worse sinner" - David got you beat
      - i) So does Paul
      - ii) Used to actively and passionately persecute and execute God's people - he got ya beat
  - b) Our eternal salvation, our positional holiness is NOT dependent on good works - it is dependent on the work of Christ
- D. A second way people view holiness is by asceticism
- 1. We mentioned the punishment of the body earlier
  - 2. The other part to asceticism is people living as hermits
    - a) This was very popular in the fourth century
    - b) But we don't have people living as hermits now!
  - 3. We sure do. We just polish it up, give it a "better" biblical rationale and call it isolation
    - a) There are some people that try with all they have to isolate themselves and their families from the world
      - (1) Some will do homeschool to keep their kids from being around sinners
        - (a) And hear me carefully, all homeschoolers are NOT this way
        - (b) But some, very intentionally want to isolate their children from the world
      - (2) When you speak to isolationists about being out in society, it is obvious that they don't want to be too close to the sinners for fear of catching something
      - (3) I even had a parent one time refuse to allow their child to go to a Christian event because they were scared that certain arrangements did not meet their standards
    - b) To be clear, isolation is different than insulation
      - (1) Absolutely, protect your family from sin
      - (2) Put a filter on the internet, watch what your kids are watching or putting in their minds
      - (3) Educate your kids any way you like, home school, Christian school, or public school - whichever they will thrive in and be able to glorify God in

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4. To be clear, this idea of isolation is no different than the hermits of the fourth century that tried to escape society to be holy and escape sin
    - a) The problem with this is wherever you go, the worst sinner imaginable is with you
    - b) That's you!
  - E. Another way people view holiness is self-denial
    1. And some of you may think, "What's wrong with that? 'Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me'"
    2. Here's what I mean - they deny themselves what God has created to be natural and normal
      - a) For example: celibacy
      - b) For those not called to it, it is more of a problem than a help
      - c) We have seen some of the unfortunate fallout over this in sex scandals in various churches
  - F. Perhaps the most common way of trying to seek holiness is by rule making
    1. And again, rules are not necessarily wrong, but when that becomes our unit of measure for holiness, we have given rules a higher place than they should have
    2. This is called legalism - making a rule for every conceivable thing
  - G. Most of us know the reality having studied holiness not long ago
    1. We have been declared holy by the Father because of the Son the moment we put our faith in Christ
      - a) That is called positional holiness
    2. What concerns us for the elder is progressive holiness
      - a) That is the daily walk with God
      - b) It involves commitment, reliance on the Holy Spirit to walk in step with the Spirit of God
        - (1) When we do, we will experience the fruit of the Spirit
    3. One of the ways that is most helpful in this progressive holiness is the renewing of the mind
      - a) Romans 12:1-2
      - b) Philippians 4:8
    4. I want you to try something - take one of Paul's prayers in Ephesians and personalize it by putting in your name and personal pronouns
      - a) For example: 3:14-19
  - H. This holiness that we have studied this year, this pursuit of God, this walking in the way to be like what God has called us to be should be exemplified by someone that is an elder
- II. Our final character quality listed in Titus 1:8 is self controlled

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- A. This is again one of those words that we feel like, “Okay, we get it. Self controlled means...self controlled. It’s not that hard to understand.”
  - 1. And that is true, it is kind of self explanatory
  - 2. However, understanding the word pictures the Bible uses in conjunction with this word gives us a fuller picture of its meaning
- B. There are several words in English used to translate the Greek word: enkrates
  - 1. This Greek word actually has another root which helps us understand the meaning
    - a) It comes from the word for power “kratos”
    - b) So the idea is power that is being held back or restrained by one’s self
      - (1) So while you may have the power to kill or destroy, you exercise restraint
      - (2) While you may have the right to do a thing, you exercise restraint
  - 2. Translators have used the words “temperate,” “self-controlled,” and “disciplined”
    - a) Each has their strengths
    - b) But if I were to choose one, I would go with disciplined
      - (1) The main reason being that the word is often used in Greek when talking about athletic competition
      - (2) While self controlled is a fine translation, self controlled is not as often applied for training toward a goal, it’s more like restraining yourself when the pie is on the table and you want seconds
  - 3. Paul grew up in the town of Tarsus
    - a) It was the most prominent town of the province
    - b) It was an intellectual center that reportedly surpassed Athens and Alexandria in quality of education (which is saying a lot)
      - (1) They had trouble though attracting foreigners or holding onto students as many wanted to study abroad
      - (2) Sounds like school districts today
    - c) It also was a great center for athletic competition
      - (1) Paul grew up around this, so it explains why he used so many athletic metaphors
      - (2) For example - turn to 1 Corinthians 9:24-25
        - (a) The words “strict training” come from the same root word that we are looking at enkrates
        - (b) There is discipline here, there is the idea of a goal that one is striving toward

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- C. Paul gives us a related picture and one that is applied directly to the Christian life in 1 Timothy 4:7
  - 1. Here Paul uses a different word translated “train”
    - a) The word carries the idea of self-discipline
    - b) But this time, the idea of self discipline is applied to godliness
    - c) In fact, the reason the word is translated as “train” instead of “self-discipline” is because the word is “gymnaze”
      - (1) Can you guess what word we get in English from this word?
      - (2) Correct - gymnasium
  - 2. So the athletic metaphor reigns supreme here
    - a) We are being encouraged to exercise our faith
    - b) We will never reach our goal of maturity in Christ without being self disciplined, and training in godliness
    - c) Paul continues in verse 8 that physical training has some value
      - (1) We all know what exercise can do for us
      - (2) We can work harder, we have better stamina, higher energy
    - d) But Paul says that exercise in godliness has even more benefits
      - (1) In this life - how we live, how we can glorify God
      - (2) And in the next life
- D. Humanity and human beings are very complex
  - 1. We are made up of spirit soul and body
    - a) And all of these interrelate to one another
    - b) It is well documented, especially in the counseling profession
  - 2. For example: you remember the story of Elijah
    - a) He had just taken on the prophets of Baal, challenged them to see who the real God was
      - (1) Now the stakes are high in this contest
      - (2) Many in the nation of Israel have fallen victim to the false gods and have been worshipping Baal
      - (3) Elijah is here to turn them back to the One True God
    - b) You remember the story that he laid down the gauntlet with a contest of offering sacrifices to each God, and whoever answers with fire is the true God
      - (1) The prophets of Baal call out to Baal and no answer
      - (2) Elijah even begins to taunt them: Maybe your god is asleep, maybe he has gone on a journey and can't hear you
      - (3) The prophets respond by cutting themselves to show Baal how serious they are

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- (4) In the meantime, after several hours have past, Elijah instructs the people to pour water over his offering - so much water that the ground around the altar has a little moat going on - it is drenched
- c) When Elijah finally prays to God, God answers by sending fire from heaven, and it consumes the water, the offering and everything around it
  - (1) Then Elijah jumps up and basically yells, "Get 'em" pointing at the prophets of Baal
  - (2) And the people put them to death, and turned back to the one true God
- d) Then Jezebel sends word to Elijah that because he embarrassed her and her prophets and put them to death, and turned the people away from Baal, she would see to it that he would die
  - (1) So Elijah takes off running to hide away - about a 125 miles plus a day's journey in about 24 hours
  - (2) Elijah is exhausted
  - (3) Elijah, even after this great victory for God, is depressed, and prays to die
  - (4) God's solution? Eat and rest
- e) You see, Elijah's emotional state was being affected by his physical state
  - (1) This is why I tell you that sometimes, the most spiritual thing you can do is take a nap
    - (a) Not on Sunday morning of course - and not while the good looking guy is going to town on God's Word
  - (2) Even Elijah's spiritual state was affected by his physical state
    - (a) After this incredible victory
    - (b) He is doubting God's ability to keep him safe from Jezebel
- E. So what are some key things to maintain spiritual health? If we want to be self disciplined, how do we do it?
  - 1. The first would be to examine ourselves, and I mean no excuses, no holding back examination of ourselves to see if we are holding on to, or making excuses for sin
    - a) I have heard of people that were living in sin by committing adultery
      - (1) Of course they had the most brilliant justification for it in the world
      - (2) But they were losing sleep, extremely depressed, and could not function at work
      - (3) This person was normally high energy achiever and that was gone

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- b) When he confessed his sin, and refocused himself in his spiritual life, he experience the cloud of depression and sleeplessness lift
- c) Is this not what we have seen in places like Hebrews 12
  - (1) Lay aside every things that hinders us - things that may drag us down to sin
    - (a) If you have self image issues, looking at the perfect world of selfies probably won't help
    - (b) If you have anger issues, driving in Chicago or NY probably won't help
    - (c) And let me add another dimension - if you are a fat Christian
      - i) Here is what I mean: you take in and take in, but you never give out
      - ii) This is the type of person that only cares about what they get out of church, or bible study, or the event you are hosting
        - (1) They look for the next spiritual high
        - (2) They want more people and things pouring into their life
        - (3) And yet, they never give out, they never do something unless they will get something in return
        - (4) They are at best one dimensional Christians - taking in all they can, but never serving and giving out
    - (d) It is completely possible to have extra weight that entangles us that is "Christian" weight - doesn't have to be neutral things or sinful things
  - (2) And every sin that entangles us
  - (3) And then we run the race
    - (a) Another sports metaphor
    - (b) It is a race that involves competition
  - (4) And the motivating factor is fixing our eyes on Jesus
    - (a) That is the focus of our conditioning for godliness
    - (b) That is our goal - our Savior Jesus Christ
    - (c) No person can serve as the one you look to in this contest for godliness
      - i) In the church I previously ministered at, most of you know went through a split.
      - ii) One of the scariest comments I heard during the split was a man that said something to the affect of "He's the best Pastor and teacher I have known. Wherever he goes, I will go."
        - (1) No thought to right or wrong in the situation



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- (2) Just a blind following of the Pastor
  - (a) Which by the way, if any of you follow me that blindly I will yell at you myself
  - (b) I am not God, I am not a Savior - I am a sinner like everyone that was called by God to lead
- (5) Christ is the only Person we should have our eyes fixed on - ever
- F. When we fix our eyes on Christ, and Christ alone, then areas like self-control, and holiness, and all the other character qualities we have gone over will be possible
  - 1. Not because of how great we are
  - 2. But because of how great He is