

In Search of Shepherds - The Character pt5

REVIEW: Welcome back to our search for shepherds. In this series we have been looking at the development of eldership in the Scriptures. We first looked at how the office of elder for the church developed chronologically, and how the office is what we would call a supra-cultural principle. In other words, the office of elder transcends culture - it was not just a Jewish thing, it was the established practice by both Jewish, Gentile, and mixed congregations in the early church.

Since then, we have been looking at WHO an elder is. The Bible puts far more stress on who an elder is than what an elder does. We will get to what elders do later in the series.

There are twenty character requirements for an elder. We have made it through half of them. I will not take the time to recount them all here. With the wonders of modern technology, if you have had to miss any of those weeks you can download the messages, or call the office and ask for a CD. Modern technology is great, because it leaves us without excuses for missing out on teaching at the church.

INTRO: Again, I remind you that as we go through these qualities at a much slower rate of speed, we do this so we will know and understand each quality, and can recognize those qualities in men we believe would be qualified for the position of elder. Not that these men need to be perfect in all of these qualities, but these are things that when we think of these characteristics, we should see these fairly obviously in their lives.

- I. To start us off on our latest characteristic, I want to share with you the story of the life of my great grandfather.
 - A. This would be down my father's paternal side - or my dad's grandfather
 1. My dad never knew his grandfather, as he died when my dad was only two years old
 - B. When you do genealogy, you always expect or anticipate that you will discover some famous people that you are related to, or that you will find someone that did something amazing that may not have made it into the history books, but was amazing all the same
 1. I have already told you that you are all sitting before royalty
 - a) I am the 19th cousin, 4 times removed from Queen Elizabeth
 - b) So if enough people die at the same time, I will be taking over Buckingham Palace
 2. But this story is not one of those great Americans stories
 3. This story is really a find of a scoundrel in the family tree
 - C. His name was Nathan Langley
 1. In total he had been married three times, and divorced three times

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2. I have not found out what happened in his first marriage, and may never because it is on the line of when the state actually kept good marriage records
 3. His second marriage, however, lasted only two years
 - a) He married a woman named Julia in 1894
 - b) By 1896 they were separated
 - c) This is when I began to find newspaper articles telling me why they were separated
 - (1) Nathan evidently had a rage problem
 - (2) The articles said that he would routinely beat his wife, had ripped some of her clothes during altercations, and even choked her
 - (3) Nathan was even arrested spending time in the calaboose (prison)
 4. By 1900 he was married for the third time
 - a) This woman, Rosa, would become my great grandmother
 - b) Now, let me tell you the story of how they met and married
 - (1) Nathan, after getting out of prison started work as a farmhand in a town outside of Decatur, IL
 - (2) At some point he was no longer employed by the farmer
 - (3) Then I find an article that Nathan ran off with the farmer's wife, and that the farmer would make no attempt to bring her back
 5. This is my family tree
 - a) Now, Nathan, we will read between the lines here, passed some of his scoundrelse ways on to his son Glenn, my grandfather
 - b) Glenn after having his family, including my father, would take my dad to the local bar, set him up on the bar, and drink the night away
 - (1) My dad was probably only 5-6 years old
 - (2) Glenn was out of my dad's life by the time my dad was 8-9 years old
- D. I have put this on FaceBook of how grateful I am to my father for breaking the cycle in the family
- E. I tell you this story to introduce to you our first characteristic for today which is "not violent"
- II. What it means to be not violent
- A. The old school word used by some translators is actually a great word, just not used often in today's society is "pugnacious"
1. It means eager or quick to argue or fight
 2. It is anger out of control
 3. That seems to have been, at least for a time, a problem for my great grandfather
- B. It is kind of a bully mentality

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1. I don't know how many of you know Mark Driscoll - he was the pastor at Mars Hill Church in Washington state
2. The stories coming out of there about his behavior as pastor fall along this line
 - a) Stories of bullying board members, and others to get his way, among other things
 - b) His behavior got so bad that other famous pastors, Matt Chandler and others had to write an open letter to him, asking him to step aside and deal with the issues that was driving his behavior
 - c) It took a while, but Mark Driscoll finally did step down, and I believe he sought help - which is how the story should end
- C. I want you to notice it's placement in both places the word is used in the Bible - so turn to 1 Timothy 3:3 (1193); Titus 1:7 (1200)
 1. What is in front of both uses of this word in the Bible. (The only uses of this word, btw)
 2. Not given to drunkenness
 3. Do you think Paul was trying to make a connection there?
 - a) A person that loses control of their senses because of alcohol can also lose control of their senses in anger
 - b) Bar fights because people are drunk and get easily angered are just unheard of, right?
- D. This characteristic is pretty straightforward to understand, so I want to challenge us in another way on this
 1. Even some of the heroes of the Bible could become violent
 - a) Cain was hardly a hero, but he did commit the first violent act against humanity
 - b) Moses killed the guard, and lost his place in the palace, and credibility with the Jews
 - c) David was a warrior, he had Uriah killed, and God wouldn't let him build the Temple because there was so much blood on his hands
 2. This may not be easy to accept, but the Bible is pretty clear that we all have the same potential
 - a) We have a sin nature, and it can lead us to do horrible things
 - b) Jeremiah said it well, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jer. 17:9)
 - c) Allow me to read an excerpt from Gene Getz's book *The Measure of A Man* (p. 140-141)
 - d) That is a terrifying reality that often we dilute ourselves from - that because of sin, we have the same potential
 - e) Praise God for an amazing Savior!

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- E. How do we deal with a pugnacious nature
 - 1. First, make sure that you are not striking out at people verbally
 - a) If you are the type of person that enjoys sharing negative stories about a particular person's behavior, chances are you are getting even with them
 - b) This might be a culturally accepted way to be pugnacious, but you are being pugnacious just the same
 - 2. Use the Bible as your guide to handle personal offenses and forgiveness
 - a) Matthew 18 shows us how we are to approach the person first to work through the problem
 - b) And let's not forget the Bible's encouragement to take the log out of your own eye before tackling the speck in someone else's
 - 3. If you are dealing with resentment or bitterness
 - a) Confess your sin to God
 - b) Pray for God's help in seeing that person or persons as He sees them
 - 4. If your pugnacious nature is really out of control, particularly if you are physically abusing others, seek professional help
 - a) What you have been doing to control your rage has not been working
 - b) You need the help of a trained therapist
 - c) And if you are sitting here, let me remind you of the connection that Paul was obviously aware of in the NT, abusers are like alcoholics
 - (1) Alcoholics usually don't think they have a problem
 - (2) Abusers are the same way, they don't think they have a problem
 - (3) And until they understand that they have a problem, they can't be helped

III. Paul is flexing his logical muscles throughout this list of characteristics, because the next one plays off this previous one - right after not violent is being gentle

- A. Some of you will remember, and he was sort of a hero of mine growing up, the wonderful football coach, Tom Landry
 - 1. Tom Landry, particularly in his coaching days, was the epitome of gentleness
 - 2. Even more so now than back when Landry was coaching, the NFL is known for its share of big egos that often get its players into trouble
 - a) I even read an article, a few weeks before preparing this message
 - b) It ranked the NFL teams by number of arrests it has had
 - 3. Tom Landry had to deal with some big egos and quirky personalities
 - a) Some of his encounters with running back Tony Dorsett were well publicized

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- b) He had two guys on the team, Dwayne Thomas and Thomas Henderson that got hooked on drugs
- c) If you remember Randy White, the all-pro defensive lineman, he said this about Tom Landry, “Hey, I was there when he had a lot of those misfits, and Coach Landry would bend over backwards in giving them a second and even a third chance. That’s two or three more than they’d have gotten from anybody else - or from anybody in any other kind of business. He did it because he has faith in people.”
- 4. But before Tom Landry came to know Christ as his Savior, he was not always this gentle man
 - a) When he played for the NY Giants, Tom was known to be fiery, and even came across as mad
 - b) Landry would be one of the first to attribute this change of lifestyle to his faith in Christ
 - (1) He came to Christ just as he was making the transition from player to coach
- 5. Tom Landry was quoted as saying, “If I have one weakness, it may be that I am too compassionate. I give people a chance to see whether they can turn it around.”
- 6. This the idea behind gentleness that Paul talks about here
- B. Turn to 2 Corinthians 10:1 (1163)
 - 1. Here Paul is appealing to the Corinthians for a change of lifestyle
 - a) They are saying that he is timid when face to face with them, but bold when away
 - b) In other words, they are saying, “You wouldn’t say these things to our face Paul!”
 - (1) And Paul’s point is, “Oh yes I will!”
 - (2) All of this is while Paul is appealing to the gentleness of Christ - using the same Greek word as our character list
 - 2. So here is the point - gentleness does not mean that you will not go toe to toe with someone
 - a) Tom Landry would allow guys extra chances to try to straighten up and fly right
 - b) But when they had pushed far enough, he would hold their feet to the fire
 - (1) A practice that is not common enough in churches nowadays
 - (2) People have stressed grace to the exclusion of accountability often times
 - (3) But grace, nor gentleness is the enemy of accountability

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- c) In Paul's case, he had no problem calling the Corinthians out on what they were doing wrong
 - (1) When they were tolerating a man that was sleeping with his father's wife, Paul called them out
 - (2) He was there to point them back to Christ
- d) Paul was a very gracious man - sensitive, and fair minded
 - (1) But when it came to the truth of God, Paul would not budge an inch
 - (2) Paul would defend himself without being defensive
 - (3) It is one way that Paul demonstrated the meekness and gentleness of Christ
- 3. And even Jesus as our example
 - a) Jesus often turned the other cheek
 - b) But Jesus had no problem going toe to toe with the Pharisees
 - (1) Calling them "white washed tombs" (in other words, you look pretty on the outside but inside you are dead)
 - (2) Or flipping tables and making a whip to drive out the money changers at the Temple
- C. Turn to Titus 3:1-5 (1201)
 - 1. Paul makes sure that we understand that this mercy and gentleness should be given to all people (at the end of verse 2)
 - 2. Paul also gives the motivation for why we are to treat all people with gentleness and mercy in verse 3-5
 - a) We used to be disobedient, deceived and enslaved
 - b) But when God's kindness appeared, God saved us from all of that
 - c) So in other words, the people that we are reaching out to, the ones we are showing kindness to are just like we used to be, and the only reason we are different is because of the grace of God
 - (1) That is the gospel folks
 - (2) We are no better than anyone else in the world
 - (3) The grace of God was revealed to us, and changed us
 - (4) While we may not be able to identify with the depths of sin a person may be trapped in, it is only God's grace that has drawn us out of our own sin
- D. There are some other ways that the Bible describes this gentle behavior - other words it uses as synonyms
 - 1. The first is prautees which is translated as gentle, mild, meek or humble
 - a) Galatians 5:22-23 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."

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- b) Galatians 6:1 “Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.”
 - c) Ephesians 4:1-2 “As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.”
 - d) 1 Peter 3:15 “But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,”
2. The second Greek word is eepios which is translated as mild, or gentle
- a) 2 Timothy 2:24-25 “And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth,”
 - (1) I made sure to include this last one, because it is also a description of the task of elders
 - (2) Correcting those with gentleness so that God may grant them repentance
- E. So we are left with, how do we develop this quality of gentleness?
- 1. While, no doubt, you can meet people that are gentle and don't know Christ, however, knowing Christ is certainly the right first step if you don't already have a relationship with Christ
 - a) Tom Landry would be the first to admit that the changes that happened in his life came about because of his surrender to Christ
 - b) Landry felt an emptiness in his life in spite of of football accomplishments
 - (1) He had read about Christ
 - (2) He eventually determined that if he accepted Jesus Christ, he had to accept what Jesus said, and if he accepted what Jesus said, than he had to change the way he was living his life
 - 2. Second thing, join a Bible study
 - a) We push that here - each person in this church should be committed to Christ's church in three ways
 - (1) Sunday morning worship with the church family
 - (2) A Bible study where you can be known fully, and seek Christ with fellow brothers and sisters
 - (3) And a regular ministry

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- b) The Bible study you join should be a place where you can not only be challenged by the truths of God's Word, but also by loving, gracious brothers and sisters about our lives
 - c) Tom Landry began his search in a 1958 Bible study
 - d) A friend invited him
 - e) He was skeptical at first, but kept going
 - f) Ultimately, Christ changed his life
3. Third, pursue gentleness
- a) Make it a goal of your life
 - b) It is actually commanded - 1 Timothy 6:11 "But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness."
4. Fourth, there will be times in your life when you will need to know how to deal with things gently
- a) These are the times to seek God's wisdom
 - b) Through His Word
 - c) Especially through prayer
 - (1) James tells us that if "any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously..."
 - (2) Later in James (3:17) he tells us that "But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere."
 - d) So if you want that gentle, peaceable wisdom, ask God
5. Finally, evaluate your life
- a) Ask people to help you see times when you are less than gentle
 - (1) Ask your wife or children
 - (2) Ask some good friends
 - (3) If you are in a position over others, ask them to evaluate you, and if you are fair and objective, able to listen to all sides of an issue
 - b) Again, develop a Bible study program with person or group
 - (1) There is no substitute for God's Word
 - (2) It is able to diagnose our hearts far better than we ever could