

7-7-24 Every Good Work (Titus) week 3

Week 3

Text: Titus 1:8-9.

Today we're going to look at the second half of the list of qualifications for Elders from **Titus 1:8-9** and then we're going to take a brief look at the role of Deacons in the church. We concluded last Sunday by talking about vices that overseers are to avoid.

Let's look first at **verse 8** to view the virtues that Pastors/Elders/Deacons and Overseers are to emulate:

1. Hospitable.

- This word literally means, "stranger-loving." The Pastor/Elder/Overseer must be one who is fond of being a friend to those in need. In the country of Crete, it was imperative for believers to offer hospitality because of the persecution that took place, leaving many Christians homeless.
- In addition, traveling preachers needed a place to stay because there weren't many "Motel 6s" around and those that were available were expensive, dirty and immoral. The home of the overseer must be open to the downhearted and discouraged.
- This is not just the responsibility of church leaders as **Romans 12:13** states: **"contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality."** NASB The word **"practice"** here is good because for many of us, we need practice in this area.
- Peter reminds us that when we do open our homes, we must do so without complaining about it: **"Show hospitality to one another without grumbling."** ESV (1 Peter 4:9).
- It is human nature to talk to people that we already know and to hang out with those we consider to be friends. But we must also reach out to those who are strangers to us.
- God can use your home and your hospitality to meet the needs of hurting people. Does your door swing open for those you know and those you don't know?
- Let's try something. Everyone up for a challenge? At the end of service today, instead of talking to someone you already know, look around and initiate a conversation with someone that is new to you. (Yes, you!)

2. A lover of good.

- Church leaders must also be examples of good. This is stated in **Titus 2:7**: **"In all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works..."**
- Aren't you thankful that God loves to do good things for us?
- Some of you may have a difficult time believing that today because of what you're going through.

John Piper's insight: "God will not turn away from doing you good. He will keep on doing good. He doesn't do good to his children sometimes and bad to them other times. He keeps on doing good and he never will stop doing good for ten thousand ages of ages. When things are going 'bad' that

does not mean God has stopped doing good. It means he is shifting things around to get them in place for more good, if you will go on loving him.”

- We’re faced with good news and bad news almost every day. I came across some news that pastors can hear from time to time.
- Good news: The Women’s ministry voted to send you a get-well card. Bad news: The vote passed 21-20. Good news: Leadership accepted your job description the way you wrote it. Bad news: They were so inspired by it that they formed a search committee to find somebody capable of filling the position. Good news: Church attendance rose dramatically in the last three weeks. Bad news: You were on vacation.

3. Just.

- This is also translated as “upright.”

Gene Getz states that the New Testament writers used this word in two basic ways. First, to become “just” describes what happens when we are saved. Second, to be “just” describes the way we live after we are saved. Stated another way, an upright Elder is righteous in all his relationships (“Measure of a Man,” Page 213). The idea here is that an overseer is to be fair and just.

4. Holy

- The root meaning of “holy” is to be set apart.
- EVERY born-again believer is to be progressively growing in holiness as one who is striving to be more like Jesus.
- The model and example for our lives is God himself as **1 Peter 1:16** says, **“Be holy, because I am holy.”**
- A related word is “devout.” None of us can be holy in our own efforts so we must lean on the Lord and ask Him to give us holy hearts. **Exodus 20:8: “Keep my decrees and follow them. I am the LORD, who makes you holy.”**

5. Self-controlled.

- This quality refers to being “level-headed” and sensible of one who is temperate.
- To be self-controlled is to not live in bondage to the desires, passions and appetites of the flesh.
- My body is a good servant but a miserable master. After summarizing what a shepherd is to do in the beginning verses of **1 Peter 5**, Peter describes the importance of this quality in **verse 8: “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”**
- Satan is looking for every opportunity to derail and destroy you.

6. Committed to the message.

- **Read Titus 1:9, “holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.”**
- The phrase “**holding fast**” is very strong. It has the sense of cleaving or adhering to something as if glued to it.
- Godly leaders **MUST** be glued to God’s Word. We can cling to the Bible because it is a “trustworthy message” as **Psalm 111:7** states: “**The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy.**”
- Church leaders are to hold firmly to the faithful Word so that they’re able to encourage believers with the Word of God and refute false teachers who spread falsehood.
- The phrase “**sound doctrine**” means to be in good health and free from sickness. Scripture can keep us from becoming spiritually sick
- Overseers must be declarers and defenders of the Bible as they both lead and feed the flock of God.

The Bible establishes a two-tiered leadership structure in the church.

Pastors/elders, who assume primary responsibility for leading and feeding.

Deacons, who serve alongside each other in various practical ways.

Elders have broad oversight; Deacons have more specific responsibilities. Both are necessary. Let’s look at how the office of Deacon first got its start. Please turn in your Bibles to **Acts 6:1-7**.

We see the problem in **verse 1**. Then we see the solution in **verses 2-6**.

1. Setting priorities.

- There was an immediate response in **verse 2**: “**So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together**” and a clear statement of priorities: “**It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables.**”
- Whenever I read those words, I always stop and ponder them because at first glance they seem a bit harsh. The apostles understood that God had called them to the ministry of the Word and to prayer. Anything that moved them away from that priority, no matter how good or noble or necessary it might be, was a diversion from their divine calling.
- In any church there are many tasks that need to be done. It is tempting to say to the leadership, “Do a little of everything.” That can lead to spiritual disaster. Since the church is built upon the Word of God, leaders must devote themselves to the study and teaching of the Bible. Nothing must be allowed to take the place of this central priority.

2. Making a plan.

- Notice that this plan begins with congregational involvement: **Read verses 3-4**.
- Get others involved. That is what the ministry of Christ is about. All of us use our talents, time and treasure to minister to others.
- God’s design is for all His children to be involved in the running of His Church.

3. Finding the right people.

- Luke tells us that this plan won unanimous approval: “This proposal pleased the whole group.”
- Look at the list of the seven men they chose: “**Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism.**” This list is unique in that all the names are Greek names. These men no doubt knew the widows personally, would have the trust of all the Greek-speaking believers, and would know how to handle any problems that might arise.

4. Commissioning the workers.

- After the congregation selected the seven men, they were presented to the apostles who laid their hands on them and prayed for them. This final step is important because it puts the full weight of the apostles behind the seven men.
- **Verse 7** brings us to the end of this little episode from the early church. Notice first that there is a new receptivity to the message: “**So the word of God spread.**” Second, there are many new converts: “**The number of disciples in Jerusalem spread rapidly.**” Third, there are conversions in high places: “**And a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.**” By God’s grace an interruption that threatened to divide became an opportunity for further growth.

Conclusion

1. There is a great reward serving as leader in the church, whether it’s as a deacon, trustee, Sunday school teacher, youth worker, nursery worker or cleaner. Leaders also **receive “great assurance in their faith,”** meaning that they know their labor in the Lord is not in vain (see **1 Corinthians 15:58**).
2. The natural leadership structure of the church is made up of pastors/elders and deacons. We see this in **Philippians 1:1: “To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and Deacons”** and **1 Timothy 3**. The crucial distinction is this: Elders guide the church, and the Deacons serve the church.
3. Everyone can do something. God has a place for you here because He has given you a unique SHAPE (spiritual gifts, heart, abilities, personality, experiences) for serving Him. You have been won to Christ in order to work. That’s God’s plan for the local church. A few serves as Elders and Deacons and most serve in other ministries, but everyone can and must do something. Your ministry matters and you’re needed on this team. **Romans 12:14: “Now the body is not made up of one part but of many”** and therefore each of us must play our part. What’s even more important than “doing,” however, is “being.” And our character is only cultivated by feeding on the Word of God.

In his book called, “Courageous Leadership,” Bill Hybels writes: “The local church is the hope of the world and its future rests primarily in the hands of its leaders...The outcome of the redemptive drama being played out on planet earth will be determined by how well church leaders lead.

Romans 12:8 tells those of us who have the gift of leadership that we better sit up and take notice,

we better lead with diligence. Why? Because the church, the bride of Christ, upon which the eternal destiny of the world depends, will flourish or falter largely based on how we lead...leaders must yield themselves fully to God, they must cast powerful biblical, God honoring visions. They must build effective, loving, clearly focused teams. They must fire up Christ followers to give their absolute best for God. And they must insist with pit bull determination, that the gospel be preached, the lost be found, the believers equipped, the poor served, the lonely enfolded into community...and God gets the credit for it all” (Page 27).

Would you be willing to pray for our church leadership?

Would you be willing to pray for those that are lost and need Jesus?

Would you be willing to be used to further the gospel of Jesus?

Are you here today and don't know Jesus the Christ as your Lord and Savior?

Sought after (Isa. 62:12) Precious in his sight (Isa. 43:4) A new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) Not condemned (Rom. 8:1) Forgiven (Col. 1:14) Loved (1 John 3:1) Accepted (Rom. 15:7) A child of God (John 1:12) Jesus' friend (John 15:14) Free (John 8:36) The temple of God (1 Cor. 6:19) God's treasured possession (Deut. 7:6) Complete in Christ (Col. 2:10 NLT) Chosen (Col. 3:12) Called (2 Tim. 1:9) An ambassador of the Most High God (2 Cor. 5:20) God's masterpiece (Eph. 2:10 NLT) Able to do all things through Christ, who gives you strength (Phil. 4:13) More than a conqueror through Jesus, who loves you (Rom. 8:37)

Last week we looked at. Sought after and precious in His sight.

This week, A new creation in Christ, Not condemned, forgiven.