

Servant Qualifications Part 1- Nigeria 2019

Dear Lord, we do thank You for this afternoon. We pray that you use it to guide us to greater understanding, that You use it to convict us with Your word, that You let us consider the things that we should be doing, the things that should be the pattern of our lives. Lord, we thank You that You do not leave us blind, but instruct us. May You instruct us this afternoon, amen.

In that last session I talked about what it meant to be a servant and in this session I want to talk about what is required to be a shepherd because the qualifications aren't separate from the work. God tells us this is what you must be like in order to be qualified for the work. Now, some might say we are already elders and pastors, but you need to recognize this is your duty to be like this as a testimony to the church of what it means to be an elder. Biblically the concept of an elder goes back to the Old Testament, it's the picture of someone more mature than those around them. When we think of the qualifications, these are the qualifications for what the leader of a church should look like, not like a child, but a full grown man. This is the description of what a full grown man in the faith looks like. As I go through these, I want you to consider how they apply to yourself and if you find that you're not qualified, repent of your sin and fix the issues. You will be held accountable to the example that you give to your flock. There's two sections of Scripture that give qualifications, 1 Timothy 2 and Titus 1. This afternoon I want to walk through Titus 1 and for the sake of time I will start in verse 5. "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you." This is Paul writing to Titus and he's saying he left him in Crete because he had other uses for him, so he could set in order the things that are lacking and appoint elders in every city. The church is lacking something serious when it's lacking faithful pastors and elders. In this verse we see the importance of having pastors and elders because Paul is saying he is going to sacrifice things for his ministry in order to fix things that are happening in the churches he planted in the past. So he's saying this is what the church needs, men like this. Verse 6, "If a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination." When we think of the idea of being blameless, it does not mean without sin. I think in 1 Timothy it says 'above reproach'. That means you have to be a mature man of God. If you're the pastor, but there's other men that are more mature than you are, things are turned upside down. The elder is supposed to be that mature man of God and here I know you split elders and pastors, but as Paul goes through the description, he's talking about both the roles you are speaking of. A pastor and elder have to meet these qualifications, you need to be blameless. Blameless means other people can't say that you have an area of sin that they don't have. That means a man in one church could qualify as being above reproach, but he goes to another church where the people are more mature in the faith and he's not qualified there because there he could be reproached, he could have people come up to him saying why are you raising your children this way, why are you doing this? If the people around you are looking at your life and they say this is not a mature man of God, then you're not qualified. This is a really important idea, pastors and elders are not perfect men, but inherently when stepping into the pulpit and stepping into leadership of the church, you are saying to follow me as you follow

Christ. You are saying you are setting the standard for this church of what it looks like to follow Christ. It is a terrifying responsibility, but it's one we should always keep in mind as we minister, we are telling the people even without using the words, we are telling people to follow us. Understand your sin is likely to be multiplied in the congregation. The pastor who has a wandering eye for the ladies, that will populate in the church because everyone will know the pastor is not going to call them on it so they will do more than the pastor did. We see this as the pattern in Scripture. Abraham lies about Sarah when they go to Egypt and says she is his sister. She was his sister, but she was also his wife. His son then goes and takes his wife Rebekah to Egypt and he says she is his sister, but she wasn't his sister. His sin was multiplied of his father's sin. This is how sin works. If you give an excuse to sin, it's like yeast, it grows. That's how sin works and a pastor that has sin, whether it's greed, whether it's lust, whether it's pride, all these things your church will follow you. If you want to deal with the sin in your church, deal with the sin in your own heart because you are telling the church to follow you as you follow Christ. They are sheep, they are made to follow, even if you are leading them in the wrong direction. Sheep follow shepherds, your sin will become their sin. You have to be blameless which doesn't mean sinless, but when you think of the narrow path that leads to life, you have to be further down the path so when people follow you they will be further down the path. Be blameless. Now Paul's going to say specific areas you need to be blameless in. First in the husband of one wife. The Greek for this doesn't necessarily mean you have to be married, what it really means is that you only have eyes for one woman, that in your marriage you are not looking around for someone else. We can all figure out how important this is for an elder. It's easy to lead a young woman into sin, it's easy to manipulate women in your church to sin. God says before you are appointed to be an elder or pastor, this is a basic thing, are you satisfied with the wife that God has given you? When we think of the tenth commandment against covetousness, covetousness can be about all things like money, but the main thing is to not covet your neighbor's wife. The man whose eyes are wandering for a woman who is not his wife, is inherently coveting another man's wife. A man who has a wandering eye in the church should not be in the pulpit. It's a very serious problem all throughout the world, and I think it's a serious problem in Nigeria as well. I know the stories I was seeing on the way over here, about trading sex for grades, if it's happening in universities, it's happening in churches. Churches are the light to the world just like the pastor is the one who sets the standard for the church. If the pastor is not setting a godly example for the church, the church is the light of the world. The reason you get grades for sex in the universities is because the church already said it was acceptable. The best place to stop it is before the man becomes an elder or pastor. And the way to detect it is to know if he has a wandering eye. When a young lady walks down the street, do his eyes follow? The eyes go before the other actions do. As soon as a pastor's eyes start to wander looking at women, those girls who are in sin have control of the church. Protect the church. A man who is always chasing women should not be at the pulpit. Then it goes on to say, "having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination." As an elder you have a certain authority in the church, it's a real authority, but it's a weaker authority than a father in the home. If you started to hit your congregants with a rod, you would probably be removed as an elder, but God says if a father doesn't do that then he hates his children. A father is given greater authority over fewer people, but if he can't exercise that authority correctly, if he can't exercise that authority to be a blessing to his children, because the blessing to his children is

two things. One is that their sin is constrained, not that they are saved because we can't save our children, that's the work of God, but we can constrain their sin. The proper use of a father's authority is to constrain the sin of his children and if with the stronger authority of the rod they couldn't constrain sin, then with the weaker authority of an elder they're not going to be able to constrain sin. That's why you look at their children, it's a testimony if they are mature because the sign of a mature Christian is that he is shining forth light and the darkness is fleeing, which means that he is constraining sin. You don't hand the keys to the church that doesn't handle the rod that he has been given as the father correctly. One of the aspects is to constrain sin, the other is to constrain insubordination. The basic relationship between man and God is that we are in rebellion to God, that is the wide way, rebellion to God. He is to have his children showing him honor, not so he can say how great he is as a father, but it's a blessing to them to show honor to their father because if they can show honor to the father that they see, then you are teaching them to show honor to the Father that they can't see. Looking at how a man deals with his children testifies to whether he will produce healthy sheep because healthy sheep are sheep that aren't destroying themselves. A shepherd that allows his sheep to wander into brambles, to get all torn up, that's a lousy shepherd. A shepherd that can't get the sheep to follow him, that's a lousy shepherd and if he is terrible like that with his children, he will be terrible like that with the church. Again, he will teach the other men in the church to do that same and the culture will become more rebellious. Sin will run more rampant in the culture and instead of the church being a beacon of light, the church will end up spreading darkness. This is why God set standards for elders and pastors. Verse 7, "For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money." That word 'bishop' is 'eskipos', which is the Greek word that means 'to look over'. This is the role of an elder or pastor, it's to be watching his flock for sin. Guess what sin you're not going to see? The sin that you are blind to in your own life because to see it in the other person is an accusation to yourself. Again, an overseer, one who is supposed to be checking over and looking after the flock, they must be blameless as a steward of God. Remember what I said before, the point of being appointed as a pastor or elder is for you to produce healthy sheep. That's the same thing Paul is saying to Titus, it's crucial for you to recognize they are not your sheep, a steward is someone who is faithful with someone else's things. If you think they are your sheep you might be interested to see how much money they can give or so that there are many people at events, all kinds of things that are not for their sake but for your sake. One of the requirements for an elder or pastor, that he recognizes that he has been given stewardship and that it's not your property, it's God's property. The Jews said it was their property, they said they would kill the son and keep the vineyard and God wiped them out. Don't be the same. It is key for you to recognize your place in God's kingdom. It is being a steward of God's sheep and not your sheep. Some of the signs that you're not a faithful steward is being self-willed, thinking your way is how things should be done. A man who is not willing to hear from God that is not saying what is God's will, but is saying this is what's right in my eyes, what's best for the sheep is not what God said to give them, but to give them what I think they need, that is a self-willed man. That's a man who believes the sheep are his and not God's and a man who should expect the judgement of God. Don't put someone like that as an elder. Die to yourself if you are like that, it's not too late to repent. As I go through these things, you are elders and pastors and maybe you're not qualified, but repentance is where you start. Are you a steward of God's

sheep or are you a thief that's broken into the sheep's fold. If it's all about you, you are a thief that's broken into the sheepfold. Another sign that you are not a steward of God is that you are quick-tempered. If you lose your temper easily, that means that you are protective of who? The people who are quick-tempered are protective of themselves. They might say it's their personality, no it's not, it's pride. Let's start calling it by the right name, someone who gets angry easily is a proud man because the reason you're angry and lose your temper is somebody offended poor little you. There is a place for righteous anger, but righteous anger is when God is offended. Righteous anger is when you are protecting the reputation of God and that takes time to determine. That's not quick, you need to judge why they are acting the way they are. I was preaching from Jeremiah yesterday and Jeremiah says he is filled with fury, but that's because he warned them again and again and again. Righteous anger is associated with patience, unrighteous anger is associated with quickness. Unrighteous anger is because of your pride. Do you get angry easily? Deal with your anger. That's not the way to bless sheep. Yes, there is a place for anger, such as when Jesus flips over the money tables and drives them out with a whip, but that's because the zeal for His Father's house ate Him up. It was about God, not about them. If you see a man that's quick-tempered, he doesn't belong as an elder or pastor. If you're quick-tempered, deal with your sin. Don't just excuse it, don't just blame it on God saying that it's just how you are. Do you understand when you say this is what you are like, you say to God how dare He make you that way? It's your problem, you deal with your anger. Again, the sheep will follow the shepherd. If it's ok for you to yell at your wife they will think it's ok to yell at everybody. Sin multiplies with yeast, with leaven. The next is, "not given to wine". When we think of not given to wine, I know the church in Nigeria is very opposed to alcohol so it's probably easy to find men that have never drunk to put into the pulpit, but we shouldn't make the application that narrow. The reason people drink to the point of drunkenness is to escape reality. You can escape reality with alcohol, you can escape reality with drugs, but there's other ways that people escape reality. They go stare at their television for eight hours a day or they don't want to deal with the reality around them and they want to put themselves in an alternate reality. It's all the same sin, it's all the same root, they don't want to be in the world that God created. They want to be in a different world. If you want to be in a different world, you're not going to want to deal with sheep. Someone who is a true pastor understands what sheep are like, sheep are pretty filthy, they soil themselves, and pastors have to deal with that. They hurt themselves and they damage themselves and you have to bind them up. They bite, frequently they bite their pastor, they bite other sheep to try to get them to bite their pastor. If you are saying you want an elder who wants to escape from the world, he's going to end up sitting there watching television instead of loving the sheep because it's really hard work to pastor sheep. It's really hard work to make sure they have clean water. It's really hard work to deal with the trouble they get into. So if a man wants to escape the real world God has created and go into this fictionalized world where everything gets fixed in an hour, where in the end the guy always gets the world, all the lies that are said in television, the real world is the opposite. Sometimes things take twenty years to resolve, sometimes you have to go witness to someone for decades before they are saved, sometimes you have to confront someone in their sin over and over again. You don't want an escapist in the pulpit, you don't want someone who doesn't want the real world, that wants a world where the girls are pretty and the men are handsome. That's what television feeds you. Maybe you don't get drunk, but ask yourself if you want to escape. What's

the best world in existence? It's not that television program that you love so much, it's the world God created because He is perfect and every single thing He does is perfect. If you don't think that this world is exactly how it should be, that all things are working together for good to those who are called for His purpose, then you have made the world about you rather than about God. The world is perfect because it's doing exactly what it was created for. Don't want to escape from this world, God has given you plenty to do. It says in Ephesians 5 to redeem the time because the days are evil. Television is a way to instead of dealing with the evil around us, we think we can escape it by staring at a box. I guess now a lot of people stare at their phones, but it's all escapism. You can escape with Facebook. On Facebook everything is wonderful, no one ever puts up pictures of their argument with their wife, it's as unrealistic as those television programs. Want the real world. That's what an elder needs to want, the real world with all it's work, sin, and problems because God hasn't called us to escape, He's called us to work. The next is, "not violent". The person who is angry all the time, and there's the person who is quick to get angry and the person angry all the time, this is contrary to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace and when we think of what He does as the Chief Shepherd, He takes His sheep to greater peace. As King of the world He says the increase of His government and peace will have no end. Violence is the opposite of peace, a man of God promotes peace. Do you promote peace within your church? Do you promote peace between brothers and sisters in the church? It's hard to keep sheep from fighting with one another and if you're quick to fight, the congregation is going to be quick to fight. They follow the shepherd. "Not greedy for money". I'm going to stop after this one so we have time for questions. The man of God who is greedy for money is going to set the tenor of the church. Everybody in the church gets to be greedy for money. The quickest way to get everyone in your church to stop tithing is to be greedy for money because if you're greedy for money they will be greedy for money. If they think their life is about money, why would they give it to the church? Greed for money is like leaven and it spreads through the church. In Nigeria it's really easy to use poverty as an excuse for greed of money, but in Matthew 6, it says with your food and clothes to be satisfied with that because God in heaven clothes the lilies of the field. In Job it talks about He feeds animals even in places where men have never gone. In all of that we should be satisfied with just food and clothing. God gives us much more, He blesses us much greater than that, but a person who is greedy for things, a person that's greedy for money, he's instilling sin in the church. The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. No elder is qualified to be an elder if his heart is towards money because Jesus Christ also said in the Sermon on the Mount that you can't serve two masters. You will love one and hate the other, you cannot serve God and mammon. If you are greedy for money it is impossible to serve God. That's what Jesus Christ said, He knew what He was talking about, never should a church appoint a man greedy for money because it means the church will not serve God. If you serve the carnal things of this world, you will not serve the spiritual things of this world. They are at tension with one another, you have to choose one or the other. If you are an elder that's greedy for money either repent or resign or expect the fierce judgement of God on you because He loves His church and He will destroy false shepherds.

Questions

1. Just as God told Ezekiel that if there is any problem that is befalling a nation, he should tell the people. Does that work in our time?

In Acts 2, it says He put a spirit in the Old Testament like Ezekiel or Daniel, but it's not like that in the New Covenant. Now it's that every Christian has that Spirit, with His Holy Spirit going into everyone in the church so everyone in the church has the responsibility to be a watchman, to warn those of the wrath to come. So the same Spirit is expanded, it's not narrowed.

2. Can one be separated from salvation after repentance?

Not after true repentance. Jesus Christ says all that the Father gave Me, there is no one that can snatch them out of My hand, or someone. We can't even snatch our own salvation out of His hand. It says that no one can resist the will of God, it is by His will that we are saved and it's by His will that we are sustained. No one can resist His will. Later I'm going to preach on John 3:1-6, which says the Spirit blows where it wills, it's the mercy of God that we're saved, it's the mercy of God that we're sustained. If we have true repentance we cannot lose salvation.

3. He works for money, but he does not love money.

Let me give you two examples. The one is Abraham, he loved God and he's given the promise that the Messiah will come from him. He was a very wealthy man, but he didn't love money because if he loved money, then he didn't love God and we know he loved God, even though he had lots of it. Another example is Jesus Christ, He didn't even have a place to lay His head. Rich and poor, neither of which have anything to do with if you are of God or not, it's whether we are faithful. If you are faithful in business, God promises in Deuteronomy 28, that your bread basket will always be filled. Not because you profess faith, but because you lived according to the law of God. The law of God produces plenty, but that doesn't mean you love money, it means the love of God can produce wealth, but whether He gives or not, we are still to love God. If you notice what I'm doing, I'm giving you much longer answers than you are asking for. I don't want it to be my opinion, I'm pointing back to Scripture because that's what pastor's have to do and that's what I am trying to be an example of here.

4. Is it good for a pastor or an elder of a church to say to the people to do what the Bible says, not what I do. Or to say, do as I say, not as I do.

If it's said as an excuse for the pastor not to repent, then it's evil. If you say to follow Scripture, but not follow me and I sin in this way and you need to hold me accountable to this sin and you stand before the church and admit you are a fallen man and ask them to help in all humility, it can be a good thing. It depends on where the heart is.

5. As an elder in his house and the church of God, some of his own children he can't control. So when is it out of his hands? His children are 14 and down.

There's two aspects of it, what's the rest of the church like? Is your church filled with rebellious children? It's a difficult problem that requires your repentance to start with and I would actually

say your answer to that was that most other families are in better shape than yours, my answer is that you should resign as an elder. If the rest of the church is like that, there is a point where you should call the whole church to repentance. You need to repent to your children because you have sinned against them by not constraining their evil. You need to work to show true repentance. I'm going to say some very hard things. You may even have to increase discipline in your home in such a way that the 14 year old leaves so you can save the younger children. Which is a really hard message to give to a father, but you have to love your children and Proverbs says to spare the rod is to hate the children. You have to constrain the evil of your children. An old enough child might say they're not putting up with it and turn to other options, but trust in the Word of God, it says to despise the rod is to despise the child so you need to show love to your children even though to start is very difficult when you have been allowing rebellion. If the children are still in your house, you should put them out of your house. Let me explain. The reason I said that is there are two areas of authority that I want to talk about that are related to the family. They are the family itself, you are their father. Your authority changes if they are in rebellion. A forty year old, you can't use the rod. There's another authority, as the head of a household. Because you control the house, you have a responsibility to constrain the sin in the house and if you allow the sin to run rampant you are telling your children that sin doesn't matter. When I said put them out, I didn't mean with absolute, 'You're gone', what I meant is, 'If you stay here you have to do this and this. You can't do this or this' and if they refuse to then you need to stop providing for them. That's what I meant by put them out. We have to think of sin as a serious matter in the eyes of God, especially with those who profess faith. If they're in the situation you described and they're not renouncing their faith, they're adding to their blasphemy of God. God considers blasphemy of His name a very serious thing. The third commandment states that He will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain. I have unbelievers that live with me, one is my son, but other people have lived in my household and the answer was that if they violated certain rules of the household then they are gone. It doesn't matter, their sin is too serious of a matter to ignore. We need to think of it as the wages of sin is death. To summarize my answer, do not consider your relationship with someone more important than their soul. It's really easy to do with children, to consider your relationship with them more important than their soul. If their sin doesn't affect the relationship with you, you're prioritizing their relationship with them over their soul. If you're more worried about their carnal well-being, then you're more worried about their flesh than their soul. Our primary concern with our children has to be with their soul. This applies not to just our children, but to every relationship. Are we more concerned about their comfort or more concerned about their soul? Christians always have to prioritize the soul.