

Subject: *Qualifications of Church Leaders, Part 1*

Scripture: *1 Timothy 3:1-7*

A mother went in to wake up her son one Sunday morning, “Rise and shine, it’s time to get up and get ready for church.” He rolled over and said, “I’m not going today.” “Why not?” “Two reasons: they don’t like me and I don’t like them.” His mother said, “Now you listen to me. You’re going to go and here’s why: number one is you’re 45 years old, and number two, you’re the pastor.”

THE ROLE OF A PASTOR

The pastor has a role to fill. The Bible uses three words to describe the role of pastor:

- Bishop (*episkopos*, overseer) – describes his management and oversight
1 Peter 5:2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof.
- Elder (*presbuteros*, elder) describes his spiritual maturity
He must be a mature Christian, not a new convert
- Pastor (*poimen*, shepherd) describes his ministry of caring for God’s flock
He is to lead, feed, and protect God’s people.
- The pastor must be called by God

Being a pastor is not a profession; it is a calling. Dr. Adrian Rogers used to say, “Ministry is the worst profession, but the highest calling.” To me that means if you’re not called to it, you will be miserable. But if you are called to it, you will be miserable doing anything else.

What is the call of God? The call is described in 1 Timothy 3:1, “If a man desires the office of a bishop, he desires a good work.” The call of God is an intense desire to serve the Lord as a pastor. I believe God calls men to the ministry, and I believe God calls men to a particular church. I’m thankful to say that I’ve never doubted my call to preach and I’ve never doubted my call to LBC.

I question whenever I hear that statement, “I surrendered to preach.” Sounds like the Lord took a man against his will. When God wants you to do something He gives you the desire and the ability to do it. ***Philippians 2:13*** *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* Charles Spurgeon said, “The first sign of the heavenly calling is an intense, all-absorbing desire for the work.”

THE REQUIREMENTS OF A PASTOR

Someone wrote an article titled, “Qualifications of a Good Pastor”: “A good pastor must have the strength of an ox, the tenacity of a bulldog, the boldness of a lion, the wisdom of an owl, the harmlessness of a dove, the industry of a beaver, the gentleness of a lamb, the versatility of a chameleon, the vision of a hawk, the hide of a rhinoceros, the perspective of a giraffe, the endurance of a camel, the stomach of a horse, and the disposition of an angel, and still, he could not please everybody.”

The Bible doesn’t make unreasonable demands of the pastor, but there are some qualifications he must meet. There are 16 requirements found in 1 Timothy 3:2-7.

Vs. 2 - blameless – not sinless, but he is not a stumbling block. No one can blame him for a life that contradicts the message he preaches. He practices what he preaches. Spurgeon wrote about a certain pastor. It was said of him that he preached so well it was a shame he ever stepped out of the pulpit, but he lived so poorly that it was a shame he ever stepped behind it.

Vs. 2 – husband of one wife – (lit. a one-woman man) – this doesn't mean he has to be married, but if he is married, he must be deeply committed and faithful to one wife.

Vs. 2 – vigilant – watchful, alert for himself and his people; ***1 Timothy 4:16*** *Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.*

Vs. 2 – sober – sober-minded; serious about spiritual matters; clear thinking

Vs. 2 – of good behavior – this goes along with his role as the husband of one wife; respectable, honorable (literally, organized, orderly)

Vs. 2 – given to hospitality – generous, friendly (literally, one who loves strangers)

Vs. 2 – apt to teach – this is the only qualification to do with what he does; everything else has to do with who he is; his main responsibility is to feed the flock by teaching the Bible

Vs. 3 – not given to wine – not attending wild drinking parties; not hanging around the wrong crowd; in New Testament times they drank wine, but it was diluted with water; in our day, there is no need for wine and we should completely abstain from any kind of alcohol.

Vs. 3 – no striker – not violent, but mild-mannered; he should not be violent with his actions or his words

Vs. 3 – not greedy of filthy lucre – he should not love money

Vs. 3 – patient – gentle

Vs. 3 – not a brawler – not one to argue or quarrel

2 Timothy 2:24-26 ²⁴ *And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,* ²⁵ *In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;* ²⁶ *And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.*

Vs. 3 – not covetous – not greedy for financial or material things

Vs. 4 – one that ruleth well his own house – rule means manage. Why do the pastor's kids misbehave? They hang around the deacons' kids. If a man can't take care of his own family he can't take care of God's family.

Vs. 6 – not a novice – not a new Christian; a reason for this qualification is that he could be lifted up with pride and fall into condemnation just like Satan (Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28).

Vs. 7 – must have a good report of them which are without – He must have a good testimony in the community. That includes paying his bills and being a good neighbor.

A man must meet these requirements before he becomes a pastor, and he must maintain these requirements as long as he is a pastor. Some of the requirements have to do with his personal life. Some have to do with his family life. And some have to do with his public life.

Only one of them has to do with his work or what he does. Most of them deal with his character and his example. The pastor's greatest ministry is his personal example. People would rather see a sermon than hear one.

Would you hire someone to mow and landscape your yard if his own yard looked like a hay field? Would you trust someone to be your fitness trainer who is 100 pounds overweight? What would you think of a dentist who had rotten and missing teeth?

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF A PASTOR

What does God expect a pastor to do? We don't have time to develop this part of the message. Some of the main responsibilities are praying, preaching and teaching, leading, training and equipping, administrating and organizing, ministering and caring for people in need, and evangelizing.

There's a question Paul asked and I often ask: "Who is sufficient for these things?" Only by God's grace can we live and serve in a way that pleases Him.