

**Letters From My Father**  
**Week 7**  
**1 Timothy 3:1-7**  
**"The Pastor"**

**Introduction**

**Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to give recognition to those who labor among you and lead you in the Lord and admonish you, and to regard them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13**

If the letters to Timothy were to be taught in a college course, they very well could be entitled: Church 101. For in them, The Apostle Paul carefully lays out the way that a church must conduct itself, both in doctrine, as well as, in organizational structure. Our LORD is a God of order, and He expects His Church to be both organized and effective. The Holy Spirit enables us to fulfill our mission of evangelism and discipleship, and as such, He equips each member with specific spiritual gifts in order to fulfill the Church's "Great Commission".

After instructing Timothy as to the roles of men and women, specifically commanding that God has commissioned men to take the lead in corporate worship with women fulfilling a supportive role, Paul then goes on to elaborate on the qualifications of those who are chosen to lead the church. The office of Elder/Pastor carries with it the daunting responsibility of guiding the congregation in a manner which is pleasing to The LORD. And therefore, God specifically chooses or "calls" those whom He pleases to fill such an office.

It has been said that one of the great spiritual mysteries of the church is that God chooses imperfect and sinful men to lead His people. And while this is certainly true, it is also true that God holds these men to the highest of standards. After all, a man who is enslaved to his own sin cannot possibly lead others to freedom. Jesus was clear on this matter. And He warned those who would endeavor to assist others that they must first deal with their own transgressions.

**"...Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the splinter out of your eye,' and look, there's a beam of wood in your own eye? Hypocrite! First take the beam of wood out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to take the splinter out of your brother's eye."**  
**Matthew 7:4-5**

To be a pastor over God's flock is a tremendous responsibility, and therefore, it should never be taken lightly. Paul had sent Timothy to Ephesus armed with the charge to get the church back on track. And Paul knew full well that if Timothy was to be effective in his endeavors, then he would need to lead by example. As a famous preacher once said, "I'd rather see a sermon, than hear one any day." To any who would presume to teach and lead in the Church, they too much set the example for following Christ in their everyday lives. And they must be fully cognizant of the fact that the enemy will do everything within his power to lead them astray. This is the reason that so many men have fallen into temptation and have thereby lost their effectiveness.

So let us look together at the qualifications for the men who are called to shepherd over God's flock. And knowing the rigorous demands of the calling, let us also be encouragers to those who exercise this authority over us. For they have a great deal for which to answer. *The Bible* command us to:

**Obey your leaders and submit to them, since they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account, so that they can do this with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.**  
**Hebrews 13:17**

According to The Scriptures, the man of God is required to demonstrate the Marks of (godly) Character. He must properly maintain his Marriage and lead his Children by his example, and he also must possess sound Maturity and be a good Citizen of his community.

**Marks of Character (vs.1-3)**

**This saying is trustworthy: "If anyone aspires to be an overseer, he desires a noble work." An overseer, therefore, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, self-controlled, sensible, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not an excessive drinker, not a bully but gentle, not quarrelsome, not greedy.** **1 Timothy 3:1-3**

Paul begins the discussion of pastor qualifications by saying that anyone who aspires to lead a congregation "desires a noble work". The Greek word translated "aspires" in the CSB is *oregomai*, and it describes a straining and stretching to reach toward something. No one is truly qualified to be a pastor, but God uses the foolish things of this world to confound the wise (**1 Corinthians 1:27**). And He uses weak and frail men to do His work here on earth.

I am reminded here of Enosh, the descendant of Seth, son of Adam. *The Bible* tells us that one of Seth's sons was named "Enosh". His name means "frail man". Now, look at what *The Bible* says about him.

**A son was born to Seth also, and he named him Enosh. At that time people began to call on the Name of The LORD.** **Genesis 4:26**

I love that verse! Now let me tell you why. It serves to remind me that I too, like Enosh am a "frail man". And if I am to have any hope of making any lasting difference in this world, then I must call upon the Name of The LORD! So you see, it isn't the wise or the strong that God chooses to do His will. It is the frail man, who stretches and strains to reach for God! To desire the position of Pastor/Elder/Overseer (the names are used interchangeably in the *New Testament*) a person must always realize that apart from Christ we can do nothing (**John 15:5**). It is most certainly a "noble task", and it takes the power of a Noble Christ in order to complete it.

Paul continues by saying that those who long to be an overseer (*episkope* in the Greek) must therefore be "above reproach". The word in the original language (*anepiliptos*) literally means, "unable to take hold of". In short, Paul is saying that if a pastor were to be accused of any wrongdoing, no evidence could be found to convict him. Pastors are called to live a life that is innocent and above reproach. It does not mean that pastors are sinless, but it does mean that we all are required to strive for this type of holiness, to live a godly life in the sight of all men.

After telling Timothy that pastors are to be blameless, he goes on to describe the personal traits of those who are promoted to the office. The list of personal attributes is rather exhaustive, as well as, demanding. For God requires high moral character among those He calls to lead within the body.

**Not many should become teachers, my brothers, because you know that we will receive a stricter judgment.** **James 3:1**

A careful study of Paul's list of qualifications or *marks*, if you will, shows exactly how the man of God is to conduct himself. In the verses that follow, we see the things that he should be, as well as the things that he should not. First let's discuss the marks of personal character that a pastor should possess.

**1. The husband of one wife.**

Many have attempted to take this Scripture and turn it into something that it is not. First of all, Paul is not requiring all pastors to be married, for Paul himself was a single man (**1 Corinthians 7:8**). Therefore, a pastor does not have to be married in order to serve. Neither should he have to remain a single man (shout out to Roman Catholicism).

It is also not a debate on "divorced clergy". *The Bible* provides clear Scriptural grounds for divorce (such as adultery and abandonment), and therefore, it would be contrary to Scripture to declare a person having Biblical grounds for ending their marriage to be excluded from the ministry. The original Greek text here declares that a man who would be above reproach must be a "one woman kind of man". Therefore, Paul is describing a man who is true to his wife. He is not an adulterer, nor does he have a roving eye. There are many men who have never been divorced

who do not honor their wives in such a manner. But if a man desires to be a shepherd of God's people, he must remain true to the woman with which he shared his wedding vows. It has been my experience that a man who would cheat and be unfaithful to his wife will have no problem being unfaithful to anyone else! To be a leader in the church, you must be a "one woman kind of man."

**2. Self-controlled** (*Nephaleos* in the Greek, meaning *sober*)

The pastor isn't to be controlled by his passions, including becoming susceptible to wine or other alcoholic beverage.

**3. Sensible** (*Sophron* in the Greek meaning *sober-minded*)

The pastor should be as sober in his thinking, as he is in his drinking. There are many difficulties that arise in ministry, and any pastor who would navigate the treacherous waters of ministry must have a good and clear head upon his shoulders.

**4. Respectable** (*Kosmios* in the Greek meaning *well ordered*)

This word is where we derive our English word Cosmos. And just as the universe is maintained with a prescribed order, we too are to conduct our lives in an orderly and sensible manner. We live in a way that causes those around us to respect our personal discipline.

**5. Hospitable** (*Philoxenos* in the Greek meaning *lover of strangers*)

The pastor must love those whom he does not know, longing to share Christ with them, meeting their spiritual needs, as well as, the physical. He is open and available to share with whoever comes his way.

**6. Able to teach** (*Didaktikos* in the Greek)

The pastor must be able to teach God's Word in a manner in which all who hear can understand and obey. The teaching of God's Word is his highest calling. But he will not be able to be effective in his teaching, if he cannot control his personal life. If a person is to lead others, then he must do so by example, or no one will pay heed to his teaching.

After this list of superlatives or "marks of character", if you will, Paul goes on to say what a pastor cannot be. He cannot be a drunkard, a bully, argumentative, or greedy (**vs.3**). He is to be gentle and kind, displaying the same kind of patience with others that God has shown him. After all, no man ever *deserved* his salvation. It is a work of God's grace. And if this grace has been afforded to us, then we must offer this same grace to others. **For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23)**. And these are the marks of character that must be observed in the life of everyone who is called to preach God's Word.

**Marriage and Children (vs. 4-5)**

**He must manage his own household competently and have his children under control with all dignity. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of God's church?)** **1 Timothy 3:4-5**

Not only must the pastor be true to his wife as a "one woman kind of man", but he is also required to be the priest of his household. No one knows a man better than his wife and children, and if they do not see him living out a godly lifestyle daily in their presence, then they will not submit to his leadership. And if a man cannot lead his own family in the ways of Christ, how can he ever hope to lead God's people?

If you really want to see how genuine a man's faith truly is, then take a close look at his home-life. For a godly man will have a godly influence upon those that he loves. If a Believer's children reject the faith, it is a very good indicator that true faith was not being lived out in front of them. It is, therefore, the

primary responsibility that a pastor spend adequate time with his own family in order to have a Christ-like influence upon them. Many churches place such heavy burdens upon their leaders, that their home-life suffers as a result. But to be *Kosmios*, “well ordered”, is to understand the balance of church work and family.

I am firmly convinced that if Christ is lived-out in front of a person’s children, then they will long to follow Christ in their own life. But sadly, many who profess to be Christians are legalistic and harsh in their dealings as opposed to loving and admonishing. People are drawn to the love of Christ, but they run away from taskmasters. Any who would be gentle and filled with grace in his dealings with God’s people should practice these traits at home.

Believers tend to beget other Believers. If you cannot convince your own family of the riches found in Christ Jesus, how then will you ever hope to compel strangers to follow Him? The ministry is not a “Do as I say and not as I do,” kind of life. But rather, it is, to live out what we believe in our every day lives. This not only applies to pastors, but to everyone who professes the Name of Jesus. Or as Paul himself would say: **“Imitate me, as I also imitate Christ.” 1 Corinthians 11:1**

### **Maturity and Citizenship (vs. 6-7)**

**He must not be a new convert, or he might become conceited and incur the same condemnation as the devil. Furthermore, he must have a good reputation among outsiders, so that he does not fall into disgrace and the devil’s trap. Timothy 3:6-7**

There is a reason that pastors are called “elders”. It is important to walk with The LORD for a long period of time before attempting to lead others in their walk. Timothy was a young man (approximately mid thirties), when Paul appointed him as the minister of the church at Ephesus. But young as he was, he had been Paul’s apprentice for over fifteen years. I can imagine no better mentor, other than Christ Himself! The message here is clear. Make sure that a person spends a great amount of time in The Word, before they presume to teach The Word.

I once heard a famous *Bible* teacher in response to an older man in the audience who said, “How can I learn my *Bible* as well as you.” The old pastor replied, “You’re about forty years too late!” For you see, in order to teach The Word, a person must spend large amounts of time in the study of The Word. And it takes years to be able to not only know it, but to be able to share it with certainty and clarity, with a well established knowledge of sound doctrine. False teachers twist The Scriptures to make them say what they want to hear, but the man of God has surrendered Himself to not only know The Word of God, but also to know the God of The Word.

Paul warns that a novice teacher very well may succumb to the temptation of thinking that he is something when in fact he is nothing. Thus causing him to promote himself, rather than Christ. This is the same mentality that got Satan kicked out of heaven! So, when we ordain a man to teach us, we must first make sure that he has had sufficient time being instructed at the feet of The Master.

After stating that a pastor must possess spiritual maturity, Paul then returns to the issue of personal character. Not only is the pastor required to live out his faith before his church and his family, but he is also compelled to live it out in the community in which he lives. A pastor must live as a good citizen, as well as, a good Christian. He must pay his bills on time and conduct all his dealings in a manner worthy of respect.

Now, of course, we know that if we profess Christ, many will despise us for it. And some may even invent accusations to malign our good character. But we must conduct ourselves in such a way that no one has any *genuine* accusations that they may use against us. When David sinned so publicly with Bathsheba, the prophet Nathan warned him not only of the personal consequences of his sin, but also the potential damage he caused within the nation. He told the king that the Name of God was being blasphemed because of him. May it never be said of us that people see our bad conduct and use it to slander our God. We, as leaders, as well as servants of Christ, must live our lives above reproach; in our churches, in our homes, and in our community. We need to live Jesus out loud. So that all who see us... will see Christ in us!

And let His people all say... TRUTH!