

Titus 1:5-9 The reason I left you in Crete was so that you would set in order the things that were left unfinished and appoint elders in every city, as I directed you. ⁶Such a man is to be blameless, the husband of only one wife, and to have believing children who are not open to a charge of wild living or disobedience. ⁷Indeed an overseer, since he is God's steward, must be blameless, not arrogant, not quick-tempered, not a drunkard, not violent, not eager for dishonest gain. ⁸Instead, he must be hospitable, loving what is good, self-controlled, upright, devout, and disciplined. ⁹He must cling to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he will be able both to encourage people by the sound teaching and also to correct those who oppose him.

When I was a circuit pastor in Wisconsin, I had the privilege of leading quite a few call meetings when congregations were calling for pastors. There is a survey that is sent out so that the district president can get an idea of the needs of the congregation. That survey also tells you a little bit about that congregation. I remember one person putting down that the single biggest issue facing the congregation was getting something in the church kitchen fixed. Thankfully they were the only person to mention that.

Almost without fail I could predict who the congregation was going to call, at least for the first two or three times. I don't have supernatural powers. I'm just a student of human nature. The person who will be called will be the youngest person on the list because they're cheap. Everyone wants a pastor who has been out for four years but somehow still has 25 years of experience. Such a person does not exist.

I heard about someone who got a call where the congregation demanded that they must make certain number of new converts every year. Apparently the people themselves felt they didn't have to be involved. Also they seem to feel that the pastor must be able to do things that only the Holy Spirit can do. That call was returned with an encouragement to study the doctrine of the means of grace and the doctrine of the ministry before they place another call. Today we see what God expects. See God's Qualifications for Pastors. We will see what he can never be and what he must be.

After Paul was released from his first imprisonment in Rome, he went to the island of Crete which is in the Aegean Sea, just south of the Greek mainland. He took along Titus. He was a man that Paul brought to faith and later became one of his co-workers in the ministry. Their relationship was so close that Paul referred to him as his son. That's why he could entrust him with this very important work.

Paul was needed elsewhere but things were still a bit chaotic on Crete. New congregations had been founded, which was wonderful, but they lacked any kind of leadership. So Titus was supposed to act kind of like a combination Seminary professor and circuit pastor. He would go around and train leaders and make sure that their teaching was in keeping with God's Word.

So naturally the question comes up: what kind of person may be a pastor? Paul gives an extensive list here. The first is "**blameless.**" Really every other qualification that he lists are just different ways that their blamelessness shows itself. Clearly that word cannot be a synonym for sinless. If it was, then he could not have appointed anyone in Crete and there certainly wouldn't be any pastors today either.

The word in Greek basically means that no fault can be found with him. He is above reproach. The phrase we often use is that no grievous public charge can be held against him. I had a friend in the ministry who cheated on his wife once. He confessed his sin and didn't try to blame anyone else. I was thrilled to be able to remind him that Christ forgave that sin too. Nevertheless, that sin made him no longer eligible for the ministry.

That leads us into the next qualification "**the husband of only one wife,**" literally a one woman man. That doesn't mean that he couldn't get remarried if his wife would die young, but it does mean that he should be completely devoted to his wife. After all, if he can't be devoted to the person who is absolutely closest to him in this life, how in the world will he be devoted to his congregation?

Tied in with that is that he must "**have believing children who are not open to a charge of wild living or disobedience.**" That is something I was very concerned about when my children were little. Pastors' kids often had a reputation for being a bit out of control. That is one of the great challenges of the ministry: trying to balance your pastoral responsibilities (which is not a nine to five job) along with your responsibilities as a husband and a father.

A pastor definitely cannot be "**arrogant.**" The Greek word literally refers to a person who is only interested in pleasing himself. He doesn't care about anyone or anything else. Sometimes people level that accusation against pastors, not because they are actually arrogant, but because they are telling them something that they don't want to hear. It's not my way or the highway. It's God's way or the highway.

He must not be "**quick-tempered.**" You probably know people who are. They can go from the sweetest person on earth to the spawn of Satan in the snap of your fingers. The ministry is chock full of things that will

try your patience. We want to imitate our Savior who didn't even strike back when he was being whipped and crucified. I'll never be able to show that level of patience, but I sure can try.

He can't be **"a drunkard."** You would be surprised to know how many people have been absolutely shocked to know that I have made my own beer. What? You? A pastor? Yes, me, a pastor. There's a difference between having an alcohol-containing beverage which God gave for us to be enjoyed, and being controlled by it. It's a slippery slope. So I keep a close eye on myself so I don't head down that destructive path.

The next thing is **"violent."** That word describes someone whose first response to conflict is to put up his dukes. Now, there have been plenty of people whose smug smile I would have loved to knock off their face, but I didn't do it. I just heard on the radio on Friday about a pastor somewhere who was on a flight with his wife. She got upgraded to first class but he didn't so he yelled at her, used profanity, and flipped her the bird. Is that the man that you want as your spiritual guide? Is that going to bring anyone closer to Christ?

The last one in this list is that he must not be **"eager for dishonest gain."** I saw one TV preacher say how God put it on his heart to buy a private jet. Imagine how much more ministry he could get done? Back in 1987 Oral Roberts said that God would "call him home" unless he raised \$8 million in the next three months. Apparently God is in the extortion business now. He got his money, but God certainly didn't get the glory.

Paul wrote to the Philippians, **"Indeed, let this attitude be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. ⁶Though he was by nature God, he did not consider equality with God as a prize to be displayed, ⁷but he emptied himself by taking the nature of a servant. When he was born in human likeness, and his appearance was like that of any other man, ⁸he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross."** Jesus is the example for all believers to follow. His humble service inspires our humble service. Nowhere should that be more evident than in the lives of pastors—the under-shepherds of the Good Shepherd.

See God's Qualifications for Pastors. We have seen what he can never be. Now we will see what he must be.

There are three different terms that Paul uses to describe pastors who were to be serving God's people in the various churches. The first is **"elder."** That name doesn't necessarily imply that a pastor must be old, but I'm resembling that remark more and more with each passing day. It shows that a person with that title is worthy of respect. He doesn't demand that people respect him. He earns that respect by the way he lives.

The second term is **"overseer."** Just like a shepherd keeps a watchful eye on his sheep to make sure that they have enough to eat and drink and that they don't go wandering off, so also a pastor is going to make sure that his congregation is well-fed with God's Word and through Baptism and Holy Communion. He will be watching over the congregation, not like he is some kind of spy, but with the love and concern that a faithful father would have for his dearly loved children.

The last term is **"God's steward."** You could also translate steward as "manager." Back at Paul's time a rich person would have his most trusted servant be the manager of his business. He knew that the work would be carried out faithfully. In the same way, God calls on pastors to be managers of the congregation in spiritual matters. He makes sure that he is carrying out his work faithfully. He guides and directs God's people as we walk together on the road that leads to heaven.

So in the previous verses Paul lists all the "don't dos" for pastors. Now he lists the things for us to do and to live. **"⁸Instead, he must be hospitable."** That Greek word literally means someone who loves strangers. You can't be a pastor if you don't legitimately love people, not just the people who love you back, but even the people who are very hard to love. After all, if our Savior loved them enough to die on a cross for them, then they are certainly worthy of our love too.

Tied in with that, a pastor is to be **"loving what is good."** He is constantly doing things that are prompted by Christ's love for him. I found out this week that I'm going to have to do one of the difficult things of the ministry. I won't get into the details, but I told my wife, "I'm actually kind of excited about this." To which she replied, "I can tell." It's not going to be "fun" strictly speaking, but it is a great way to show God's love. A pastor's heart moves him to step out of his comfort zone to serve God's flock.

A pastor must be **"self-controlled."** That word is somewhat similar to the word **"disciplined"** that comes up later. This word basically means that the pastor knows himself. He recognizes that he is a sinner. He knows what sins he will be most tempted to commit, so he will avoid situations where he might be tempted. Sometimes it's the difference between knowing when to speak and knowing when to shut up.

Obviously he needs to be **"upright."** That word is normally translated as **"righteous."** Often when that word is used it describes how God made us righteous through Jesus' perfect life and innocent death. Through

the Word and Sacraments he made us believers and keeps us as believers. In this context it is describing the kind of lives we lead because we know what our Savior has done for us. His love is reflected in what we say and do.

In that way, the word “**devout**” is similar too. The difference between this and the previous word is that here it describes that the way a pastor lives is not just how he is naturally responding to God’s love. It is planned. It is thought out. When I wake up in the morning, I want this to be a day that I live in perfect love for God and his people. I know I’m going to fail. I know I’m going to need to pray for forgiveness at the end of the day, but that’s still my goal.

Last in the list is “**disciplined**.” That means that a pastor’s new person will be in charge instead of his Old Adam. The ministry is a job where no one is keeping watch over what you do 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You have to be a self-started and a good manager of your time. I don’t do this because I’m afraid someone will notice. I do this because I want to live for the Savior who lived and died for me.

Remember that these are characteristics that God is looking for from all of his people. It’s not like the members of the congregation can be violent, but the pastor just has to stand there while his nose bleeds. With the exception of blameless, God wants us all to not to be arrogant money grubbers. He wants us all to love what is good and be dedicated to him. The pastor is to serve as a model for his fellow Christians to imitate.

In the last verse Paul writes, “**He must cling to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he will be able both to encourage people by the sound teaching and also to correct those who oppose him.**” A pastor is to be a vehicle to bring God’s Word to people. My main job is to point people to the cross of Christ. I could be the best speaker in the world, but if my people don’t know Jesus and what he has done for them, then I am a miserable failure.

I use the Word to encourage people. What could be more encouraging than to know that Jesus took away all of our sins, welcomed us into God’s family, and is preparing a place where we will spend eternity with him? I also use that Word to correct people. I don’t want people to believe because I say so but because God’s Word says so. People might not appreciate being corrected, but I’m pretty sure they will thank me when we are standing together in heaven someday.

See God’s Qualifications for Pastors. We have seen what he can never be and what he must be. Maybe when people read these verses they might think, “If all this is true, who would ever want to be a pastor?” As someone who has been there and done that, I think, “Who wouldn’t want to be a pastor?” You’ve got the best boss in the whole world and you can bring the best news ever. It doesn’t get any better than that.