

## Titus 1:5-9 Leadership in the Church of God: Management that Produces Order (part 2)

### Character

In v. 5 we see Paul's command to Titus: **"This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order . . . and appoint elders in every town as I directed you."** His first concern is the appoint of leaders to manage the church of God. And this is for the purpose of order. But Titus mustn't appoint just any person, only a person who is, according to both vv. 6 & 7, "above reproach." His concern is with a consistent godly character that accords with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Last week, we looked at the elder and his management of his home, his relationships with his wife and his children. Today, we will consider the elder and his character. Look at vv. 7-8: **"For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined."** As I shared last week, I take these words with great seriousness. Again, this week, I look inward first and preach these words to myself. And let me say as I said last week, these character qualities are not merely for the elder. They are for EVERY Christian. Concerning elders, he is saying, "Make sure they are mature, above reproach, in these areas before you call them." With this in mind, I would like simply work my way through these qualities of character and then transition as we take the Lord's Supper. Five are given as commands NOT to be or do something; 6 are given as positive commands. Let's begin.

1. Not arrogant. This word can also be translated as not self-willed. An arrogant person thinks of himself first, before thinking of others. This is a selfish person. This person is often overbearing because when you speak with him/her, they spend about 99% of their time telling you about their life and their problems and stories that interest them. They are not really interested in what is happening in your life. And at the end of the conversation, you may think, "I'm glad that's over." I think this quality is so important in our relationships. It really has to do with NOT being selfish. Brothers and sisters, in EVERY relationship, EVERY the goal for the Christian is to do good to others! In every meeting we have, every relationship we encounter, we must develop the heart attitude of considering the other person first. And when we do this, we will not be arrogant or self-willed.

2. Not quick tempered. Another translation here is "not easily angered" or not "hot-headed." You know the person, the smallest things in life set them off, traffic jams, rainy days, waiting in line, the restaurant getting their order wrong, someone saying something he/she disagrees with, etc. I am not talking about "righteous anger" as Jesus displayed in turning over the selling tables in the temple. I am talking about things in life that should never set us off in anger. One of my best friends often reminded me of Psalm 119:165: **"Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them."** (KJV) Now, you might say, "I'm ok here. I usually keep my peace." But, as with everything else, we must go straight to the heart. **"For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks"** (Matt. 12:34).

3. Not a drunkard. We see the same thing in 1 Tim. 3:3 in the context of elders and then in 3:8 for deacons, **"not addicted to much wine."** In some contexts, the abundance of wine is seen as a great blessing. But, the abuse of wine is a sin. And the concept here, moves beyond just alcohol,

and includes the misuse of substances in general. Paul gives us the alternative in Eph. 5:18: **“And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit . . .”**

4. Not violent. The KJV translates this word as one who “strikes.” This can be a reference to hitting another person with your fist. Or, “striking out” with one’s words. This person is quick to speak and ready to fight. I picture the Apostle Paul before he came to Christ. In Acts 22:4, concerning his persecution of Christians, he says, **“I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women . . .”** Paul was a bully . . . one who violently persecuted the people of God. In our context, an elder must not be such a person. Instead, the opposite must be true. Jesus says, **“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called Sons of God”** (Matt. 5:9). Also, let me say that often these three characteristics go together. The one who abuses alcohol or other substances is usually quick to be angry and violent.

5. Not greedy for gain. This quality has to do with the elder’s heart and actions toward money and power. In 1 Tim. 3:3 Paul says, “not a lover of money.” This was apparently a big problem in Crete, and among those who aspired to be elders. In 1:11 he says, **“They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.”** And v. 12: **“One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own , said, ‘Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.’”** When we look at our own culture, I believe this is often what we see with pastors, and among leadership in the Christian world. And, I have even heard this said of pastors in our Baptist churches. But, it must not be so with the elder. And let me also say that it must not be for Christian. 1 Tim. 6:10: **“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.”**

Now, we turn our attention to the positive commands. It is not enough merely to NOT do certain things and act in these ways. The elder must also be a man that exhibits certain qualities that represent mature godliness. Now, this is not a comprehensive list, but again, a snapshot of Christian maturity.

6. Hospitable. He begins with hospitality. This must be true of ALL of us! Peter says, **“Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.”** But, this must be especially true of the elder. I believe this truth begins with the family of God, as we welcome other Christians into our homes, those who live close by and those who are travelling through. We experienced this first-hand when we lived overseas. Often, Christian visitors came our way. But, hospitality extends further to the love of neighbor. Brothers and sisters, this is SO important! Our homes must be an open door to Christians brothers and sisters, and to the world! We might even say that God has given us our homes for this purpose: to love our neighbor as we do ourselves.

In Africa, this is the ONE thing that gained the most respect from our poor brothers and sisters. Kristen and I were CERTAINLY not rich. We had the barest of furniture, no television, no washing machine. But, compared to our brothers and sisters, we were RICH. But, we did not care what it looked like to them. We had an open-door policy. And, later, we were told, it was this quality that gained the most respect and love from our neighbors. Brothers and sisters, are you hospitable? Do you often invite others to your home in order to make disciples? I cannot stress the importance of this for the elder and for the Christian in general. Hospitality is an

opportunity to show love to our own and to strangers. It is an opportunity to do evangelism. It is the perfect venue for making disciples. And also let me say quickly that hospitality is a great venue for accountability, for your own godliness. Why? Because people are always in your “mess.”

7. A lover of good. God is good! Therefore, elders must love that which is good, in both men and the world. And a love for what is good must translate over to doing good. Paul relates doing what is good with knowledge. Rom. 15:14: **“I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another.”** Gal. 5:22-23: **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”** Phil. 4:8 is a great commentary here. **“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”**

8. Self-controlled. The KJV translates the word as “sober.” It can also be translated as “wise.” Paul says the same thing to Timothy as he considers the qualifications of elders. This person is not rash or foolish or headstrong, but one who governs his passions and affections. This person thinks before he speaks; doesn’t react quickly in anger or emotion with the many day to day situations providence brings. (See also Tit. 2:5, 12; 1 Pet. 4:7).

9. Upright. This word is translated as “right,” “fair,” “righteous,” or “just.” I think of Ps. 1 when I think of such a person. **“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.”**

10. Holy. This is the same word used for God. God is holy. But, because He is holy, we are also commanded to be holy. Now, we are not like God in this sense. Now, He does from one perspective, make us “holy” in Christ. Rom. 15:16 says we are “sanctified” or “set apart” by the Holy Spirit. But the meaning is for the elder (and us) is close with “upright.” This person lives according to God’s Word and it is evident in his life.

11. Disciplined. This word can also be translated as “self-controlled,” and it certainly includes this, but it goes further to include discipline. For without discipline, there will certainly be consistent failure in these qualities we have just seen. It has been said that it takes twenty years to build a reputation, but only five minutes to destroy it.

There is much here and much more can certainly be said. And as I have already shared, I take these words with the utmost seriousness. Often, in our elder meetings through the years we read these words from 1 Tim. 4:6-16: **“If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. The**

saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. Command and teach these things. Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.”

When I read these truths, I feel the weight of being an elder. I am sure our other elders do as well. Our continuing in godliness is so important for us and for you. I believe God has designed the relationship between elders and the flock in such a way that as our sanctification goes, so does yours. As we go, so do you. As your elders, we are much more than your examples. Brothers and sisters, there is such a weight I bear, we bear. But, I want all of you to know that I bear, and I believe your elders bear this weight with great joy and with great gladness. When I consider the sin in my own life, and when I consider your sins (which are hard to hide in our context over the past 12 ½ years), I/We press on! For **“our hope is set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.”**

As we transition into the Lord’s Supper, turn over to Titus 2:11 and look with me. **“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.”**

Brothers and sisters, we are great sinners. But God is a greater savior. And we remember his words, **“This is my body broken for you.”** He speaks of the cross. He “gave himself for us.” He laid down his life, though he did not have to. Nor was he compelled. He freely said to the Father, **“I will go! I will do your will!”** And as the sacrificial lambs were laid down in the OT, so the Lamb of God laid down his life. And in his death, God judged the Son. And all the wrath and anger that our sins deserved, fell upon Christ. And his sacrifice was enough! For he was the sinless Son of God. And then to justify all of these things, He rose from the dead. He conquered death and hell (for us) and now he sits at the right hand of God until all his enemies are made his footstool.

As we consider these words for elders, we must remember, these commands are found elsewhere for all Christians. And as we consider our sins, we look unto Christ, knowing that ALL of them have been judged in Christ. And ALL of our sins fall under the blood of our Lord Jesus! (I urge you today, if you are not a Christian! Repent! Look unto Christ! Trust Him! Believe the promise of God that if you come to him, he will not cast you out. Where we find repentance and faith, we find mercy and grace and salvation.