

Introduction

A few weeks ago, we looked at the three costliest hurricanes, and they were all in 2017. Those were the costliest in dollars. Last week we looked at the costliest tornado that hit the U.S., which was in Joplin, Missouri in May 2011. Those were the costliest in dollars. I believe that lives are more precious than property. If we look at the costliest in terms of lives, the Great Galveston Hurricane on September 8, 1900 was the costliest. It is considered the deadliest hurricane in U.S. history. It claimed between 8,000 and 12,000 lives. There was such total destruction on that island that they could not get anything more than a very rough estimate.

The Great Galveston Hurricane of 1900 was the deadliest hurricane to ever hit the United States and caused between 8000 and 12000 deaths. The storm reached the Texas coast south of Galveston on September 8 as a Category 4 hurricane with a storm surge of 8 to 15 feet. The lack of warning and the high storm surge caused this storm to have the highest death toll of any United States hurricane.

We do not know what kind of spiritual storm hit the island of Crete, but it was enough for Paul to make a special trip there with Titus to survey the situation. After being released from prison in 63 A.D., they went to the island of Crete. Paul left the island to go spend the winter in Nicopolis, but he left Titus in Crete to set in order what remained. Titus' first order of business was to ordain elders in every church. These elders were to silence certain men who had upset families. These false teachers had taught certain things for the purpose of sordid gain. I think there are some of those same preachers today. They had focused on controversial things, and their lives were characterized by disobedience and detestable actions. What the churches in Crete needed were godly leaders, whose lives adorned the gospel, who led by example, and taught sound doctrine. Paul quickly identified the need for the right kind of leaders, godly leaders.

Last week we looked at the office of elder and the calling. We saw that there were five fingers that pointed to the calling of a pastor. We covered four of those, but held off on the final finger, which is the qualifications of an elder. Our text today is verses five through nine, which is where Paul gave Titus the things to look for in a man when considering him for the office of overseer. If a man did not have these things in place in his life, he was either not called, or it was not the right time; the man needed more seasoning. This morning, we will begin to look at these various qualifications or requirements. There are three main requirements: a man must be above reproach in his family, above reproach in his character, and he must be a man of sound doctrine. This morning we will cover being above reproach in his family life. Let's read our text.

(Titus 1:5-9) "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, {6} *namely*, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. {7} For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, {8} but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, {9} holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict."

Qualifications Of An Elder – Part 1

1. Above Reproach In His Family
2. Above Reproach in His Character

1. Above Reproach In His Family

The outlines in Titus 1 and 1 Timothy 3:1-8 are similar, yet there are some differences. In 1 Timothy, Paul includes requirements about being able to manage the affairs of God's household. In Titus, Paul does not give any specific requirements about being able to manage; his focus is on character and sound doctrine. In Titus, he is looking at the qualifications of an elder, and that is all about spiritual maturity and character. In 1 Timothy, he is looking at the qualifications of an overseer, which is the same office, but a different aspect of the office, and he looks at some of the management considerations. But, in both accounts, character comes before any other requirement.

In Exodus 18, Moses was settling disputes all day every day. He was about to wear himself out and Jethro, his father-in-law, gave him advice to appoint elders. Jethro's emphasis was on character. He wanted men who fear God, men of truth, and those who hate dishonest gain.

(Ex 18:21) "Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place *these* over them *as* leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens."

In Acts 6, when the church needed deacons, the apostles told the church to find seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom they could put in charge of serving the widows. Again, the focus was on character. God is looking for men of character to serve in His house. God wants capable men, who can manage and preside over His house. God wants men of the word, who can exhort with sound doctrine and refute others. God's first concern is always character.

(Acts 6:3) "Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task."

God is concerned about character for a number of reasons. First, we saw in our study of Genesis that God made us in His image (Gen 1:26-27). We are to represent Him and He is a holy and righteous God. He wants leaders to properly represent Him. In a similar vein, our lives are to adorn the gospel message. Paul said that bondslaves should adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect. None of us are slaves in the literal sense, but we are God's servants, and our lives are to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect. Last week in explaining the various offices, I mentioned Peter's charge to the elders. He told them to shepherd God's flock with the right mindset, right motives, and the right methods. My focus was not on Peter's message, but the various words he used for elders. Peter told elders not to lord over the flock but to prove to be examples to the flock. Elders are to be examples of these character qualities. The Greek word for example is *tupos* (Strong's G5179), which means a die that is cast. It comes from *tupto* (G5180), which means to strike. The life of an elder is like a die that leaves an exact impression on the lives that they touch, so it is critical that their lives are in the image of Christ. In addition to this usage, *tupos* is also used as a statue for a hero in a public place for people to look up to and to emulate (Acts 7:43). *Tupos* is also used as a pattern, when describing the pattern that God gave Moses for the tabernacle (Acts 7:44). The flock needs to be able to use the life of an elder as a pattern to copy. things that were put up for heroes to be form letter (Acts 23:25). In John 20:25, Thomas said he would not believe unless he saw the imprint or *tupos* on Jesus' hand. Elders are to leave an imprint on our lives, so it is vitally important that pastors have the character of Christ.

(Titus 2:10) “not pilfering, but showing all good faith so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.”

(1 Peter 5:3) “nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.”

Another reason that character is so important in our text today is because of the problems in the churches in Crete. They have been devastated by the false teachings of unscrupulous men who have been taking advantage of the flocks for sordid gain. Paul wants elders to be appointed whose lives adorn sound doctrine, and who can exhort in rebuke with sound doctrine. These false teachers needed to be corrected, and spiritual men are to bring correction. Notice what Paul writes in Galatians 6:1. “*Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.*” Elders are to be spiritual, men who are walking uprightly with God. If an elder is not spiritual, he is not qualified to bring correction to others.

When Jesus taught about taking the speck out of our brother’s eye, H said that we need to first take out the log from our own eyes. We have to be free of those sins and able to see clearly before correcting others. Elders need to be men who have removed the logs from their own eyes and who see clearly. Character is important to God, and elders must be men of proven character.

(Matthew 7:3-5) “Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? {4} Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? {5} You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.”

In our text, Paul tell Titus twice that someone that he is considering for the office of elder or overseer must be above reproach. The Greek word for above reproach is *anenkletos*, (Strong’s G410), which means unaccused, irreproachable, or blameless. This is someone who has not been accused, cannot be accused, and is blameless. He is above being reproached or accused. There are no hints of impropriety. Billy Graham was such a man. If he was alone in an elevator and a woman stepped in, he would step out. He avoided compromising situations, and any situation where someone could falsely accuse him of impropriety. He did not give the enemy a chance to bring accusations. Billy Graham was a man who was above reproach.

Anenkletos, [G1](#) (a) (as a negative particle) and a derivative of [<G1458>](#) (*egkaleo*); *unaccused*, i.e. (by implication) *irreproachable* :- blameless.

Last week the media made a big deal about a gubernatorial candidate in Mississippi, Robert Foster, who would not allow a woman reporter to spend the day with him in his truck. He said she could accompany him if she brought along another man with her. They made him out to be weird or sexist. The truth is that Robert made a promise to his high school sweetheart that he would never be alone with another woman he wasn’t related to under any circumstances, be it in an office, a farm, or a truck. He went on to say, “I put my wife and my Christian beliefs above anyone else’s feelings or opinions...and I did not want there to be a perception that I was riding with another female and that something promiscuous was going on.” Good for Robert. He is a man who is living his life above reproach.

Mississippi Gubernatorial Candidate's Condition For Female Reporter: Bring A Man

Robert Foster made a promise to his high school sweetheart before they got married: He would never be alone with another woman he wasn't related to under any circumstances, be it in an office, a farm or a truck. On Sunday, that meant denying a female journalist's request to ride along with him as he campaigned to become Mississippi's next governor, unless she agreed to bring a male colleague along for the trip. "I put my wife and my Christian beliefs above anyone else's feelings or opinions ... and I did not want there to be a perception that I was riding with another female and that something promiscuous was going on or anything like that," Foster, a first-term Republican state representative, said to National Public Radio (NPR). The reporter, Larrison Campbell, who writes for Mississippi Today, began covering Foster even before he formally announced his gubernatorial aspirations. The request to join him on the campaign trail for a full day of events was part of the news outlet's election coverage that would include similar profiles of all the GOP candidates vying for a win in the Republican primary on Aug. 6.

Paul gives two different areas where the life of a prospective elder should be examined. First, an overseer must be above reproach in his family life. Second, the elder must be above reproach in his character. Paul does not mention in our text today being above reproach with outsiders, but he does include this in his letter to Timothy, where he also gave the qualifications of an overseer. Therefore, I believe these are just two examples, and they also apply to other areas of his life.

A. Above reproach in his marriage

Paul mentions that men must be above reproach and then he mentions four things. First, he said that they must be the husband of one wife. Second, they must have children who believe. Third, their children must not be accused of dissipation or rebellion. These all pertain to his family. There is an order in what Paul gives Titus. A man's marriage comes before his children. Many times after marriage couples pour into their children, but not into their marriage and they drift apart. Couples need to continue pursuing their marriage relationship. It must be a priority.

The first area that Paul addresses is a man's marriage. There is a lot of debate on what is meant by being the husband of one wife. Some say that it is talking about polygamy, not having more than one wife at the same time. Some say that a man cannot be divorced and remarried and be an elder. The Assemblies of God hold that view. One of their pastors got divorced and he ended up leaving their denomination and starting his own church in San Antonio. He felt called by God to be a pastor and the fact that his wife left him did not change that call. His church has more than 20,000 people in it, and it is nationally recognized. The apostle Paul was responsible for putting Christians to death, and yet God called him into the ministry. God gives most people second chances.

Most theologians agree that the husband of one wife means that the man is devoted to his wife, that he only has eyes on his wife. I tend to agree more with the third view. Marriage is extremely important and God wants a man's marriage to be in good order. I have known men who have one wife, and yet their relationship with their wife is terrible. One man in the Chicago area had a disagreement with his wife, and from that point on, they lived in separate quarters in the house. He had nothing to do with her any more. They were Catholics and did not get an official divorce, but their marriage relationship had ended. It is the quality of your relationship that is key. A man that is being considered for ordination as a pastor needs his marriage relationship to be healthy.

A few years ago, we had some Nigerians visit our church. When I introduced one of them to Karen, he told me that I had a fat wife. I asked him what he meant. He said in Nigeria, that is an expression that means that her soul is healthy and I have done a good job caring for her. That sounded much better than the way it first sounded. In our country, we don't tell any women that they are fat.

Another view by some is that a man must be married to be an elder. I don't agree with that at all. Paul was an elder, and became an apostle, and he was never married. So, that interpretation does not hold up. Here is something important to remember about all these qualifications. They are general rules. If a man is married, his marriage must be in good shape. It does not mean he must be married. If he has children, they must be well behaved. It does not mean that a man who is not married or does not have any children cannot be an elder. Having children is not the requirement, having children not accused of dissipation, or rebellion is a requirement.

If a man's marriage is not in good shape, the family will not be in order. A man's marriage should be a priority in his life. Peter tells men to live with their wives in an understanding way and show her honor as a fellow heir so that their prayers will not be hindered. Is a man's marriage important in ministry? Absolutely. His prayers will be hindered if his marriage relationship is not right. The Greek word for hindered is *egkopto*, which literally means to be cut off. You do not want the prayers of your pastors to be hindered or cut off. When they pray for you, you want them answered.

(1 Peter 3:7) “You husbands in the same way, live with *your wives* in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered (*egkopto* – cut off).

In Ephesians 5, Paul gives instructions to husbands and wives. He tells husbands to love their wives and he gives specific ways for a man to love his wife. A man should love his wife the way Christ loved the church, laying His life down for her. This is sacrificial love. A man should love his wife the way that he loves himself. A man should cherish and nourish his wife. At the end of his exhortations to men on loving their wives, he says this in verse 32, “*This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.*” The marriage relationship represents Christ's relationship with the church. God wants an elder's marriage to properly represent this relationship, so this is really important to God.

Paul tells wives to respect their husbands and to submit to them. Sometimes this is easy to do, especially when the husband loves his wife like Christ loves the church. When a man cherishes his wife, lays his life down for her, and washes her with the word, it is fairly easy. However, when a man is not being the husband that God wants him to be, Peter tells wives to submit to them and respect them so that they may be won without a word (1 Peter 3:1-2). For the family to be in order, the marriage has to be in order. The husband is the head and must lead, but wives have a part in this. An elder's marriage needs to be in good order, and if he is loving his wife the way Christ loves the church, the chances are that his marriage will be excellent.

Marriages are in such trouble today and we especially need a pastor's marriage to be an example to the flock. Unfortunately, most pastors are having marital problems. According to the Schaeffer Institute, 77% of pastors surveyed said their marriages were in trouble. Thirty-eight percent of pastors are divorced. According to the surveys by George Barna, fifty percent of pastors will get divorced. In that same survey, Barna also said that forty percent of pastors have had an

extramarital relationship while in the ministry. That is certainly not what I would call being an example to the flock. Paul tells Titus that a man's marriage needs to be in order before being ordained.

B. Above Reproach With His Children

Not only must a man's marriage be in good order, his family needs to be in good order. His children must believe, and they must not be accused of dissipation or rebellion. There are some tough questions related to all of these points. If a man is called to be a pastor and he and his wife do not have children, then it is okay for him to be a pastor. However, after ten years of ministry his wife gets pregnant and they have a child. Then, they have a second and third child. They raise their children in the church and train them up in the ways of the Lord, but one of the children simply does not believe. Does that pastor now have to step down from the ministry because of the one child's unbelief? Samuel was a man after God's heart and he was a godly man. But, his children did not walk uprightly. Therefore, the people asked for a king because they did not want to be under Samuel's sons. Samuel did not have to leave the ministry because of his sons.

If a pastor's child does something rebellious or sins, does that pastor have to step down. Karen and I were part of a group of churches that believed that. Their pastor in the Washington D.C. area, Benny Phillips, was very famous and wrote a great book on raising children. In fact, the name of the book was *Raising Children Who Hunger For God*. One of his children toilet-papered a neighbor's tree one night as a prank, and they removed him from being the pastor at that church. He was moved under church discipline and sent to another church. I was not in agreement at all about what they did. Larry Tomczak said something very good about this matter. He said, "Don't be surprised if my children sin; be surprised if I don't do something about it." All of us are going to sin, including our children, and we must not bring judgment on a pastor for something that his children did.

What is Paul talking about? Paul is saying that a man's children are a reflection of his leadership in his home. If a man lives uprightly, is god-fearing, and represents Christ, his children will want to be like him. His children will want to follow Christ. Having children who believe is a normal characteristic of a man who represents Christ to his family. In Colossians 3:21, Paul exhorted fathers not to exasperate or provoke their children so that they would not lose heart or be discouraged. A father who provokes his children is pouring water on the fire. Fathers need to be those who fan into flame the desires of their children to follow God. We need to be those who encourage our children rather than those who discourage them and cause them to lose heart. The spiritual condition of a man's children reflects his character and leadership in the home.

(Col 3:21) "Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart."

The children of a man who is being considered to be an elder should also be well behaved. They should not be accused of dissipation or rebellion. The KJV says, "having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly." The NIV says they are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. The Amplified Bible says, "whose children are well trained and are believers, not open to the accusation of being loose in morals *and* conduct or unruly *and* disorderly."

What makes children wild, disobedient, unruly, and disorderly? There are a number of things that contribute to this. First, a man must lead his family by example. If the mother and father are rebellious and not submitted to authorities, their children will struggle with submission. An elder

must be one who is submitted to authorities. An elder must be willing to submit his life to the presbytery, and to government authorities.

Second, a lot of rebellion is a result of conflicts and offenses that have not been resolved, and have turned to bitterness. Hebrews 12:15 says, "See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled." These roots of bitterness come from unresolved conflicts. Parents need to see to it that these are resolved. The Greek text says episkopos or oversee that no one comes short of the grace of God. Episkopos is the same word for overseer, one of the three terms for a pastor.

Third, many times children are wild, rebellious, and disobedient because there is no discipline in the home. Foolishness is bound up in the heart of children, but a rod of discipline will remove it far from him (Pr 22:15). A good father loves his children and disciplining his children is just one way he shows that love. In Hebrews 12:6 we find that the Father disciplines those whom He loves. If we are without discipline, we are illegitimate. In our culture today, parents are not disciplining their children and we are raising a generation of rebellious and disobedient children. Someone being considered for the office of overseer must properly discipline his children and teach them to be obedient and well behaved. If a man cannot do this in his own home, it is highly unlikely that he can do this in God's household, the church. An elder will be one who disciplines his children so that they grow up obedient and well-behaved.

(Heb 12:6-8) "FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES." {7} It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline? {8} But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons."

One June, we went on vacation to the Smoky Mountains. We camped there for about a week. We had a great time, relaxed, wound down, met new friends and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. What I got the most out of during the vacation was observing a nest of robins outside our camper. A mother and father robin had built a nest in the fork of a tree right beside the campsite we were assigned. For a solid week, I was able to observe and reflect on these two birds. They were incredible parents! One bird was always there watching the nest. It might not be on the nest, but it would never be out of sight of the nest. The other bird would be off finding worms. When the robin with the worm came back, the other parent would take off. The robin with the worm would feed the babies and then wait until the other bird came back before it would take off again. From sun up until sun down these two robins worked hard to feed and nurture their babies. They did not spend their time seeking to build a bigger and better nest for their youngsters. They had no regard for their own life. They put everything they had into raising up the offspring that God had given them.

Then the Lord spoke to me about what I had been watching all week. He said if I would pour my heart into my children like this robin, if I would work hard at feeding them every day, then He would develop my teaching gift and use it in His church. So, I began to have daily worship and teaching times with my children. I began to pour my life into our children. And, God did prepare me and develop my teaching gift, and my ministry today is a result of that camping trip.

Again, I see these qualifications as general characteristics rather than a legal standard. If a man has no children or is unmarried, he is not disqualified because he is not married or has no

children. If a man has a child who is not walking with the Lord, I don't think that he is disqualified. But, these characteristics that Paul gives should be evidenced in a man's life, and if they are not, then we need to be very careful about ordaining that man.

Conclusion and Applications

All of the characteristics that we have looked at today are for the whole body, not just pastors. But, they should be in place in a man's life before being ordained and put in the office of overseer. Elders are to be examples to the flock in all these areas. Elders are to give the church a model of how a marriage should work, and how a family should be raised.

How are you doing in these various areas? Is your marriage relationship healthy? Is your relationship with your children healthy? Are you children respectful and obedient? Do your children have a hunger for God?

Whether you are called to be an elder or not, God wants all of us to display these traits and characteristics in our lives. Take a few minutes and write down two things that have stood out this morning that you want to work on in your life. Then, take a minute to ask God to help you grow in these areas. Let's pray.

Introduction (Titus 1:5-9)

- 1. Above Reproach In His Family** (Tit 1:5-9, 1 Tim 3:1-8, Ex 18:21, Acts 6:3, Tit 2:10, 1 Pet 5:3, Gen 1:26-27, Acts 7:43-44, 23:25, John 20:25, Gal 6:1, Matt 7:3-5)
 - A. Above reproach in his marriage** (Tit 1:6, 1 Peter 3:7, Eph 5:25-33, 1 Pet 3:1-2)
 - B. Above Reproach With His Children** (Col 3:21, Heb 12:15, Pr 22:15, Heb 12:6-8)

Applications for my life:

- 1.**
- 2.**
- 3.**