

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Let's pray...

What does God look for when He chooses a leader?

What are the criteria?

What is the check list?

When He begins to survey and measure our lives up what does He look for?

Does He use the same criteria as man does?

Does God look upon man's charisma and say, "This guy has charisma, he is a natural born leader - he needs be a leader in the church because people are going to be attracted to him? The answer of course is No

Does God look at style?

How the individual dresses, how he looks, how does he speaks?

Does he have a deep commanding voice like James Earl Jones?

Is he funny – is God impressed by the man that can keep the congregation laughing?

No –

Unfortunately church, there are many men that stand behind the pulpit this Sunday morning that were chosen based upon this outward criteria.

You see church; any group of people can heap up for themselves a teacher.

“These are our qualifications, this is what we want to be taught and this is how we want it to be taught.”

But church - You and I, want to be under a man in the ministry that has been chosen and placed there by God – not by man.

Someone who has been fashioned, someone who has been seasoned and been tried by the fires and continues to grow in the ministry.

God’s not looking for looks or style or charm.

He is looking for spiritual substance, character and holiness.

If he has charisma – great – but there better be character.

If there is style – there better be spiritual substance

And if there is a little bit of humor here and there, there better be whole lot of holiness in that man that we follow.

Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 1 -

[1Co 1:26-29 NKJV] 26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, [are called]. 27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; 28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, 29 that no flesh should glory in His presence.

So when we begin to look at the criteria for spiritual leadership – we need to understand that God uses a different methodology and criteria, which we find here in Paul’s letter to Timothy.

[1Ti 3:1-16 NKJV] 1 This [is] a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.

So here in verse 1, we have another one of the early churches “faithful saying” – I mentioned back two weeks ago during our study in chapter one - that in the early church, the New Testament wasn’t complete yet, people didn’t bring their bibles to the church services – so they resorted to memorizing these faithful sayings.

And Paul lists five of them in his letters to Timothy and Titus.

These are not just good principles; they are the kinds of truths that we can rely upon.

And the first spiritual leadership position that Paul addresses is the office of bishop.

And when most of us think of the word bishop, we immediately think of a guy wearing a pointy hat.

The Greek word that is used here in the word episkope – and it is made up of two words –

Epis – which means from above / over

And the word skope = where we get our word scope or to see

So the office of bishop is one of overseer.

Paul also uses the word desires twice – and I had you make a note of that.

And the reason is that he uses two different words for desire.

The first word that he uses for desires, speaks about a longing – wanting something.

The second word that he uses for desire is means not just to aspire to something, but to exert much energy to try to get it.

To yearn for something and to stretch out your hand to try to get hold of it.

Paul is describing a person who is not only wanting but also actively pursuing.

He is describing someone who is passionate about serving God and doesn't just daydream about it, but looks for ways to actively be involved in service to the Lord.

So the first question we want to ask ourselves this morning is –

Do I want to serve the Lord??? That is the first desire.

The companion question is

Am I trying to serve the Lord??? That is the second desire.

Because there is a difference between the two.

In Luke 10 –

You don't have to turn there, you can look it up later on.

In Luke 10, we have an even where Jesus healed ten lepers.

All 10 were cleansed, given new life, saved by God's compassionate grace, but only one came back (a Samaritan) to give thanks to the Lord and honor Him.

"Where are the 9?" Jesus asked. "Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God?"

Nine of the 10 had an unresponsive heart to what Jesus did.

We want to have responsive hearts.

How should we respond? Well, with thanks to be sure, but also with the kind of desire that Paul is describing in this verse, an active desire that seeks for opportunities to serve Him.

So the first criteria that God looks for is desire.

He looks for someone who has allowed themselves to be burdened by God.

They see the lost and the needs of the church, and they want to serve.

They desire to serve God and people, and they pursue this service in various ways. It is those people who God uses to build his church and his kingdom.

2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach;

Blameless – this doesn't mean that the individual is sinless.

Because the word of God tells us that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

(Rom 3:23)

Blameless means beyond reproach.

Meaning that the individual cannot have legitimate concerns about his life that anyone can hold up and criticize.

Jim Bakker

Jimmy Swaggert

Two names synonymous with church hypocrisy.

These two men were caught doing the same things that they preached against.

They forgot that as spiritual leaders, Satan was going to come after them and they let their guard down – and they were no longer beyond reproach.

And unfortunately, this goes on in church after church today.

You see, Satan knows that when a shepherd falls, the effect on the sheep is devastating.

People will stumble because of it – “Well if my pastor is doing the same things I am doing – why do I bother coming to church?”

We must all seek to live above reproach because ultimately our lives either honor or dishonor Christ—they either gather or push people away from Him.

The husband of one wife – this does not mean that an individual has to be married to be an overseer.

Some have even taken this verse to mean that a man cannot be an overseer if he has been divorced. Again – I don't believe that is what Paul is referring to.

The idea is that love and affection and his heart is given to only one woman, and that being his lawful and wedded wife.

temperate, sober-minded

The word temperate and sober minded have to do with the idea of someone who doesn't have these abrupt mood swings – someone that isn't prone to overreacting but at the same time someone who is a clear thinker.

Hospitable – this command is not only to overseers but is given to each one of us.

Turn with me to Romans 12,

[Rom 12:9-13 NKJV] 9 [Let] love [be] without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. 10 [Be] kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; 11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; 12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; 13 distributing to the needs of the saints, **given to hospitality.**

The word given – means to pursue or chase.

So this means that we are not simply to wait for the occasion to show hospitality toward to one another, we are to pursue it.

Able to teach

This is the only qualification that has nothing to do with character –

Can he teach???

Phillips Brooks, famous American bishop of the 1800s, said, “Apt to teach—it is not something to which one comes by accident or by any sudden burst of fiery zeal.”

A pastor must be a careful student of the Word of God, and of all that assists him in knowing and teaching that Word.

Church, in the book of Hebrews, we are told as believers, we are all called to teach.
(5:12)

We may not all be called to teach in a public setting in front of a pulpit – but we can still teach in a one on one setting or in a small group.

Teaching is a characteristic of spiritual maturity.

3 not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous;

The spiritual leader or the mature believer must not be a drunkard.

This goes back to verse two where Paul spoke about being temperate and sober-minded, if alcohol impairs our ability to make decisions – then we are no longer being temperate and sober-minded.

Not violent –

My dad was a big Clint Eastwood fan – so I remember him watching the Dirty Harry movies.

Dirty Harry may have made a good cop, but I'm not sure he'd make a great leader in the church.

He had an anger issue –

And so what Paul is telling Timothy here is to make sure that the person who he appoints as overseer doesn't have anger issues.

Even though they may claim to be spiritually mature, watch out!!!

Not greedy for money –

Ministry is about serving – not about advancing your portfolio.

4 one who rules his own house well, having [his] children in submission with all reverence 5 (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?);

Godly leadership begins in the home.

This doesn't mean that the children are perfect – because it is possible for a child to rebel from a godly home –

Franklin Graham – Billy's son, grew up in a Christian home and rebelled as a teen.

He smoked and drank and did whatever he wanted.

He wrote in his autobiography -

“I took pride in my individuality and tried to see how far I could stretch rules before getting reprimanded,”

“Instead of getting my esteem from achieving within the system, I got my thrills and identity from challenging the system.”

“I believed in God. I just didn’t want Jesus running my life. I wanted to run my own life. ... But I was miserable,”

That is when he hit rock bottom -

I realized for the first time that sin had control over my life. Franklin Graham was not in charge, but sin was. And there was absolutely nothing I could do in my own power to overcome it.

... I felt I was a Christian. I was the son of Billy Graham, I went to church, and I memorized Scripture. What more did it take?

Suddenly, I had an overpowering conviction that I needed to get my life right with God

... I was sick and tired of being sick and tired. My years of running and rebellion had ended. ... It was finished. The rebel had found the cause.

Does this mean that Billy and Ruth Graham fail as parents? No -

Again, the question that must be asked is – did the child rebel because of the parenting or did they rebel in spite of the parenting.

When God finds someone to serve him, he looks for someone who is faithful in his or her home life.

6 not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the [same] condemnation as the devil.

Maturity takes time.

It doesn't come in two weeks time.

A mature Christian has withstood the test of time.

The test isn't whether or not you've withstood temptation for ten or twenty days, but whether you've withstood it for ten or twenty years.

A leader in the church ought to be someone who has been a believer for a period of time.

The reason – a young believer will begin to think that his promotion into the leadership is because of his own doing and not Gods.

As we mature in the Lord, we begin to understand humility.

Humility isn't something that happens overnight.

It takes time and maturity to cultivate and grow.

7 Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

There are some people that have the ability maintain one reputation at church and a different reputation outside the church.

And Paul reminds Timothy here that God wants us to have a good reputation in and out of church.

The reason – because nonbelievers respond to our testimony outside of church.

So, we can't point them in the direction to Christ if we are behaving in the same way that the world behaves.

[Mat 5:16 NKJV] 16 "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

8 Likewise deacons [must be] reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money,

Now Paul gives instructions for selecting deacons.

The first “deacons” in the early church were a group of men who were chosen to help out the apostles.

Turn to Acts 6.

[Act 6:1-4 NKJV] 1 Now in those days, when [the number of] the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. 2 Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. 3 "Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of [good] reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; 4 "but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

As the early church began to grow rapidly, the apostles couldn't keep up with the needs of the church.

And certain things were being neglected.

So the first set of deacons took care of the ministry that fed the widows in the church.

"They waited on tables"

It's not that the apostles were "above" helping with the feeding of the widows, but that they realized that the church wasn't going to progress if they weren't doing the two most important things – which is praying and teaching God's Word.

Now, the word deacon is the servant –

And as believers, we are all called to be servants.

Reverent: Showing proper respect towards both God and man.

Not double-tongued: This is the person who changes their message depending on who they are talking to.

To your face they tell you that you are their best friend.

Behind your back they criticize and slander you.

Nothing is more devastating than to tell one person one thing and someone else the very opposite for your own personal gain, or to protect yourself, and thus begin the process of spinning lies among God's people.

9 holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience.

When Paul uses the word mystery here – he is referring to the gospel.

It is God's redemptive truth revealed in the New Testament; the sacred things hidden from natural reason known only by the revelation of God, hidden from Old Testament saints, known only by the revelation of God.

So the deacon then must hold to New Testament revelation.

He has to be a New Testament, doctrinally-oriented individual, who knows and understands truth revealed in the new covenant.

And he has to hold onto it with a pure conscience.

What does that mean?

A conscience that's not accusing you, a conscience that's not bringing guilt on you.

Why?

Because you're holding the truth and you're obeying the truth.

The stronger your theology, the stronger your conscience.

The more you understand about the Bible, and the stronger your faith and belief, the stronger your conscience.

To say it another way; when a person who really has strong doctrine and strong theology, and holds to the mystery of the faith with great strength violates that doctrine, they have a very strong conscience reprimanding them.

Show me a person who is weak in conviction and I'll show you a person with a weak conscience, because conscience reacts to the body of truth the person is committed to.

10 But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being [found] blameless.

Paul is giving Timothy the instruction to test the people first before giving them a title.

There is value in "testing" people before allowing them to get too far in leadership.

The goal in testing is to see how sincere the person is.

It's to see if they are what they claim to be.

Do they really have a heart to serve?

Or are they really only in it for the title?

Turn with me to Philippians 2 -

(Philippians 2:19–22 NKJV) —19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. 20 For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. 21 For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. 22 But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel.

Timothy – was tested before he became the overseer of the churches in Ephesus.

He did all the small things.

He served in the kid's ministry

He cleaned bathrooms.

Paul didn't just appoint him leader from day one.

He had to prove himself – and that is what Paul wants Timothy to do.

11 Likewise, [their] wives [must be] reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.

I had you make a note of the word wives.

Because the word that is used for wives is the same word for women.

So this can be applied to the wives of a deacon or a woman who serves.

Why didn't Paul simply use the word for deaconess?

Because there isn't one in the Greek.

The word for slanderer is the word for "devil"

So Paul is saying that they are not to be She Devils.

That they are supposed to control their tongue.

12 Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling [their] children and their own houses well. 13 For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

The world may not think that there's any benefit to being a "servant" to others (diakonos), but in God's economy, there is great benefit.

The "good standing" will be before other believers who appreciate what humble service requires.

The "great boldness" relates to a new depth in your relationship with the Lord.

There's a wonderful thing that happens in your heart when you sense that God is asking you to do something, and you step out and do it.

14 These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; 15 but if I am delayed, [I write] so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

The truth of the gospel does not come from God's people; it has come to God's people via the church.

And we must make sure that it is not watered down, squandered, compromised or traded away for any philosophical fad.

The church is where people are going to hear the only truth that really matters – that they can know God through Jesus Christ.

16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.

What Paul is saying here is that there can be no argument regarding

Jesus' manifestation – His incarnation

His life

His death

His Resurrection

And His exaltation

Why does Paul end with this statement?

Because -

Jesus is the perfect fulfillment of these descriptions that Paul lays out here in this chapter regarding Christian character.

We trust that Jesus will transform our life according to the same character, as we put our focus on Him.

Sometimes we make the mistake thinking that religion will build this character in us – but truly, it is only through a relationship with Him that it is accomplished.

Amen

Let's pray...

