



### **1Timothy 3:1-7, Part 3**

We are continuing our third and final week in 1Timothy, the qualifications for local church elders. These qualifications and this process of selecting godly leaders seems pretty boring until something goes wrong within leadership. In other words, we tend not to recognize good shepherds until bad shepherds take over. As I mentioned last week, my former church has had two shepherds who were not qualified to lead and the church has been devastated and decimated as a result.

Speaking of bad shepherds, I came upon this article written by a pastor describing the problem of hired hands to guard the flock.

When they (our “tyrannical” government) attempt to strip us of our right to defend ourselves with arms, they are attacking the very lives and liberties of our homes and families. Life is a precious gift of Almighty God, and anyone who would make our children and families vulnerable to death and destruction by wicked and evil men is tantamount to a mad wolf that attacks the life of a little lamb.

How dare our shepherds (pastors) stand silent and mute in the face of such evil? How dare they refuse to sound the alarm?

Any pastor who refuses to take a stand of resistance to the evil forces of tyranny that are now sweeping as a horde of locusts upon us is as guilty of the loss of our nation’s

freedoms and liberties as are the evil despots who perpetrate these atrocities. He is as guilty of the death and destruction of his people as the hireling who flees in the face of the wolf is guilty of the death and destruction of the sheep.<sup>1</sup>

So unless I continually warn you that the government plans to take away your guns and other freedoms, I am a bad shepherd, a hired hand, guilt-ridden with the blood of precious sheep on my hands? Worse still is the way he uses the Bible to prove his point.

Furthermore, the Apostle Paul spent about as much time in jail as he did out of jail. And, of course, he was thrown in jail for breaking the unjust, evil laws of men. Every apostle except John was killed by tyrannical governments because they refused to submit to unjust laws. How First Century Christians chose to resist versus how free men and women in Colonial America chose to resist is material for another day. The point is, THEY ALL CHOSE TO RESIST.<sup>2</sup>

Funny, but I must have missed the part where Paul spent half of his life in jail for speaking out in favor of armed citizens. He writes, How First Century Christians chose to resist versus how free men and women in Colonial America chose to resist is material for another day.” Of course it’s material for another day because it is not at all relevant to his greater point. These men of faith were persecuted for courageously preaching the gospel, not for failing to lobby for conceal carry permits for swords.

But he is right about one thing—there are, and always have been, hired hands who cares nothing for the flock of God. The prophet Ezekiel gave the clearest description of these men.

*“Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord GOD: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? 3 You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. 4 The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. 5 So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts. 6 My sheep were scattered; they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them.*

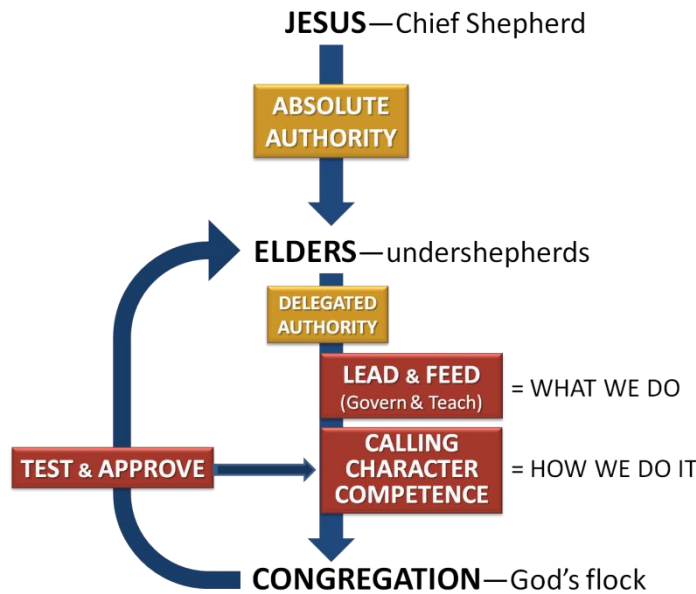
(Ezekiel 24:2-7)<sup>3</sup>

Ezekiel makes a watertight case as to why we need to make sure we all understand the qualifications for local church elders, because as go the leaders, so goes the church.

We left off last week talking about the second of three C’s—character, but I want to back up and say one more thing about calling. I mentioned that my calling to full-time vocational ministry came at age 19 but I failed to mention the context. I did have a very clear time when I felt as if God laid mantle of ministry on my shoulders but this happened in the midst of active service. I have told you before that I was a very shy person when I was young so when I started to work as a camp counselor, responsible for leading a large cabin of campers and leading songs, skits and other up-front kinds of activities, I was pulled out of my comfort zone every minute of that first

summer. A friend of mine who started the same summer that I did, told me years later that he cried himself to sleep the first night as a camp counselor because he was so overwhelmed. I was pretty close to this much fear myself. I never did become a youth pastor but the context of my call to ministry was this active service at camp working with children and teens.

The same thing happened to Kate Aloisi. As she explained last Sunday, it was during her ministry in Haiti that the Lord prompted her to “give up softball.” Her call to ministry did not happen while she was sitting on the couch or checking her facebook page. It came during active service for the Lord. Kate gave up softball on the mission field and God graciously gave her softball *on* the mission field.



This does not mean that you need to take a mission’s trip to know your calling and it certainly does not mean that everyone will be called to vocational ministry, but if you are not regularly engaged in ministry to others, I am confident that you will not receive your calling. And calling and vocation are the same thing. The Latin word for vocation means calling. You can be called to a vocation while you are serving and helping others.

Now let’s get back to the topic of character. Looking again at our chart of

character qualities (below), who is an elder shepherding here? All of these character qualities are about self-shepherding. This is what character is about for every person—shepherding yourself. Now that should never be taken as a “pull yourself up by your bootstraps” kind of thing. I heard a sermon a few weeks ago and the pastor kept telling us to “man up.” If you are caught in a sin, if you are struggling with something, what you need to do is “man up” and quit doing whatever it is you are doing. The sermon was all about trying harder. We have got to get past this dangerous, works-based notion that the Christian life is all about trying harder.

<b>1 Timothy 3:1-7</b>	<b>Titus 1:6-9</b>
Above reproach	Above reproach
Husband of one wife	husband of one wife
Sober minded	disciplined
Self-controlled	Self-controlled
Respectable	Upright, holy, lover of good
Hospitable	Hospitable
<b>Able to teach</b>	<b>Give instruction in sound doctrine</b>
Not a drunkard	Not a drunkard
Not violent, but gentle	Not violent
Not quarrelsome	not quick-tempered
Not a lover of money	Not greedy for gain
Manage his household well	Children are believers
Not a recent convert	
Well thought of by outsiders	
	Not arrogant

I assume most of you know what the Whack-a-mole game is, right? It’s an old arcade game where there are holes where these little plastic moles pop their heads through and your task is to take the giant mallet and whack the mole on the head. It’s really easy at first. Most two year olds

can whack the mole on the head but as the game progresses, the heads pop up faster and go back down before you have time to whack its head. I love this game. I was pretty good at it too. If I played two games back to back I would work up a little sweat.



The Wii and the Xbox Connect are pretty amazing game systems. These motion activated games are far beyond what you would ever find in the old arcade games, but a virtual whack-a-mole can never be as good as the arcade game. You need to feel the giant mallet in your hand. You need to experience the thrill of bashing the plastic mole on the head. You need to be able to speed up faster and faster until you attain complete mole domination. My kids know that I am not very good at video games, so if Mario needs to be raced in a little car or if tigers and rhinos need to be shot before they attack me, I will call my boys to do the job but if a plastic mole needs to be whacked on the head, I am the man for the job.

But far too many believers picture the Christian life like a giant whack-a-mole game. We are the plastic moles and every time we commit a sin, God takes his giant mallet and bashes us on head. With all of the Christians in the world and all of the sin happening all of the time, you might think that God would also work up a sweat whacking all of the Christians on the head, but since he is all-powerful, it's probably easy for him. Sermons and teaching that tell you to "man up" and "try harder" are teaching a whack-a-mole theology of God—and it's evil and frustrating and legalistic and defeating.

When you commit a sin, instead of picturing God with a giant mallet, picture the triune God as the Bible describes him. The Holy Spirit, the Comforter, puts his arm around you and says, "I'm am trying to build a fire of holiness within your heart but you keep throwing water (1 Thes. 5:19) on the hot coals. Remember that I have abundant power available to you to defeat this sin. The power that raised Jesus from the dead is the exact same power available to you to fight this sin, if you would only ask me."

Next, Jesus approaches you with a penetrating love in his eyes and says, "Did you forget that my blood covered that sin? Did you understand that I bore the wrath of my Father; that your sin became my sin such that I became a stench to my beloved Father and his holiness caused him to turn away from me? (Matt. 27:46) Don't forget that I was raised from the dead as the final victory over sin and death. That sin you just committed is covered. That sin is atoned for and will never be used against you because I am your eternal advocate, standing before my Father—interceding for you (1 John 2:1) and covering you with my righteousness. (2 Cor. 5:21) I am your Good Shepherd (John 10:11), leading you to paths of righteousness."

Finally, your Father gives you a warm, heavenly embrace and declares, "My child, you are my adopted son (Romans 8:15). You are my adopted daughter. I will never disown you (John 10:29).

Through my son, Jesus, your sin is as far from me as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12).  
Come find refuge under the shadow of my loving arms (Psalm 91:1).

At all costs, we need to avoid communicating messages of work harder that are condemning and shaming. This does not mean that we don't need to work hard. John Owen, "Be killing sin or sin will be killing you." Scripture is filled with messages about striving after holiness. We ought to fight sin and work for holiness with every ounce of our being but in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

So all of these character qualities have to do with shepherding yourself, as long as that does not mean try harder and you'll be a good person. The next character qualities have to do with shepherding your family.

*4 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? And the "sister" passage from Titus 1:6—and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.*

The main point of this section is clear—if a man is not able to shepherd his own family then he is certainly not qualified to shepherd a church body. That part is simple, but what is not so simple here is the question of what that looks like. 1 Timothy states that his children must be submissive. At the parent class last Sunday, Nathan shared a humorous story about Eli. They were playing king and castle and guess who was the king? Hint—it wasn't Nathan! In the course of their pretend play, Eli said to his dad, "I am the king but I know I am not in authority over you. We are just pretending." But how submissive do they need to be? What does that look like?

Titus states that they must be believers. This implies that an elder could be disqualified if his children were not believers but once again, when you are talking about children and teens, this is not always easy to quantify.

Notice that the NIV has "not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient" is a really bad translation. There have been many times when my children have acted "wildly" and they are disobedient almost every day, just as I am disobedient to the Lord every day. At our former church when Ryan was about five years old, the Sunday School teacher frequently told us about Ryan's wild behavior. One day Karen went downstairs and Ryan was sitting outside of the classroom. That is never a good sign!

Gene Getz is the only person I have ever heard who is convinced that this standard is referring exclusively to grown children and not children living at home. He writes, "Clearly, he [Paul] was thinking of grown children who were probably already married and how 'wild and disobedient' behavior was affecting their father's reputation both in the church and the non-believing community."<sup>4</sup> As much as I respect Gene Getz, I think this view is ludicrous. A parent can only train their children while they are young and if they choose not to follow the Lord in their adult life, it is out of the control and influence of the parents. Some of the most godly people I know have adult children who have strayed from the Lord. Having said this, if all or most of a man's

adult children are not walking with the Lord, then that would be a yellow, caution flag to check into further.

You can start to see how the self-shepherding is a powerful influencer over the shepherding of one's family. If a man is quick-tempered, greedy for money and in general is not above reproach, then this all demonstrates a certain level of hypocrisy. It is not a simple thing to say that a man is qualified or disqualified from serving as an elder by examining the behavior of his children. We must be very cautious about such things but we should also uphold these Biblical principles as high as possible. An elder is to be shepherding his family with increasing effectiveness and commitment. If it obvious that this is not happening, then it would never be wise to entrust such a man with shepherding the larger church body.

If I had to summarize the issue of character in a single word, that word would be teachability. Teachability begins first of all with humility and a slow killing of that person's pride. Teachability obviously assumes that the person is teachable, that he is willing to listen to others and cares about their ideas. A teachable person is ready to receive gentle feedback or harsh criticism and can pull out the good things from the critic and leave the harsh words behind.

However, being teachable does not mean that you are carried along by every whim and opinion of others. I like what Randy Alcorn said when he was asked this question. What single bit of counsel has made the most significant difference in your leadership? "No one said it in exactly this way, but several men have said what helped me come to this way of thinking: Care about people but don't live to please them. If you do, you'll fail your Lord, and you'll fail people too."<sup>5</sup> I think teachability summarizes most of the character qualities in this passage.

Speaking of teaching, we finally get to our final qualification of an elder—competence—and the primary area of competence necessary is teaching. If you recall from two weeks ago, the qualifications for an elder and a deacon are nearly identical except that elders must be able to teach.

<b>Elders</b> —1 Timothy 3:1-7	<b>Deacons</b> —1 Timothy 2:8-13
Must be blameless	Blameless
Husband of one wife	Husband of one wife
Temperate	Reverent
Sober minded	Not double-tongued
Not given to wine	Not given to much wine
Not greedy for money	Not greedy for money
Rules his own house well	Ruling their children and houses well
Able to teach	

The ability to teach does not mean that you must be a great preacher but it does imply the necessity of being able to clearly and effectively communicate God's word. If you had heard my first few sermons, I think you would have told me to stick to my day job and forget going off to seminary. They were not very clear nor effective. I did use the Bible and not merely weave together a bunch of stories, but I was as green as they come and wet behind the ears.

An elder does not have to be great preachers but they do need to be able to think deeply and carefully about Biblical issues. The sister passage in Titus 1:9 makes this clear. *He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.*

Do you see the dual role here? The shepherd must know his Bible very well and also be able to rebuke those who contradict it. Ryan has been finding this out the hard way at work. He has gotten in some very interesting spiritual conversations with his co-workers and even though he knows the Bible pretty well for an 18 year old, and even though he has been through various apologetics classes, he has found that when someone has a tough question, it's not necessarily easy to quickly whip out the perfect answer. It's one thing to know the Bible but it's more difficult to refute those who contradict the truth. And that's OK. We all have had or will have this experience. It's OK to say that you don't know the answer to a difficult question but it's not OK not to find an answer and get back to the person.

I am working on an application of this principle with a few guys in a training class. Our church recently received promotional materials to an area conference. Their homework is to do a little research to find out if the topic and the presenters are likely to be presenting a solidly Biblical message or not. In other words, if they were elders, would they recommend everyone in our church to attend the conference or would the poster go into the garbage can?

#### Calling—Character—Competence

Just like in Ezekiel's day, there are still plenty of bad shepherds in our day—far too many—otherwise, there would be no need for list of qualifications such as we have here. If I die or leave or as we select elders in the future—choose good elders with these necessary Biblical qualifications. Let's leave shepherding the church as a rather boring enterprise. Choose good shepherds and BR good shepherds—of yourself, your family and the church.

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March 2, 2013

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<sup>1</sup> <http://chuckbaldwinlive.com/home/archives/5460>

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> See also Jeremiah 23:1-2. *“Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!” declares the LORD. 2 Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who care for my people: “You have scattered my flock and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for your evil deeds, declares the LORD.*

<sup>4</sup> Gene Getz, *Elders and Leaders: God's Plan for Leading the Church*, Moody Publishers: Chicago, © 2003, p. .99.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.epm.org/blog/2013/Feb/22/preaching-time-sports>