

NOON BIBLE STUDY: 1 TIMOTHY 3 (PART 1)

WE'VE SEEN THROUGH OUR STUDY SO FAR THAT THIS FIRST PASTORAL EPISTLE SERVES AS A SORT OF HANDBOOK FOR CHURCH LIFE. PAUL ADDRESSES THINGS TO WATCH FOR (FALSE TEACHERS) AND SOME INSTRUCTIONS ON WHAT SHOULD BE DONE/NOT DONE (PRAYER & GENDER ROLES IN CHURCH). NOW PAUL IS GOING TO GIVE SOME GUIDANCE ON CHURCH LEADERSHIP. PAUL IS GOING TO OUTLINE CHARACTER TRAITS WHICH WILL HELP ANSWER "WHO OR WHAT SHOULD THE CHURCH LOOK FOR IN THEIR LEADERS?" THIS IS IMPORTANT, ESPECIALLY IN CONTRAST TO THOSE WHO ARE FALSE TEACHERS AND LEADERS.

IT WAS PAUL'S CUSTOM TO WORK TO SET UP CHURCH LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE AFTER PEOPLE RESPONDED TO THE GOSPEL IN A CERTAIN REGION. THE END GOAL OF PAUL'S MISSIONARY TRIPS WASN'T TO STAY IN THE REGION AND BECOME THEIR PASTOR/LEADER, BUT TO IDENTIFY AND EMPOWER LOCAL LEADERS.

ACTS 14:21-23 - AFTER THEY HAD PREACHED THE GOSPEL TO THAT CITY AND HAD MADE MANY DISCIPLES, THEY RETURNED TO LYSTRA AND TO ICONIUM AND TO ANTIOCH, 22 STRENGTHENING THE SOULS OF THE DISCIPLES, ENCOURAGING THEM TO CONTINUE IN THE FAITH, AND SAYING, "THROUGH MANY TRIBULATIONS WE MUST ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD." 23 WHEN THEY HAD APPOINTED ELDERS FOR THEM IN EVERY CHURCH, HAVING PRAYED WITH FASTING, THEY COMMENDED THEM TO THE LORD IN WHOM THEY HAD BELIEVED.

TITUS 1:5 (NLT) - I LEFT YOU (TITUS) ON THE ISLAND OF CRETE SO YOU COULD COMPLETE OUR WORK THERE AND APPOINT ELDERS IN EACH TOWN AS I INSTRUCTED YOU.

HOW WAS THE CHURCH TO KNOW WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THESE LEADERS? PAUL CONTINUES HIS LETTER TO TIMOTHY FOR THIS EXACT PURPOSE (SEE ALSO TITUS 1:5-9)

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-7 - ELDERS

V. 1 - THIS IS OUR SECOND USE OF THE PHRASE "TRUSTWORTHY STATEMENT" WHICH PAUL USES TO HIGHLIGHT THINGS THAT ARE CERTAINLY TRUE AND IMPORTANT TO ACCEPT/BELIEVE.

THIS IS A GOOD THING TO DESIRE TO DO, YET THERE IS A SACRED RESPONSIBILITY AND HIGH CALLING FOR THIS OFFICE. JAMES WRITES:

JAMES 3:1 - LET NOT MANY OF YOU BECOME TEACHERS, MY BRETHREN, KNOWING THAT AS SUCH WE WILL INCUR A STRICTER JUDGMENT.

V. 1 - "OFFICE OF OVERSEER" - THIS IS ALL ONE GREEK WORD (ἐπίσκοπή *EPISKOPĒ*) WHICH LITERALLY MEANS OVER SEEING/WATCHING. IT IS SIMILAR TO ANOTHER WORD USED IN THE SAME CONTEXT (πρεσβύτερος *PRESBYTEROS*) WHICH MEANS ELDER. OUR MODERN TERM "PASTOR" WHICH IS MOST COMMONLY USED TO DESCRIBE CHURCH LEADERS, IS ALSO REFERENCED BY PAUL IN EPHESIANS 4:11. THE WORD PASTOR IS THE GREEK WORD FOR SHEPHERD (ποιμήν *POIMĒN*). THE IDEA OF THE SHEPHERD IS ONE WHO IS WATCHING OVER (OVERSEEING) THE SHEEP/FLOCK. ANOTHER CHURCH LEADERSHIP ROLE IS THAT OF DEACONS, THIS IS COVERED IN THE NEXT SECTION (1 TIMOTHY 3:8-13)

SO WHAT OUGHT THE CHURCH LOOK FOR IN THEIR ELDERS? PAUL IS GOING TO GIVE A DETAILED DESCRIPTION. THIS IS NOT AN EXHAUSTIVE LIST (IT DOESN'T SAY AN ELDER SHOULDN'T BE A MURDER, THAT'S ASSUMED) BUT IT DOES GIVE A WONDERFUL PICTURE OF WHAT OUR CHURCH LEADERS

SHOULD LOOK LIKE. THESE ARE QUALITIES THAT ARE NOT ONE AND DONE BUT A STANDARD TO BE HELD UP TO CONTINUALLY AND CONSISTANTLY MODELED.

ABOVE REPROACH: ESV & KJV: "BLAMELESS". NOT ABLE TO BE BLAMED, DISCREDITED. NOT ABLE TO FIND FAULT IN. WE ALL OBVIOUSLY FALL UNDER THE NEED FOR GOD'S DAILY GRACE, BUT ONE SHOULD NOT BE ABLE TO POINT TO OBVIOUS AND WELL KNOWN SINS IN THEIR LIVES. DISAGREEING WITH SOMEONE IS ONE THING BUT CONSISTENTLY SEEING A SIN OR UNGODLY PRACTICE IN AN ELDER WILL POTENTIALLY INVALIDATE THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD.

HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE: *AT MINIMUM*, IT MEANS NOT MARRIED TO MORE THAN ONE PERSON. THIS DOESN'T NECESSARILY DISQUALIFY A SINGLE PERSON. THE LANGUAGE USED IS EMPHASIZING FAITHFULNESS TO ONE'S SPOUSE.

THE ESV STUDY BIBLE ADDS: "THE PHRASE LITERALLY STATES, "OF ONE WOMAN [WIFE] MAN [HUSBAND]." (1) MANY COMMENTATORS UNDERSTAND THE PHRASE TO MEAN "HAVING THE CHARACTER OF A ONE-WOMAN MAN," THAT IS, "FAITHFUL TO HIS WIFE." THERE ARE SOME WHO WOULD SUGGEST A DIVORCED OR REMARRIED PERSON IS DISQUALIFIED BASED ON THIS QUALIFICATION AND THAT'S LIKELY SOMETHING TO BE DISCUSSED AND DETERMINED BY EACH LOCAL CHURCH. REMEMBER, PAUL IS WRITING A FOUNDATIONAL HANDBOOK, NOT DEALING WITH EVERY POSSIBLE VARIABLE OR HYPOTHETICAL.

TEMPERATE: ESV: "SOBER-MINDED". SOMEONE WHO IS TEMPERATE HAS AN EMOTIONAL TEMPERATURE THAT IS JUST RIGHT - NOT BOILING OVER, NOT FREEZING COLD. THEY ARE REASONABLE RATHER THAN EXTREME. MERRIAM-WEBSTER DEFINED TEMPERATE AS IT RELATES TO TEMPERATURE AS "HAVING A MODERATE CLIMATE WHICH ESPECIALLY LACKS EXTREMES IN TEMPERATURE."

PRUDENT: ESV: "SELF-CONTROLLED". WHILE TEMPERATE SPEAKS OF THE EMOTIONS, PRUDENT SPEAKS OF THE ACTIONS. THE OVERSEER OUGHT TO USE WISDOM AND NOT BE FOOLISH. SENSIBLE AND SELF CONTROLLED. NOT PRONE TO RECKLESS BEHAVIOR. REASONABLE. WEBSTER DEFINES PRUDENCE AS "THE ABILITY TO GOVERN AND DISCIPLINE ONESELF BY THE USE OF REASON."

Q - WHY ARE TEMPERANCE AND PRUDENCE IMPORTANT QUALITIES OF A CHURCH LEADER?

RESPECTABLE: COMES FROM THE WORLD WHICH MEANS IN ORDER. IT IS THE SAME WORD USED IN 1 TIMOTHY 2:9 FOR "PROPER" CLOTHING OF A GODLY WOMAN. AN ELDER LIFE SHOULD BE PROPER AND IN ORDER ONE THAT DOES NOT REQUIRE UNDUE ATTENTION. AN ELDER'S LIFE SHOULD BE ABLE TO BE IMITATED.

HOSPITABLE: THIS IS AN IMPORTANT QUALITY OF A CHRISTIAN GENERALLY, AND CERTAINLY FOR AN ELDER. THE GREEK WORD MEANS "LOVE OF STRANGERS" (φιλόξενος *PHILOXENOS*) AND IS NOT JUST ABOUT BEING ABLE TO HOST A DINNER BUT ABOUT HAVING ONE'S LIFE AND HOME OPEN TO OTHERS, ESPECIALLY THOSE NOT IN ONE'S FAMILY. WEBSTER DEFINES HOSPITABLE AS "SHOWING A NATURAL KINDNESS AND COURTESY ESPECIALLY IN SOCIAL SITUATIONS." AN ELDER MUST BE WELCOMING, FRIENDLY, APPROACHABLE. AN ELDER'S MINISTRY IS IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH, NOT JUST BEHIND THE PULPIT.

ABLE TO TEACH: THIS IS AN IMPORTANT QUALIFICATION OF AN ELDER. THERE WILL BE SOME PUBLIC TEACHING/PREACHING. THERE WILL BE MUCH PRIVATE TEACHING/PREACHING. NOT ALL ELDERS WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR MAIN TEACHING AT THE WEEKLY SUNDAY TEACHING. THERE ARE SOME ELDERS WHICH WILL DEMONSTRATE THE GIFT OF TEACHING AND SOME WILL SERVE AS "TEACHING ELDERS" IN A MORE PUBLIC CAPACITY THAN OTHERS. BUT ALL SHOULD BE ABLE TO TEACH AND "SERVE THE WORD."

THE IMPLICATION OF THIS TELLS US THAT ELDERS SHOULD BE WELL VERSED IN THE GOSPEL, IN THE BIBLICAL NARRATIVE, THE SPECIFIC DOCTRINAL DISTINCTIVES OF THE CHURCH AND THE MATTERS OF LIFE ONE SHOULD WALK AS A CHRIST-FOLLOWER.

NOTE THE CONTRAST BETWEEN HOSPITABLE AND ABLE TO TEACH. THE EARLY CHURCH HAD A HOLISTIC CALLING OF AN ELDER NOT ONE OF AN EXALTED HIERARCHY - SEPARATING CLERGY AND LAYPERSONS. A SHEPHERD IS AMONGST HIS SHEEP, LEADING THEM, WATCHING OUT FOR THEM, CARING FOR THEM AND STEPPING IN THEIR POOP FROM TIME TO TIME TOO.

NOT ADDICTED TO WINE: MERRIAM-WEBSTER'S DEFINITION OF "ADDICTED": TO DEVOTE OR SURRENDER (ONESELF) TO SOMETHING HABITUALLY OR OBSESSIVELY. AN ELDER SHOULD HAVE A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP WITH THINGS THAT POTENTIALLY COULD BE ADDICTIVE.

NOT PUGNACIOUS: ESV, NLT, NIV, AND OTHERS TRANSLATE THIS AS NOT VIOLENT. "PUGNACIOUS" IS DEFINED AS HAVING A QUARRELSOME OR COMBATIVE NATURE, CONTENTIOUS. NOT A FIGHTER, NOT SOMEONE WHO ENJOYS QUARRELS.

GENTLE: THIS IS IN CONTRAST TO BEING PUGNACIOUS. GENTLE MEANS TO BE SOFT, EQUITABLE AND YIELDING NOT HARD, HARSH OR STUBBORN.

PEACEABLE: THIS IS ALSO IN CONTRAST TO BEING PUGNACIOUS. AN ELDER/SHEPHERD MUST BE STRONG AND WATCHFUL BUT BEING STRONG AND WATCHFUL ISN'T ANTITHETICAL TO BEING GENTLE AND PEACEABLE. THE GREEK WORD IS ἄμαχος (*AMACHOS*) WHICH LITERALLY MEANS ABSTAINING FROM FIGHTING. THE ESV USES THE PHRASE "NOT QUARRELSOME".

FREE FROM THE LOVE OF MONEY: THIS IS ALL ONE GREEK WORD (ἀφιλάργυρος *APHILARGYROS*). THE KJV SAYS "NOT COVETOUS." IN SOME CASES THE NEW TESTAMENT SPEAKS OF CHURCH LEADERS BEING FINANCIALLY SUPPORTED BY THEIR CHURCH YET, AN ELDER MUST NOT BE IN MINISTRY FOR THE MONEY. AN ELDER MUST NOT MAKE SHEPHERDING DECISIONS IN LIGHT OF THEIR OWN PERSONAL GAIN. AN ELDER MUST NOT SHOW FAVORITISM WHICH MIGHT BE FOR PERSONAL FINANCIAL GAIN. AN ELDER MUST LOVE GOD, HIS FAMILY, HIS CHURCH AND NOT MONEY. THE USE OF THE WORD "LOVE" INDICATES THIS IS AN ISSUE OF THE HEART.

ONE WHO MANAGES HIS OWN HOUSEHOLD WELL - KEEPING HIS OWN CHILDREN UNDER CONTROL WITH ALL DIGNITY. IF A MAN DOESN'T KNOW HOW TO MANAGE HIS OWN HOUSEHOLD, HOW WILL HE TAKE CARE OF THE CHURCH OF GOD?: THE QUALITY OF ONE'S MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE IS AN IMPORTANT INDICATOR OF THEIR QUALIFICATIONS AS CHURCH ELDER. CERTAINLY THIS DOESN'T IMPLY PERFECTION BUT IS THE ELDER LEADING HIS FAMILY WELL? ARE HIS CHILDREN BEING CARED FOR AND SHEPHERDED? ARE HIS CHILDREN REBELLIOUS AND DISOBEDIENT AND IF SO, HOW IS THE ELDER/FATHER RESPONDING?

ONE OUGHT NOT THINK THAT "CHURCH WORK" IS GREATER WORK THAN "HOME WORK". CARING FOR ONE'S MARRIAGE AND FAMILY IS A CRITICAL SPIRITUAL WORK FOR ALL CHRISTIANS AND ESPECIALLY ELDERS. ONE SHOULD NEVER NEGLECT ONE'S OWN HOUSEHOLD IN CARING FOR THE CHURCH. THE ELDER'S HOME MUST BE IN ORDER. THERE SHOULD BE GODLINESS THERE. HE SHOULD BE PASTORING HIS HOME WELL IF HE IS TO BE PASTORING THE CHURCH WELL.

THE WORD "DIGNITY" MEANS SERIOUSNESS. AN ELDER SHOULD TAKE SERIOUSLY THE CALL TO LEAD HIS FAMILY - AND ALSO RECOGNIZE THAT FOR FATHERS, THE ROLE OF PARENTING IS NOT ONE JUST LEFT TO MOM.

(SIDE NOTE: WHILE THE ROLE OF FATHER IS NOT PART TIME, THERE IS A DIFFERENT RELATIONSHIP ONCE CHILDREN ARE "OUT OF THE HOUSE". ADULT CHILDREN WITH THEIR OWN FAMILIES SHOULD STILL BE INFLUENCED BY GRANDPARENTS, BUT THEY ARE NO LONGER UNDER THE SAME AUTHORITY OF THEIR PARENTS).

NOT A NEW CONVERT (SO HE WILL NOT BECOME CONCEITED AND FALL INTO THE CONDEMNATION INCURRED BY THE DEVIL): THE WORD "NEW CONVERT" COMES FROM A SUPER HELPFUL GREEK WORD, (νεόφυτος *NEOPHYTOS*) WHICH LITERALLY MEANS A "NEW PLANTING". THINK ABOUT

THE DANGERS A NEW PLANTING MUST FACE. IT IS NOT CLEAR THAT A NEW PLANTING IS GOING TO LAST UNTIL SEASONS PASS AND THE EVIDENCE OF FRUIT IS CLEAR. IN THE FOUNDATIONAL PARABLE OF THE SOWER, THINK ABOUT THE THREATS AGAINST THE NEWLY PLANTED SEED (DEMONIC, PRESSURE, PLEASURE, ETC). A NEW CONVERT SHOULD SERVE BUT NOT LEAD. SPIRITUAL ZEAL IS NOT THE SAME AS SPIRITUAL MATURITY. KNOWING A LOT IS NOT THE SAME AS HAVING WISDOM/PRUDENCE.

THE RISK OF A NEW CONVERT AS A CHURCH ELDER IS THAT THEY COULD BECOME CONCEITED/PROUD AND SUSCEPTIBLE TO THE DEVIL'S TEMPTATIONS, THUS BLEMISHING GOD'S CHURCH.

Q - WHAT DANGER COULD A NEW CONVERT FACE IF THEY ARE PLACED IN A CHURCH LEADERSHIP POSITION?

Q - HOW LONG UNTIL A NEW CONVERT IS NO LONGER A NEW CONVERT?

A GOOD REPUTATION WITH THOSE OUTSIDE THE CHURCH (SO THAT HE WILL NOT FALL INTO REPROACH AND THE SNARE OF THE DEVIL): PEOPLE OUTSIDE OF THE CHURCH SHOULD SPEAK WELL OF THE ELDER. THEY SHOULD BE KNOWN AS A GOOD PERSON BY PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT CHRISTIANS. WHAT DO THEIR NEIGHBORS THINK? WHAT DO THEIR EMPLOYERS OR CO-WORKERS THINK? WHAT DOES THE POLICE/GOVERNMENT THINK? DO THEY PAY THEIR TAXES? DO THEY OBEY THE LAWS OF THE LAND? DO THEY BLESS OTHER PEOPLE? ARE THEY A FRIEND OF SINNERS? HOW DO THEY TREAT PEOPLE AT THE GROCERY STORE, RESTAURANT, COFFEE SHOP, TOWN HALL, DRIVING ON THE ROADS, ETC?

THERE ARE CERTAINLY CASES WHERE THE WORLD WILL SPEAK EVIL OF THE CHURCH AND CHURCH LEADERS, BUT IT OUGHT TO BE BECAUSE OF THE GOSPEL AND NOT BECAUSE OF THE CHURCH LEADER'S BEHAVIOR. THIS ALSO IMPLIES THAT THE CHURCH ELDER IS KNOWN BY THE COMMUNITY - THEY SHOULD NOT BE IN HIDING OR AVOIDING CONNECTING WITH THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITY. THEIR LOCAL WITNESS (THE WORD "REPUTATION" IS THE SAME WORD USED FOR WITNESS/TESTIMONY) IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO HONOR CHRIST!

THE OFFICE OF AN OVERSEER IS A WORTHY OFFICE TO ASPIRE TO. YET IT IS A HIGH CALLING AND ONE THAT AN INDIVIDUAL MUST QUALIFY FOR, NOT BY GRADUATING FROM A SEMINARY OR MNISTRY SCHOOL (THOSE MIGHT BE GOOD THINGS IN MANY CASES), BUT BY THE CHARACTER OF THE ELDER. THE CHURCH WOULD DO WELL TO PRAY FOR THEIR LEADERS AND ENCOURAGE THEM. THE ELDERS OUGHT TO PRAY OFTEN, REPENT OFTEN AND OFTEN REVIEW THESE QUALITIES AND THEIR OWN LIVES.

EACH ELDER OR PASTOR IS DIFFERENT. THE GOAL ISN'T TO BE THE MOST POPULAR OR CHARISMATIC, THE GOAL IS TO BE FAITHFUL, HUMBLE, LOVING AND GODLY. AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF JESUS CHRIST, AN ELDER MUST STRIVE TO BE LIKE THEIR OWN SHEPHERD, JESUS HIMSELF. AND IT IS THE QUALITIES OF CHRIST THAT THE CHURCH SHOULD OBSERVE, NOT JUST THEIR PERSONAL PREFERENCES.