

Elders 4

Titus 1:8-9

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, March 3, 2019

You can turn with me to the book of Titus. And as you're doing that, if you're joining us for the first time this morning, we're in a series called the "How to Plant a Church" series, because that's what the book of Titus is about. It's about how to plant a church or how to get it started and off the ground. In fact, from what we can tell in this book, the churches in Crete were already planted, but they hadn't really gotten off the ground yet. They needed a lot of work and needed some tender love and care, which is what Titus was told to do. If you look in chapter 1:5, these are his orders for the work in Crete. Paul says in verse 5, "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." After introducing himself and talking about his own life in ministry, Paul tells Titus about his job on the island and he says, "You need to set in order what remains." That's his job in Crete.

I've told you before, the phrase "set in order" comes from one word in Greek *ortho*, from which we get the word "orthodontist". I'm not going to ask you to raise your hands if you ever had braces as a child, but I had them, and I had to wear headgear. Anybody have to wear headgear? You can raise your hand. I had a dent in my head from all my middle school years from the headgear. But an orthodontist straightens teeth and Paul says, Titus' job was to straighten out the churches in Crete. Just as a dentist goes in with his tools and his instruments and he puts everything in order, puts it in place, Titus' job was to do that, verse 5 says, by appointing elders. That was how he was to straighten things out. "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders."

You can't really see this in English, but the word "appoint" there is plural in Greek, which means this was a job for everyone. Titus wasn't to do this alone. The church and Titus working together were to put men in place in leadership over the church.

We haven't talked about this before, but there are a lot of ideas floating around today about how the church should be run, about who should lead it. And just to kind of wet our appetite for our passage this morning, it might be good to mention a few of them. Like it was in Titus' day, there was a lot of confusion about church leadership. That's a common problem. It's been going on for thousands of years. So, let me just mention a few ideas that are out there about how to lead the church, a couple of models we could talk about.

One is what we could call the "Pastor as CEO" model of ministry. The "Pastor as CEO." That means the pastor is a Chief Executive Officer of the church. He's the head honcho and the big cheese. He sits on the throne and he tells people what to do and they do what he says. That's one model of ministry that's out there. I remember visiting a church in Tennessee years ago and asking the people, "Why do you do this and why do you do that?" (Because they had some unusual practices.) I said, "Why do you dress this way, and why do you sing those types of songs?" And they said, "Because that's what our pastor tells us to do." That was the answer I just heard over and over and over again. And we would turn to certain passages (they did) in the service, and I thought, "That's a strange way of interpreting that." I asked them, "Why do you

interpret it that way? Why do you hold this doctrine?” They said, “Because that's what our pastor does.” The problem with that is that that's a model that's never found in the Bible. Nobody acted that way in Scripture. You never saw a leader say, “Just do this because I said to do it.” He never says, “Believe this because I believe it.” There was always a reasoning process involved. Pastors are supposed to bring the people along. But you see that model of leadership a lot today. It's very common in Canada and the United States.

Which brings us to another model of church leadership that's popular today, that we could talk about. And that is the “Pastor as Employee” model of ministry. We could call this the “Pastor as Employee” model or the “Elder as Employee” model of ministry. We have the “Pastor as CEO,” now we have the “Pastor as Employee”, which is the opposite of that. According to this one, the pastor is the employee of the church. He's a servant of all, which means he does what everybody tells him to do. The people are on the throne, he is beneath, and they tell him his orders. So, if somebody needs to be visited, they tell him to visit them and they tell him how to do it from the sidelines. If somebody needs to be counselled, they tell him to counsel them and so forth and so on. The thinking is that that's what we pay him for, we give him a salary, so he should do what we want. But the problem there, is it's another model that's not seen in Scripture. The pastor should serve the people. He should love them and care for them and meet their needs any way that he can. But all the gifts don't reside in one man, right? And so, everyone needs to be serving. That's a model for burnout.

It leads to one more I would mention to you, one more model of leadership that's out there today. And this is what we could call the “Pastor as Guest Preacher” model of ministry or the “Multisite” approach, the “Pastor as Guest Preacher”. In this one, you have one man preaching to multiple sites at once, one man preaching to several churches simultaneously on a computer screen, and it's almost as if he's a guest. The people don't know him, they've never interacted with him. Sometimes, he's thousands of miles away, but it's the pastor as guest.

I know here at Grace Fellowship we did that for a season. There are seasons when you might need to do that. I don't mean that that's wrong in that sense - I mean to do that forever. This is very popular today for whatever reason. You've seen it in big cities. But the problem with this one, it's not in the Bible either. Biblically speaking, pastors are local, and we'll talk about that.

Which leads to one more model of ministry that brings us back to the book of Titus. This is the model we see in Scripture and that is an elder-led form of church government, an elder-led model of ministry. This is one where the church is led by a team of qualified men who are present with the congregation. They're not CEOs who call the shots. They don't sit on a throne, and they're not employees who do what everyone says, and they're not guests.

And you see this from a couple of angles in this verse (this is why I brought this up to you). For one, if you look back in Titus 1:5, you see that the word “elders” is plural there. So, the word “appoint” is plural, but the word “elders” is plural, which means this refers to more than one person. It's not just one guy. This is a team of men. This is a team of leaders overseeing the church. And like we said earlier, they are to be appointed. That word “appointed” *kathistemi* in Greek, it means “to set something over something”. It means they are to be put in a place of leadership.

There is a delicate balance here in the church where the elders are accountable to the people. They are appointed by them, but at the same time, they need to lead. They need to have the freedom to set a course for the church. And that leads to one more detail we see in this passage. You can get a lot of mileage out of one verse in the Bible, right? I mean, there's a lot of things in this one verse.

But that is that the elders are local leaders. If you notice in verse 5, Paul says, "Appoint elders in every city as I directed you." That's very interesting. That means these elders are to be local. They are to be in the churches. Apparently, there were multiple cities on the island of Crete that had churches in them. Crete was actually called the island of a hundred cities by Homer, because there were cities everywhere. And Paul tells Titus to put elders in every one of them that has a church.

If you think about it, in a place like Crete, that would have been very hard to do because you've got a very evil island, a very evil place, and you got to go (Titus' job was to go around) and train the evil out of these men in every church. Not just put one guy over all of them, that would have been easy to do, but every church should have its own elders.

This is the New Testament model of ministry, by the way. You plant a church and then you appoint elders for that church. Then you plant a church and you appoint elders for that church, and you plant a church and you appoint elders for that church. You see that over and over and over again in the Bible.

I say this gently, but it's important for us to think about this. There really is no such thing as an offsite elder in the Bible. That's called a Cardinal in the Catholic Church. That's called a Bishop or a Pope. Or if we want to be Biblical about it, apostles did that. Apostles led multiple churches at one time. Paul did that, Peter did that, but that office is closed now. There are no apostles today. So, every church is to be led by its own team of men.

This is known as the "principal of autonomy" or "self-rule". It means the church can rule itself. It is autonomous. It doesn't need outside leadership. It can for a period of time when it's being planted or something like that. It's also known as the "principal of congregationalism", which can be a confusing term, but in its strictest sense, congregationalism means the church governs itself. Leadership comes from within the congregation. Leaders are raised up in-house.

And this is what Paul goes on to talk about in verses 5 through 9, if you read the rest of this passage with me. I just want to read it. I won't say a whole lot about it, but Paul says in verse 5,

5 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.

We've been going through this passage extensively for the past couple of weeks. We've given it a lot of time, and I don't want to say too much about it by way of review here. Other than this is the type of man, Paul says, who should be leading the church. This is the type of man who should be an elder. These are his qualifications. And Paul starts to list out, if you notice in verse 6, everything kind of falls under this umbrella with the phrase "above reproach", "Namely if any man (verse 6 says) is above reproach." Everything else in the passage just kind of flows from that.

That phrase means not to be called into account or accused of anything. The King James Version has "blameless", which is a good translation. But this is a man who can't be blamed for anything. As Christians, we should live a life that's blameless and we should have leaders that are blameless. That's the idea. As believers, we are called to be above reproach, to be innocent of sin, and we should have leaders that do the same thing. H. A. Ironside once said, "You can forgive a leader for a lot of things, but you can't forgive him for hypocrisy." That's what this passage is saying. You want to put a guy over the church that's not a hypocrite. It's also been said that it's not the water outside the boat that sinks the boat, it's the water inside. And this is a man that doesn't have a lot of water inside or if he does, he's dealing with it before the Lord. I mean, if he leads you in sin, he will lead you all into sin. Does that make sense? If he leads you in an evil way or if he has evil in his heart, he will bring it into the church. And so, Paul fleshes that out here by saying this man needs to live an above reproach life in the home and in the family. He needs to do it in all these other areas.

And what I want to talk about this morning is I just want to wrap the list up with you. I want to finish it off. We've been in this for about a month now and we have spent a lot of time on this passage because it's very important for the life of our church as we consider leadership and things like that. But this morning, I just want to tie off the list this way. If you're taking notes in Titus 1:8-9, we're going to look at three final qualifications for an elder in the church. I promise you my next sermon will have four points, not three. I've had three points. I haven't put a poem in there. You guys heard the preacher of three points and a poem? No? Okay, maybe it's a Baptist thing, I don't know. But I don't put a poem in there, but I do have three points a lot. We'll have four points next time. But there's three final qualifications for an elder in the church. We're going to go through the first one pretty quickly because I want to look at the second and third one with you. But Paul has told the Cretans to appoint elders. That's clear from the passage. He has told them to set men over the church. Now, he tells them what to look for with three final qualifications.

And the first one is this, an elder must be devout and self-controlled. That's the first qualification we're going to look at it this morning. It probably goes without saying, but a man who's going to lead the church, he needs to be devout and self-controlled. He needs to be sincere (like we just talked about) and keep the water out of the boat. And if you look in verses 7 through 8, again, Paul says it this way. He says, "For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine or pugnacious or fond of sordid gain, but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout and self-controlled." Those are our last qualifications there in the list: devout and self-controlled.

These last two qualifications really should have probably gone in last week's sermon, because (I don't think I've told you this before) there are actually three categories to these qualifications for elders. The first category is the specific qualifications, which is the husband of one wife and children who believe. That's a very specific area of this man's life. The second category is the general qualifications: he must not be self-willed, quick-tempered. Those are very general. At the end of the list, you have the practical qualifications in verse 9. We'll talk about that in a moment. "Holding fast the faithful word..." - that's a very practical thing for an elder to do. But these next two should have gone in last week's sermon. These are general qualifications. They're referred to as general behaviour.

And Paul says the first one here is an elder must be devout. That word is *hagios* in Greek, which means holy. It's not the common word for "holiness", which means "set apart from sin". This word means "serious". This is a guy who is serious about his sin. He's earnest about it. He doesn't have to frown all the time at everything. Some people think serious means that. But he does frown at his sin all the time. He is sincere to the max. You cannot accuse this guy of hypocrisy. Which flows naturally into the next one there.

It says he is self-controlled. That means he has control over his behaviour. He's disciplined with his life. He has mastery over his sins, his sins don't master him. Does that make sense? You guys get that? He controls his sins, or, he gives it to the Lord who puts it on the cross. But it doesn't control him. As you can see in this passage, it takes a certain degree of self-control to live like this, doesn't it? And as you read through this, it takes a certain amount of discipline to be this way. In fact, this is the only way a man can live this way. This is the only way he can do these things, is by being disciplined. You can't live this way and do whatever you want. That's the idea. And this man knows that.

It was said that George Mueller, the director of the Ashley Down Orphanage in England in the 1800's was a very busy man. He wrote 30,000 letters a year to his friends and he pastored a church of over a thousand people. And he cared for multiple orphans at once. But it was said, the first thing George Mueller did every day when he got up was to read his Bible and pray every day before he did anything else. And he said he did that because - he said, "It was my first and greatest business every day to make sure my soul is happy in God." That's an elder-qualified man. He knows how to put everything on hold to make his soul happy in God, he has self-control.

And let me tell you why this is important, why self-controlled and being devout is in this list. Because churches are destroyed over a lack of self-control, amen? Churches are ruined by men who let their sin take over. Do I even have to say that? Do you guys know that already? That's common sense, right? Some time ago, I heard about a church in California that split because of a fight on the elder board. And when it was looked into, it was discovered that one of the elders who started the fight was having an affair. And it made him defensive and angry and irritable, which eventually split the church. Paul says, "You want to find a man who's not doing that. You want to find a man who is known for his control over himself." I think of another church that had a similar problem when it was discovered that one of the pastors was stealing money from the church. He was taking money on the side and a similar thing happened. Paul says, "You can't do that. You can't put a guy in leadership like that."

In fact, this was such a big deal in Crete, that if you look in verses 10 through 11, Paul goes on to say right after this, he says, “For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain.” This is why these elder qualifications are so long. This is why Paul spent so much time on this list, because there were men in Crete that were not qualified to lead and they were leading. They were upsetting families, they were being rebellious, their sin was taking over. And Paul says, “Titus, it's your job to step in there and deal with it.” It's a fine job, right? But that's what he was called to do. Whatever sin it is. Lust, pride, greed, sloth - you need to find men who are being victorious over it. And this is for everybody, right? This is for everyone in the church.

In a recent article, the CBC website said that 71% of all Canadian families are in debt. Now, I'm not saying that's all because of sin. That's not my point. My point is this study found, as they looked into that, a lot of that debt is just simply over a lack of self-control. It's not things that people need. It's just things that they just impulsively want to buy.

There was another study done that said that the average Canadian watches 30 hours of television a week. That comes to about four and a half hours a day. And if you factor in how much we sleep and go to work, there's not much time left over after that. And the point is that's all because of a lack of self-control. It's not just for our leaders. We all need to work on this together in Christ. We need to take our sins seriously or take our time seriously.

Second Timothy 1:7 says, “For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and self-control.” Paul says, “You shouldn't be timid about your sin.” You don't need to be intimidated by it. You don't need to say, “I don't know if I can beat this. I don't know if I can do anything about it.” Paul says, “You can beat it. You can have victory because God has given you that in Christ. You have the power to defeat sin.” Philippians 4:13 says, “I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.” The word “all” means “all” there. God didn't leave anything out. If you're struggling with sin this morning, you take it to Christ, and He can defeat it. There is no sin you can't beat in Him. And I'd like to say more about that, but like I said, I want to move on to the next qualification for an elder in this passage.

So, the first one is that he must be devout and self-controlled. That's the first one in our list for today. This is someone who is serious about his sin. He doesn't make crude jokes on the side and say, “Oh, I can do that. I have freedom in Christ.” He doesn't talk like that. He doesn't do things that might cause someone to stumble as much as it is to his ability to do that. He has mastery over his sins.

Which brings us to a second qualification, and that is that he must hold fast to the faithful word. If you're taking notes, that's the second one we'll look at this morning. He must hold fast to the faithful word. I just told you a moment ago this begins a new section in the list of elder qualifications because it talks about an elder's practical qualifications, what he should be doing, what he should be practicing. So far, Paul has told us what an elder should be and he spent a lot of time on the man's character, which is very important. But now, he shifts gears and he tells us what an elder should do. And he says in verses 8 through 9, he says, “But an elder must be hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled and he must be holding

fast to the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching.” If you notice as you read through this passage, there's a progression in the text. As Paul is describing elders and leaders in the church, he tells you what they should be and he just fires off one thing after another, like a bullet point form. They're just real quick. Most of those phrases you see in verses 6 through 8 are really one word in Greek. So, it's very quick. And then he gets to this one in verse 9 and he gives it a long explanation just to kind of show you the importance of this, to kind of draw it out a little bit.

And he says an elder needs to “hold fast to the faithful word, which is in accordance with the teaching.” That's kind of a hard phrase to translate into English, but the idea is that an elder must teach the Word of God as it has been taught to him. He must be a teacher first and foremost. Others have taught him the Bible, and now he must teach it to them. Others have discipleshiped him and trained him up in the ministry, men like Paul and Titus, and now, it's his job to do that for the next generation. If you read the book of Acts and you read in the letters of the New Testament, this is what they did. Paul, Peter, James, John, they would go into a church, plant the church, train up faithful men, and then they would go to the next town and do it again over and over and over again. And as they left, those faithful men, would train up other faithful men.

I've told you before about the relay race where one man carries the baton to the next guy who carries it to the next one, who carries it to the next one. He didn't create the baton. He can't boast in that, he just carries it. He's a delivery guy. He just makes sure that he doesn't drop it. This is why character is so important. This is what all these other qualifications are such a big deal, because you need to know that a man is going to do that before you make him an elder. You need to know he's not going to drop the baton. You don't want a man who's going to give up halfway through the ministry, halfway through the race. You don't want a guy who's going to do fine and do well until there's a big problem in the church and then he leaves. You want a guy who's going to hang in there.

To say this another way, an elder doesn't have to be a CEO or an entrepreneur or a businessman. That's not what this is about. That has nothing to do with it. He doesn't have to be an employee who makes everybody happy. He doesn't have to have the type of leadership skills that can lead multiple campuses at once. He has to be faithful. That's his job description. That's what he's called to do. He has to teach people the Word of God week in, week out, in good times and in bad, in dry seasons and in plentiful seasons. This is a big deal because there's so much confusion surrounding this today. I just told you some of those ideas floating around about what an elder should do in the church. This is a serious issue.

Several years ago, an interesting book was written by a man named Nathan O. Hatch called “The Democratization of American Christianity” in which he was talking about the effect democracy has had on churches, particularly in the States, but even worldwide. And he said it's done a lot of good. I mean democracy has done a lot of good things. And so, it was not a complaining type of book. But he did say one problem that democracy has brought is everyone thinks their opinion is authoritative now in the church. Everyone thinks they can come into church - and not just the church, the government as well, workplace, and they can give their opinion and take over and everybody has to do whatever they want. Paul says, it's not really the case because an elder has a very specific job to do. He has a very specific calling and nothing can take away from that. It

doesn't mean you don't listen to people and hear them out when they have thoughts about things and opinions. You need to do that. But at the end of the day, an elder does have a job to do. He's a teacher.

I have relatives...my mother-in-law's with me today, and I'm not talking about her by the way. I just want to qualify this. I don't want to embarrass my mother-in-law. I don't want to have a long car ride home...But I have relatives every year who love to tell me, every Christmas time or around that time what I need to be doing as a pastor. They've never been a pastor before, they've never been in that, but they love to tell me what I need to wear (and I guess they didn't like what I wear) and how I need to talk to get more people into the church. And sometimes, it's funny and sometimes it's not so funny. They say, "If you just get a cappuccino machine or if you just get a rocking worship band, then your church will grow. It will explode." And I remind them, people in British Columbia do not drink cappuccino, we drink coffee. But that's not my job, right? It's not the job of an elder. You need to hold fast to the faithful word cappuccino machine or not. "Faithful word" there could be translated "word of faith". It's another way of saying the Bible or the Word of God. And "teaching" is another way of saying doctrine. This is a man who teaches you sound doctrine. This is a man who teaches you the Bible. That's what he does. He doesn't have to be all these other things.

As Paul tells Timothy in Second Timothy 4:2, he says, "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and careful instruction." Paul tells Timothy, "You preach the Bible in season and out. That means when people like it and when they don't. You preach it when all they want is a cappuccino machine. You preach it when all they want is a rock and worship band and they want you to dress differently."

He says in Second Timothy 2:15, even more seriously. He says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." Paul says, "Timothy, you're going to stand before God for this one day. You're not going to stand before men. You're not going to stand before people they like and people they don't and all that sort of thing. You're going to present yourself to God, so you need to handle the Word in such a way that you won't be ashamed on that day."

Al Mohler says, your job as a pastor and elder is very simple at the end of the day. Sunday morning, you stand up, you read the text, you explain the text, and then you sit down. Next Sunday, you stand up, you read the text, you explain the text and you sit down. Next Sunday, you stand up, read the text, explain the text and sit down. He didn't talk about what you have to do throughout the week and that kind of thing. But that's true though, right? Sunday morning, that's the job that Paul is describing here. You want a man who will explain the Word of God to you.

By the way, this is not just for full time pastors. There's no differentiation in verse 9. This is for any elder. Any elder needs to be able to do this for you in the church. He needs to be able to open up the Word of God and explain it to you.

Which leads to one more qualification for an elder that we're going to look at today. And this is really the last one in the list. Just to review the other ones, first Paul says that an elder must be

devout and self-controlled. He must be serious about his sins, serious about his walk with the Lord. Second, he must be hold fast to the faithful word. We just talked about that. That's the first practical qualification. He should be able to teach the Bible to people. This is the one difference between an elder and a deacon, by the way. Deacons need to be all these other things as well, but deacons don't have to be able to teach. Elders do have to be able to do that. That's just one differentiation between the offices there.

That brings us to a third final qualification for an elder, and that is that he must exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict. That's the last one in verse 9. If you see there, he must exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict, which means that he has to make his teaching personal for people. He needs to be able to open up the Bible and sit down with someone and say this is what this means for you right now, not just up here from the pulpit, but in your day-to-day life. If you read on in verse 9, he says, "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." As Paul closes this section out and he draws these elder qualifications to a close, he mentions two specific duties of an elder back to back, one right after the other.

On the positive side, he says an elder must exhort in sound doctrine. That means to encourage someone. I've said this several times in this passage with you guys, an elder needs to be an encouraging guy. He doesn't need to be the kind of guy that you walk out feeling deflated all the time, right? That's not his job. The word "exhort" comes from two words in Greek, *para* – alongside, and *kaleo* - to call someone or to come alongside someone. This is a man who comes alongside you for the purpose of encouragement and helping you.

And then on the flip side, the negative side of this, Paul says he must be able to refute those who contradict the doctrine. The word "refute" means "to hold someone accountable for sin". In other words, this is a man, an elder is a man who knows when to speak for and when to speak against someone. He knows when to say, "You can do this, you're doing a good job," and when to say, "You can't do this, you need to cut it out." He's got to be able to wear both hats.

I think Steve Lawson said, when you preach, it's ducker pucker. People want to kiss you or they want to throw things at you and you got to duck. Well, that's what he does. John Calvin says an elder has to have one voice for the sheep and another voice for the wolves. He knows how to talk to both people. He knows how to talk to those who want to please God and help the flock, but they're struggling a little bit, and he knows how to talk to those who aren't trying to help anybody but themselves. I don't have to tell you that everyone doesn't come to church for the same reasons. You guys know that. And some people come to church because they want to please the Lord and they're trying to honour Him. It's just hard for them right now. And some come to church because they just want power or respect or those types of things. And an elder, Paul says, an elder needs to know how to spot which is which, and talk to them.

First Thessalonians 5:14 says, "We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak and be patient with everyone." And if you notice in that passage as well, there are several groups of people mentioned there just like this one: the unruly, fainthearted and the weak. And Paul says, an elder knows how to deal with each person

specifically. You can't talk to everybody the same way in the church. You don't want to admonish the fainthearted, do you? If someone's on the ground, you don't want to step on them. Everybody say "amen" to that. Please don't step on those who are on the ground. On the flip side, you don't want to encourage the unruly. I mean, if someone is splitting the church and causing trouble and making problems, you don't want to say, "Way to go, keep it up." You want to say, "Stop!" And leaders in the church have to deal with both parties.

To say this another way (and this is something we talk about a lot here), an elder needs to know how to counsel people, how to shepherd people. He needs to know how to meet them where they are and help them with their problems.

Martin Lloyd Jones once said...(Martin Lloyd Jones was a doctor who became a pastor in London, England. He had a very interesting life. If you ever get a biography of his, I encourage you to read it. He was a very famous doctor and became a very godly pastor.)...But he once said that in medicine, the prescription can be the same for two people, but the dosage is usually different. And what he means is that people can have the same problem and you're going to deal with it similarly in some ways, but it's also different because everybody has a different body. And it's the same way, Lloyd Jones went on to say, with your soul, everybody has a different soul. So, everyone needs the Bible. Everyone needs the Word of God, but some need to learn from this passage and some need to learn from that one. And some people need to be patted on the back and some people need to be confronted face to face. And that's what an elder does. He knows how to exhort and refute people. He knows how to shepherd them.

This is why you can't have offsite elders, by the way. I don't know if I can emphasize that enough. But you can't do this offsite. You can do it in large congregations because if you have a large elder board, the men can meet the needs and those types of things. That can be done that way. But if you never see the people, if the elders never see the people, you can't do that. This is why a pastor can't be a CEO or just the employee of the church because a CEO and an employee can't do those things.

And this all raises a question that we can talk about this morning as we tie this together: how does this apply to us? What does this have to do with our lives? As we've gone through this passage in the previous weeks, it has been very easy to tie these elder qualifications into our lives, because they apply to all of us. There are things that we're all expected to do, but not everyone is called to exhort and refute like this. We're all called to counsel each other and we're all called to do this in that way. So, there is some overlap. But this is a little different because Paul is talking specifically about leaders here. So, how does this apply to us? And I wrote down a couple things just to mention these to you. For one thing, as a church, you need to grow in your love for the Bible, so you can spot a man like this. You need to have the discernment as a congregation to spot and identify people that can do this. You need to grow in your love for the Bible so you can actually tell when someone is teaching it to you. There are a lot of Christians today who can't do that. They can't spot a good teacher for the life of them. They listen to anything. One of the Hebrew words for "fool" means "open-minded". And it means everything goes in and everything goes out of your head. And some Christians listen to sermons and read books like that. It just all goes in and out. You're not supposed to be that way. You should have a sign on your ears that says, "Truth only in here. I only want to hear the Bible and nothing else."

Which leads to another way this applies, and that is you need to apply what you hear. And what I mean is you need to take what you hear and live it out. Make it a part of your life. Don't read the Bible just to read it, don't listen just to listen. One way you can tell if someone is teaching you the Word of God is that your life is becoming more godly as you sit under their instruction. Does that make sense? If you're not growing in godliness from what you're hearing or what your reading, then that is not coming from God. That's one major criticism a lot of people have, rightly so against some of the television preachers, is if this is a ministry of God, a lot of these men are not living godly lives and neither are their congregations. But one way to tell that it is coming from God is you are growing in godliness. We said this last week, but you should read the Bible to change and not just to be challenged.

Which leads to one more way to apply this to your life, and this is something you do very well. By the way, as I was thinking through this, I thought about you guys because you do so well at this. You need to be teachable. If you want good teachers like this, you need to be teachable and approach the Word of God with a humble heart. Jesus told us four times in the Gospels that "he who has ears to hear, let him hear." You remember that statement? You know what that means? That means he who has ears that work, let them work, right? If nothing is blocking the ears, then just open them up and listen to the Word of God. He also said about 12 times, He said, "Have you not heard, and have you not read?" This is what it boils down to: are you hearing what God has to say? Are you listening to his Word?"

The author Charles Swindle once wrote about a time when he was very busy. He had a lot of things going on in his life and his daughter was trying to get his attention and tell him something. And she said, "Don't worry daddy, I'll tell you really fast. I won't waste your time." And he felt really bad about that and he said, "Well, no honey, you're not wasting my time. You can tell me slowly." To which, she replied, "Then daddy, you need to listen slowly." I think we all need to take a lesson from that, don't we? We all need to slow down a little bit when we come to church, when we come to our Bibles, when we come to things like sermons and the songs that we sing. We need to drop what we're doing and pay attention and listen to God's Word as it's spoken to us.

Again, I think you guys do a wonderful job of that. I just encourage you to excel still more. And let me pray for us that the Lord would help us to do that, that He would give us grace as we strive to listen to His Word.

Father, we thank you Lord for this passage that we've gone through this morning and this whole passage of elder qualifications. I pray for my brothers and sisters here. I don't know how many are aspiring for eldership, but even those that aren't Lord, as they see what kind of leaders that they're looking for, and as they see how that reflects in their own life, I pray this passage would have been very devotional for us. I pray that it would have challenged us in our hearts to grow in godliness and to thank you Lord, that you are a God who changes us like this in Christ.

Father, thank you for the Word of God. Thank you that it can be taught to us, that men can open it up and explain it. It is an explainable book. It is a clear book, and it's true because You have written it that way. We thank you, Father, for Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ who opens our eyes to what it says. He opens our ears to hear.

And if there's any here this morning who don't know Him, Lord, I pray they would come to Christ for the forgiveness of sins in salvation. For those who have trusted in Him, may they be encouraged by this time of fellowship. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.