

DESERT VIEW BIBLE CHURCH

PRAYING FOR OUR NEW PASTOR

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-7

9.12.21

MAIN POINT

As members of a church installing and celebrating our new lead pastor, you have the privilege of praying for and supporting the man who will teach, oversee, and serve as an example to the congregation for many years to come.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Spend a few minutes discussing why we need leaders in different areas of life, such as government, church, business, and so on. What are the potential pitfalls and obstacles of a society without leaders?

When you hear the word “pastor,” what comes to mind? What key characteristics should a pastor possess?

What are our major responsibilities toward the pastors who serve our congregation?

Today's text indicates that the leaders overseeing and serving God's people in the church are significant in God's eyes. Pastors have a heavy responsibility as shepherds of the church, and should be prayed for regularly. How can we support our new Senior/Lead Pastor in very tangible ways his new role? What is our role in following his lead? What is our responsibility to care for our pastors and their families? Today's study will explore these questions.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

The apostle Paul wrote two letters of encouragement and instruction to his protégé Timothy, who accompanied Paul on two of his missionary journeys and was the pastor of the church at Ephesus. Paul's primary motivation in these letters is to mentor Timothy and give practical advice for Christian living. In today's text, Paul's advice focused on the qualifications for and expectations of church leaders (and any of us who are spiritual leaders in the lives of others). As we'll see, it's important that the message of the church be biblical, and that the leaders of the church maintain a certain character. As we look to pray for and affirm our spiritual leaders, this passage of Scripture gives practical implications for the standard to which God holds His leaders.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 TIMOTHY 3:1-7.

When it comes to spiritual leadership in the church, God sets apart certain qualities as necessary for that work—a work Paul distinguished as “noble” (v. 1). Why is church leadership a “noble work”?

In verses 2-7, Paul listed specific characteristics that make it clear a leadership position in the church is not to be taken lightly. These characteristics describe the character of a person who would serve as pastor. The list is not intended to be exhaustive, but it envisions a person of mature Christian character.

Looking at verses 2-4, why do you think we should pray for our pastors' protection?

Pastors have quite an expectation to fulfill. On top of that, they must maintain good self-control, be sensible, respectable, and hospitable. They must be good teachers, gentle, not argumentative, not greedy. To add just a little more pressure, their families must reflect the gospel. This is why we pray for our pastors' protection.

According to verse 4, what is the connection between leadership in the church and one's home life?

In verse 4, Paul's emphasis was not that a pastor must be married and have children. Rather, if he has a wife and children, the leader is to manage his own household competently and keep his children under control with all dignity. The leader is to exercise proper authority with sensitivity and care in his home. Of course, Paul did not mean the pastor's home is a perfect

model with no problems. He stressed that a leader manages his home with dignity, love, truth, and discipline. The one answer to Paul's rhetorical question (v. 5) is, "he can't." But if an overseer succeeds with his own family, likely he will succeed in God's family, too.

Realizing that our pastors are not super-Christians, how can we specifically pray for and encourage them as they balance family life and church life?

What threat does pride (v. 6) have on effective leadership?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ HEBREWS 13:17.

According to this verse, what is our relationship to our pastor-shepherd supposed to look like?

What happens when church members disobey the command found in this verse?

The primary role for pastors and elders is to be shepherds of God's flock that is under their care. This is not an optional assignment, but a command. It echoes Christ's command to Peter to "take care of My sheep" (see John 21:16). To shepherd means "to lead, to guide, and to rule." Just as pastors have a primary responsibility to shepherd the members of the flock, the members have a primary responsibility: submission to their pastors, who have been given the responsibility of leadership. This command indicates a spirit of cooperation, as opposed to dissatisfaction with the leadership. It describes a willingness to support the pastors' directions.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 12:12.

What are Paul's three commands to believers in this verse? How do these commands relate to a circumstance in which a church is seeking a shepherd-pastor to lead them?

Of the three commands, which one is the hardest to do? Why?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Assess your attitude toward your pastors and church leaders. Do you hold yourself to the same standards you hold them to? Why or why not?

What can our group do to encourage new lead pastor? Come up with an idea today and consider when to implement it.

Will you pledge to pray daily for the senior pastor and the other pastors/directors/staff who are currently on our church staff? Although they may not be the senior pastor, they are pastors nonetheless and need the support of our congregation.

PRAYER

Pray for your church staff members by name. Pray that they will feel encouraged in their ministry and will continue to exhibit godly character in both their jobs and their homes. Pray specifically for your pastors' families, protection, and physical and mental health. Pray that they would cultivate their personal relationship with Christ. Finally, pray for the man called to serve your church as its senior pastor.

COMMENTARY

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-7

3:1. Paul reminded Timothy, a leader in the church at Ephesus, about a second saying he described as trustworthy. These formal statements, occurring five times in Paul's writings to Timothy and Titus, were likely cherished beliefs first-century Christians held and frequently voiced in Sunday worship. The sayings also served as theological benchmarks regarding Christian beliefs that mattered most to them. The specific saying here was "If anyone aspires to be an overseer, he desires a noble work." Throughout the New Testament the words "overseer," "elder" (Acts 20:17), or "pastor" (Eph. 4:11) refer to a church leader. Today we

usually refer to this specific church leader as pastor. Every local church must have leadership as its backbone. A church leader must first and foremost be a person of godly character, which Paul described in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. Some of the same qualifications for leaders are listed in Titus 2:2-7a in reference to all believers. The beauty of Christlikeness can shine in every Christian, and even more brightly in church leaders.

3:2. Paul wrote a long list of qualifications for those aspiring and desiring the leadership role of pastor/overseer/elder. He demanded these of an overseer. The first requirement is “above reproach”, which Paul likely used as an all-encompassing must for anyone seeking leadership in the church. One above reproach has a spotless character with such integrity that no one, whether Christian or non-Christian, can successfully charge him as unfit for the role of overseer and deservedly so. Paul left no room for moral laxity in the life of a pastor. To specifically teach what living above reproach means, he followed with ten moral qualities for a godly leader’s moral character. First is “husband of one wife,” a phrase describing a one-woman husband, a man devoted to the wife he deeply loves and thus is not sexually promiscuous. In the first century, immorality was the norm; Paul demanded Christian leaders reflect the sanctity of the Christian home.

Next is “self-controlled,” meaning sober-minded, clear-headed, free from rash actions. “Sensible” describes a person whose judgment is thoughtful, evenhanded, and thus trustworthy. The sensible leader is not erratic or unpredictable in decision making. “Respectable” refers to an orderly, disciplined lifestyle that reflects inner steadiness. If a person’s lifestyle is chaotic, how can he create and maintain order in the church? Together these three words picture a leader who is able to conduct himself in an orderly fashion as he performs pastoral duties. “Hospitable” is the next character quality Paul demanded of a Christian leader in God’s church. It reflects the attitude and action of keeping an open house to Christian servants, an especially important service in the first century when traveling believers needed a place to eat, rest, and sleep, as well as hospitality toward needy members of the local congregation. Church leadership is not enough. It must extend into the overseer’s home. “An able teacher” is the one quality in Paul’s list that doesn’t necessarily apply to believers generally but to overseers particularly. God calls and equips pastors to skillfully teach correct doctrine, refute error, and build up the Christian flock in God’s Word.

3:3. “Not addicted to wine” is Paul’s first negative qualification. The overseer must control a thirst for wine. Getting drunk is unacceptable behavior. Better to avoid it altogether. Additional negatives are “not a bully” and “not quarrelsome.” A man who bludgeons believers to do what he wants, who chooses fists over reasonable arguments to get things done, doesn’t have the right stuff for church leadership. Instead of looking for a fight, the overseer must be “gentle,” or kind, forbearing, willing to show flexibility to others’ points of view. “Not greedy” is another negative requirement of a church leader. Greediness is bad; generosity is good. Pondering get-rich-schemes obviously contrasts with having God’s people and their spiritual needs utmost in the leader’s heart.

3:4. Paul next turned to the overseer's home life. In verse 4, his emphasis is not that a church leader must be married and have children. Rather, if he has a wife and children, the overseer manages his own household competently and keeps his children under control with all dignity. The overseer is to exercise in his home proper authority with sensitivity and care. Of course, Paul did not mean the pastor's home is a perfect model of home life with no problems. He stressed that an overseer manages his home with dignity, love, truth, and discipline. The one answer to Paul's rhetorical question (v. 5) is, "He can't." If an overseer succeeds with his own family, likely he will succeed in God's family.

3:6-7. The final two qualifications are "not be a new convert" and "have a good reputation among outsiders." Without spiritual maturity, not necessarily maturity in age, conceit may swell up in a spiritually immature leader's heart. Then the devil steps in with condemnation, trapping the leader in the grip of trouble, loss, and ruin. Last on the list is that the overseer must "have a good reputation among outsiders" (that is, non-Christians). The overseer's good standing and name in the community of unbelievers is important as a witness to them. Consequently, the devil focuses on setting his trap to bring the pastor and his flock into disgrace with the likely result that unbelievers turn their noses up at the gospel.

HEBREWS 13:17

With v. 17 there is a shift in topic to the issue of the response of the readers to their church leaders. Verse 17 is one sentence in the Greek text. The author uses a double exhortation: "obey your leaders and submit." The present imperative "obey" probably has an iterative sense of "continue to obey" or "obey on a regular basis." The second imperative, "submit," is also in the present tense. The word originally meant "to withdraw; give way to," and then figuratively came to mean "yielding to authority." It is a stronger and more specific word than the preceding "obey" and carries with it the implication that one is to yield when the leader's rule is at variance with the reader's wishes.

The reason for the obedience is introduced by *gar* which is left untranslated in the NIV: "[for] they keep watch over you." The Greek pronoun *autoi*, "they," is overtly used by the author in its clause initial position for emphasis. The sense is "they themselves and none other." This serves to place emphasis on the authority of the leaders. The implied predicate of "submit" may be the direct object "yourselves" or an indirect object "to them." Lane and the NIV supply "to their authority" as the indirect object. The verb translated "keep watch" implies constant vigilance, wakefulness, or sleeplessness. It is used in Mark 13:33 and Luke 21:36 meaning "to be vigilant in awareness of threatening peril." Here and in Eph 6:18 it connotes "to be alertly concerned about." The shepherding aspect of pastoral duty seems to be implied in this verb, and this is supported by the author's reference to Jesus the great Shepherd of the sheep in the benediction in v. 20. The NIV renders the Greek "souls" as "you."

The leaders keep watch over the readers “as men who must give an account.” Most commentators take this as expressing necessity, hence the translation “must.” However, Lane argued that such an approach misses the subjective-voluntative force of this classical idiom. He suggested the translation “as those who intend to give an account.” This clause is introduced by *hos*, “as,” and may be taken to indicate manner, as in the NIV, or as indicating reason with the sense, “because they must give an account.” This is followed by a *hina* clause which most take to be expressive of purpose: “so that they can do this with joy” (HCSB). Lane interpreted the clause imperatively: “Let them do this.” Either way, the notion of purpose is present. The phrase (lit.) “with joy” can be taken to mean joy “over their obedience” or joy “in keeping watch,” with the latter option the most likely. The NIV “not a burden” renders the negated participle *mē stenazontes*, “not sighing/groaning.” The author’s desire is that the leaders may do their pastoral duty with joy and not with sighing or groaning, where the participle in Greek expresses manner. The burden can be taken as what the leaders experience if the readers disobey or in the sense of if the leaders had to give a negative account. The final clause in the sentence is introduced by the subordinating *gar* which provides another reason for the readers to obey their leaders: if the leaders’ work is a burden to them because of the uncooperative spirit of the readers, “that would be of no advantage to you,” The Greek *alusiteles*, “of no advantage,” occurs only here in the New Testament. Its interesting etymology originally meant “not worth the price” or “not covering one’s expenses.” The meaning in our context is along the lines of “unprofitable, not advantageous, not worthwhile, detrimental.” Since the author uses “you” here and not “we,” he probably considers himself to be one of the leaders of the church.

ROMANS 12:12

The apostle Peter spoke of being born anew “into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 1:3). The reality of that hope brings joy. This world will have its full share of difficulties (John 16:33), but the believer is to be steadfast in time of trouble. The realization that life is to some extent an obstacle course keeps a person from being surprised when things do not go as planned. Afflictions are to be borne patiently. And the source of spiritual help during such times is prayer. So Paul counseled his readers, “Steadfastly maintain the habit of prayer” (Phillips). Barclay comments, “No man should be surprised when life collapses if he insists on living it alone.” Most Christians will confess the difficulty of maintaining a regular and effective prayer life. The reason is not difficult to discern. If Satan can keep us out of touch with God, he will not have to worry about any trouble we might cause for his evil kingdom.