

Qualifications of Elders

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[0:00] I'll read the first seven verses of 1 Timothy 3. Here is a trustworthy saying. If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.

Now the overseer must be above reproach. The husband of but one wife. Temperate.

Self-controlled. Respectable. Hospitable.

Able to teach. Not given to drunkenness. Not violent, but gentle. Not quarrelsome. Not a lover of money.

He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?

He must not be a recent convert or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

[1:09] When employers are looking for new employees, someone to work for them, someone to do a job for them, sometimes they'll put out some information for people seeking jobs.

They'll put it on the radio perhaps or in an ad in the newspaper so that people will know that they are in search of employees. And they'll give some information, usually some key items included.

And often among them are a job title and a description so that people looking for jobs know what sort of job this employer wants to be done and what it involves, what's the title and what does that person do.

And then oftentimes they'll also include some qualifications so a person knows whether or not they should bother applying at all. If it says non-negotiable, you must have a master's degree to apply for this job, and I've got a bachelor's degree and not a master's degree, then I'm not going to bother applying for it because the employer's told me clearly what he wants.

Well, Paul isn't writing a job ad here. Not exactly, but there are some similarities. Last week we took a look at overseers and deacons and their roles in the church.

[2:28] And there's the job title and the description. There's two jobs. There's overseer and there's deacon. There's the title and we looked at their roles and what they do last week. There's a bit of the job description. And tonight we come to the qualifications for the overseer, for the elder, the pastor, the shepherd in the church.

We want to see what it is God expects of those who would lead his flock. Christ is Lord over all things. God has given him his head over all things for the church.

What does Christ want for his church? Christ is the great shepherd. What does he want his under shepherds to be like? What does he want them to be characterized by? And there's several reasons to look at this tonight.

And listen to some of these reasons. And you'll find that you fit in at least one of them. And likely more than them. Which should give you every reason to listen tonight.

Some people might look at this and say, Well, this is about elders in the church. So we've got about three people in our church that need to listen. Well, that's not it at all. Listen to some of these reasons why we need to look at these things from God's Word.

[3:35] And there's one of them. Most obviously, it is God's Word. And everything in God's Word is profitable for his people. And so don't ever come to a section of God's Word and assume that it's going to be useless for you.

Even if you happen to be a woman who last time we saw very clearly is not to have the role of elder in the church. And you're talking about the role of elder in the church. There's going to be something here for women.

Something here for everyone. Because it is God's Word. And it is profitable. So we listen. And because it's God's Word. Secondly, it should be good for us because it's a helpful measure for current elders in the church to be evaluated.

By the church and by themselves. These qualifications should ever be before me. I must pray over them.

Seek to be certain my life stacks up against them. And pray for the grace and the power of the indwelling Spirit. Such a marvelous prayer we just prayed. Together in song.

[4:37] Together in song praying for the help of the Holy Spirit. I can't be or do these things in my own strength. When we see something like this, it should immediately drive us to our knees.

And this in many ways has been a painful week. Studying these things. Having to pray and seek forgiveness and continued grace. And I'd ask you to pray for your pastors as you look at these things tonight.

Pray for your pastors. Because we are not sufficient for the task. Not in our strength. It's only God who makes us sufficient for these things. And so they serve as a measure to evaluate our current elders.

We do that every three years or so for each person in office in the church. And for self-evaluation.

And as you think, again, please pray. But another reason to look at these things.

It also gives us a standard by which to evaluate future candidates for the eldership here. Last week we encouraged you to be praying that the Lord would provide pastors in the future.

[5:43] Because we're not always going to be here. You won't always have the three pastors that you do now. There will be others in the kindness of God. Should He tarry?

And should He preserve us? And so here's the standard by which we evaluate such future candidates. Who should we have as our pastors? Here is the job description and the qualifications. Another reason to look at them. For some who are considering the ministry. Again, as we encouraged you to do last time. Some of you men and young men. And here's the place to begin examining your heart.

To see if God is indeed calling you to this work. It's a good work. We saw that in verse 1. But it's not for everyone. And here's who it's for.

These sorts of people. There's a therefore in verse 2. And we've got now in the NIV. And therefore is a little bit better. It is necessary therefore that the overseer be above reproach.

[6:40] You see, it's a good work. Therefore, it requires a good man. And here's the standard by which you can examine yourself. To see if you might be called.

If you're wondering if God has called you to that work. And finally, and maybe not so obvious. One last reason to look at these things. With the exception of one of these qualifications.

Each of them has some application to all of God's people. Not just elders in the church. Not just pastors. These things, again, with the exception of one.

Are Christian graces. That ought to mark all of our lives. And so, don't just think about your pastors tonight. Or possible future pastors.

Do that. And pray. But think about yourself tonight. And pray that God would make these things true in your life. You can't say, God, these are for pastors. I'm off the hook.

[7:37] No. These are things you'll see as we go through them. That should mark all of God's people. And so, may God help us then as we look at these things. For these various reasons.

To apply them to our hearts in particular ways. We'll divide them into two categories. Things. The overseer. The pastor. The shepherd. Again, we'll use those words interchangeably.

The elder. Things he must be. And then secondly, we'll look at things he must not be. Here are the things that are required. And here are the things that cannot be true. Of the man of God.

And notice, first of all, that he must be these things. These are not optional. There's one tiny little three letter word in Greek. And it means, it is necessary. And it's the first word in this verse.

It is necessary, therefore, for the overseer to be. Above reproach and so on. The things that follow are not optional. It doesn't say, if you can find a man with all of these things to be your elder, great.

[8:35] But if you can't, settle for something less. No. He must be these things. They're not optional. They are non-negotiable necessities in the life of the pastor.

He must be, first of all, above reproach. And this one seems to serve as sort of an overarching qualification to all the others. In each of these areas, in his whole life, he must be above reproach.

And that means he must have a good reputation. Here we'll talk about within the church. We'll see later. He has to have a good reputation outside the church as well. But he must be above reproach so that no one speaks poorly of him or reproaches him.

And the reason that they don't speak poorly of him or reproach him is because there's nothing to speak ill of. He has a good reputation and he deserves it. It's not just that he has it and doesn't deserve it.

He has it and he deserves it. He is above reproach. He is without stain. He is blameless. There's no handle by which you can get a hold of.

[9:42] If you're looking for a way to accuse this man, there's no place where you can get a good firm handhold. It's like trying to scale the face of a cliff without any good handholds. There's no place to latch on to him.

The thing that popped into my mind was I remember Pastor John preaching on these things some time ago. And I think he used the illustration of the greased pig where you're chasing him around the pen and you try to catch him and you can't get a handle on him.

The thing that came to my mind was a wet bar of soap in the shower. And if you've ever started to drop a wet bar, it's slippery. You can't get your hands on it.

And you lose it and you start to juggle it and you drop it. And that's sort of the idea of the word here. If you're looking for a way to get a hold of this guy to accuse him, you can. He's squeaky clean.

Just like a bar of soap would be. It's not to say that you know there's something wrong with him and you can't just figure it out. There's not something there to lay hold of for you to get a handle on and accuse him.

[10:46] It's not to say he's perfect. There's only one who walked the earth who is ever perfect. And that is the son of God. But it is to say that his deserved reputation is above reproach.

He is not sinless, but he is putting sin to death. It's the sort of person to whom you can point and say, model your life after him as he models his life after Christ.

Not that a pastor would point to himself and say that. Paul could under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. But that's the kind of person you're talking about. And again, not to say that you can point and say he never sins, but look what he does when he does sin.

Look what he does with that and how he takes it straight to the cross. He must be above reproach in his life. No handle for accusation. Obviously, this is going to be a necessity for the minister.

Otherwise, he's going to leave himself open to accusations of hypocrisy. He's going to be standing before you preaching one thing and in his life doing something else. And that leaves him open to an ineffective ministry.

[11:58] That will destroy a ministry. If a man is not above reproach and he is seeking to preach and teach as though he is, you're going to find as we go that this isn't just an arbitrary list.

Paul's not just reaching for adjectives here to describe a holy man. These are things that are essential for ministry. You can't be without them. And so I have to ask myself in all things, am I above reproach?

But so must you. Later, Paul uses this word of everybody in Ephesus. He's talking about how to care for widows. And he says in chapter 5 and verse 7, he says, Give the people these instructions so that no one may be open to blame.

Same word. So that everyone may be above reproach. And so you too must examine your life even as your pastors do.

Examine their own. First of all, he must be above reproach. Secondly, the husband of but one wife. Quite literally, the man of one woman or a one woman man.

[13:02] A few things it doesn't mean, okay? To clarify, it doesn't mean a man must be married to be in the ministry. It's talking about a man who is married. If he's married, he must be faithful to that.

It doesn't mean that any more than down in verse 4. It means that a man must have children to be in the ministry. If that were the case, Paul himself would have been disqualified. He wasn't married. He didn't have any children.

And he even advocated that sort of life, if you read 1 Corinthians 7, to those who are capable of it because there's less distractions and they can give themselves wholeheartedly to serving God.

And so we understand from the rest of Scripture that it doesn't mean that a man has to be married in order to be a pastor or has to have children to be a minister in the church. It also does not mean that a man who is a widower or divorced for a righteous cause and has remarried is disqualified

from the ministry.

It doesn't say a man who has one wife for his whole life. It says a man of one wife. It sounds terrible to say this. It means one wife at a time.

[14:07] And again, please don't take that and run the wrong direction with it. Okay? But it doesn't exclude a widower who is remarried. It does mean, and maybe we need to state the obvious, that it must be a man.

Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband, the man of one woman. He made that clear back in the previous chapter. A woman is not to teach a man in the church, but in our day it needs to be said.

Paul knew how to say the opposite. If he had wanted to say the woman of one man, you know what? He says that exact phrase later when he's talking about widows. Those who deserve to be put on the list for receiving assistance from the church.

It was a widow who was faithful to her husband. A widow of one man. Or a woman of one man. And he doesn't say that here. He says a man of one woman.

It also means that it must be a heterosexual man. Again, it's to point out the obvious, but in our day and age it has to be said. The ordination of homosexuals to the ministry is an abominable practice.

[15:18] Foreign to God's word. Monogamy is in view, but only heterosexual monogamy. It says a man of one woman. Not popular in our day, but what God teaches.

It also means that, contrary to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, a man may be married and be in the ministry. They require celibacy of their priest. That they not be married. God doesn't require that.

And they're adding something to the qualifications for the ministry that God does not. And Paul says, if you can do that, good. But he doesn't require it. And so the Catholic Church can land themselves and have in much difficulty and trouble for making an extra-biblical requirement of the minister.

What it means for the married minister is that he be faithful to his wife, that he be sexually pure. It's the seventh commandment.

He must not seek sexual gratification outside of his marriage, whether through the virtual world of the internet or through magazines or through movies or through another real-life flesh-and-blood woman.

[16:30] He must guard his heart being the example of purity to the flock. For the single minister, it means he must refrain from sexual gratification of all those desires only to be fulfilled within the bonds of marriage.

Clear, I hope, why this is so necessary for the minister. How can God's servant call his people to faithfulness and to purity in their lives in today's sex-saturated world that we live in when he himself is not a model of it?

And this too applies to all of God's people. The seventh commandment isn't just for pastors, is it? It's for all. And so, we saw it applied to the widows who were to be put on the list, receiving help from the church.

The rest of the Scriptures make it clear that all are to pursue holiness in their relationships with the opposite sex. You men, be careful how you interact with the ladies that you meet at work or yes, even at church.

Ladies, be careful to guard your hearts not to start wishing your husband was more like so-and-so to whom you're secretly becoming attracted. You young people, sex is to be reserved for marriage.

[17:45] Keep yourself for your spouse. Save yourself all sorts of heartache down the road. The minister and all of God's people are to be either one woman men or one man women.

Alright? And so he must be that. Thirdly, he must be temperate or sober. Temperate in one's manner. He's going to talk about alcohol later.

Soberness, that sort later. But a temperateness in his manner. He must be level-headed. Not a wildly emotional, quick-tempered man.

He's unable to keep or he's able to keep his head and his emotions in check in difficult, trying situations. When approached with a rebuke, he doesn't snap back in anger.

He's able to control his emotions. When informed of tragedy, he is able to mourn and sympathize without being incapacitated by it. Paul uses the verb form in 2 Timothy, writing to Timothy.

[18:46] 2 Timothy 4-5 and he says, but you, and the NIV takes a little liberty, but I think it's exactly right. It says, but you keep your head. Keep your head in all situations.

Endure hardships. Do the work of evangelists. Discharge all the duties of your ministry. But keep your head. That's the word here. Be temperate. Be level-headed. You see how vital this is for the minister?

What would the effect on the sheep be if the shepherd was always running around, always worried. He's unable to control himself. He's fearful doing tragedy. He doesn't know what to do. He's so tightly wound that you think he's going to pop at any second.

And just, I'm agitated right now. What's the effect of that on the sheep? They get agitated and they get fretful and they get worried and they start to, a minister's got to be temperate. He's got to have those things under control.

He's got to have them in check. Going right with that, next he must be prudent or self-controlled as we have it here. It's closely related to temperance.

[19:43] These two things go hand in hand. He's sensible. He thinks before he acts. He has good judgment, a sense of what is right and proper and modest. And again, you can think of a pastor without any sense of decorum, of what is right in a particular situation, who acts before he thinks and has little control over his emotions or words or his actions.

That sort of behavior is going to undermine a ministry. If he never knows how to carry himself in particular situations, he laughs when there should be mourning and he's joking when it should be serious.

It's all backwards. He's not prudent. He's not self-controlled. That's going to undermine the ministry. And so the minister must be self-controlled. He must be prudent.

Something that must mark God's people as well, this temperance and prudence. Self-control, part of the fruit of the Spirit. When Paul writes to Timothy and Titus, he tells them, urge the older men and the younger men and the older women, all of these people to be these things.

Controlled. Prudent. Wise. But the man of God must also be respectable. Still in verse 2. He's to be orderly and well-behaved and therefore respected and honored.

[21:01] It goes with being above reproach. If a man is above reproach, then he will earn the respect of his people, of his congregation, of his flock. And that will come as they have opportunity to interact with him.

The respect and honor will grow as he ministers to them personally, as they have opportunity to see him handle a difficult situation appropriately, as he shows genuine concern for them in their lives, where they are in their particular situations.

Their respect grows then. You say, is that really all that important? Well, yes. A pastor who doesn't have the respect of his people won't have their ear when he preaches to them, when he teaches them, when he counsels them, if they don't respect him.

And so he must be respectable. He must be hospitable. The word is literally friend of strangers. A need for a minister's home to be an open one where not only the people of his congregation are welcome around his table, but also visitors from other churches, visitors from the community, people that he has never met before anybody, that he's never met before.

Not known to us until they come through our doors. The ability to show love by providing a meal and fellowship and even a place to pillow one's head will be vital to the ministry.

[22:21] Do you see why this is in Paul's list? Why is that important? Again, take a minister who is unfriendly, who never invites anyone into his home, who takes no care of his people or the visitors that come his way.

Will the ministry of that man be well received? I think not. People respond well to a man they can get next to and eat with and laugh and fellowship with.

A man who never opens his home for such a purpose will flounder and his ability to connect with and to effectively reach his people. And I can point you elsewhere.

You know that this is for all of God's people too. 1 Peter 4.9 Hebrews 13.2 remind us that hospitality is not just for pastors but for all of God's people to show to one another and to strangers.

And then he must also be able to teach. Here I believe is the one qualification in the list that doesn't necessarily apply to all of God's people but it must be true of the elder in the church.

[23:27] It's not so much a matter of character and grace like the others but a matter of giftedness and skill and God gives different gifts and skills to different people. And so the minister must be one

who is gifted to teach.

He must be able to take God's Word and to dig into it and to find its meaning and to preach it with power and pointedly to His people with relevance to their lives.

He must take it and proclaim it in such a way that people know that God has spoken and that He has spoken to them. In the list he gives Titus when Paul writes to Titus he gives him a similar list and he fleshes it out a little bit more in Titus 1.9 He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

One of my pastors from a previous church said he must be resolute in his orthodoxy and he must be gifted in his ability. He's got to understand the truth.

He's got to hold firmly to the faithful message, the sound doctrine and then effectively teach it to the people in the church and be able to answer questions about it.

[24:40] To answer those who oppose him in these things. Part of being able to teach. It's great if you have a man who has all of these other things but if he is not able to teach he's not going to be an effective minister.

It doesn't say he's got to be the most eloquent orator perfect speaker but he must be able to teach. If you get down into verse 3 now he must be gentle.

Not given to drunkenness not violent but gentle. Here's something again what he must be and later we'll get to what he must not be. He must be gentle. Found in the midst of prohibitions to violence and quarreling he has to be like the master.

If you want a picture of a gentle minister read the gospels and look at Jesus who with great gentleness healed the sick laid his hands on those who were blind and unable to walk comforted Mary and Martha when they lost their brother he took little children into his arms.

There's the picture of a gentle faithful leader. Not to neglect the need for boldness but this is what our attention is drawn to here gentleness. While he must be able to answer objections and there will be objections that the elder the overseer has to do so with gentleness and self-control and everything else in this list.

[25:59] It's why Paul say to Timothy in his second letter chapter 2 and the Lord's servant must not quarrel instead he must be kind to everyone able to teach not resentful those who oppose him he must gently instruct.

And so we see that just the ability of a man to teach doesn't make him fit for the ministry. He can have a guy that's sharp as a tack and he's able to dismantle any argument but he's oh man he's mean when he does it.

It feels like he's taking a book and hit you upside the head when you walk away and you feel just undone by him. You see that he's right but wow that's painful that's not the ministry must be gentle because if you're wise and you have all these arguments and able to answer every objection but you have not love or gentleness or kindness then you're just a resounding gong a clanging cymbal nothing.

If people are afraid of him if children run away crying from him instead of running to him he's likely not a gentle man and not fit for the ministry and all of you need to be gentle too.

Not long ago we heard from Philippians 4-5 let your gentleness be evident to all the Lord is near in your conversations your debates with one another you are to be gentle oh big tough guy says let your gentleness be evident to all the man of God must also verses 4-5 be a good manager of his own house his own household he must manage his family well managing involves leading the word that's used here is leading them and caring for them he's got to be able to lead his family take them in the direction they need to go lead them spiritually and to care for them to care for their needs physically to care for their soul spiritually the man who is managing is able to lead and to care for and he must be able to do it in his home and to do it well otherwise he won't be able to do it in the church part of that will be having children in submission with all respectfulness with all respect children who obey children in submission to him

[28:24] I don't believe that it requires believing children we've talked about that before that would require a man to do what only God can do but I believe it requires Titus again expands on it a bit he says it's children who are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient they're in submission with proper respect and that proper respect or with all respect might apply both to the manner of parenting and the manner of obedience from the child and I was reading a commentary on this and this is by far the best summary I've heard just on parenting in general in a long time in a

very concise statement it's William Hendrickson and I'm going to read it and I might even read it twice so you can get it dads pay attention alright kids pay attention moms too parenting that is and obedience that is with dignity he says with respect must be done in a manner that the father's firmness makes it advisable for a child to obey that his wisdom makes it natural for a child to obey and that his love makes it a pleasure for a child to obey you see that if the father is firm it will be advisable for the child to obey he knows there's going to be consequences if he don't but he's wise too and so it's natural for the child to obey he sees it he understands it because his parents have made it clear to him and because of the parents love the children delight to obey excellent summary

I think for any parent but it must be the case for the man of God that his children obey with all respect and the reason for this obvious if you can't lead and care for your own house well how can you be expected to do it for the church the household of God you can look at a man's life here and learn something about what it will be like over here and so you parents again not just for pastors remember all the exhortations to faithful parenting in the scriptures but it must be the case for the minister and finally he must have a good reputation with outsiders outsiders those who are outside the church outside the family of God is what he's talking about here and the overseer needs to have the words are he needs to have a good testimony from outsiders that means when they speak about him they speak well of him again because there's not something to speak ill of if they speak ill of him it's because they're slandering because they're lying and saying things about him that aren't true if outsiders speak the truth they will have a good testimony of him and this is vital otherwise he may fall into disgrace reproach and so he must be above reproach with people in the church he must be above reproach with outsiders as well otherwise he will fall into disgrace or into reproach where people do have occasion to speak ill of him and by not maintaining that favorable reputation of fall not just into disgrace and reproach but into the snare of the devil doesn't the devil love to take

Christians and make hypocrites out of them so everybody can say I don't want anything to do with Christianity because they're all a bunch of hypocrites they say one thing and they do something else they go to church on Sunday and the rest of the week they're just like everybody else and can you imagine if the devil got a toe hold and not just somebody that goes to church but one of the leaders of the church look at that pastor look at him he's not what he says he is and so the pastor must be above reproach or fall into that snare of the devil how Satan must love to show those inconsistencies and all of God's people and especially in the elders in the church there's disgrace there's reproach there's the snare of the devil to be avoided and so he must be above reproach and you all know that we've just said it it's a snare for all we're all open to the accusation of hypocrisy if we don't keep our reputation good among outsiders

Jason Jason read for us this morning in Sunday school 1 Thessalonians 4 and he didn't just address it to pastors did he it was to all people make it your ambition to lead a quiet life to mind your own business and to work with your hands just as we told you so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders so that you will not be dependent on anybody all of us are in danger of the snare of the devil there are the things the overseer must be and will hasten through the things now that he must not be first of all in the list he must not be given to drunkenness he must not be addicted to wine I'm not real fond of the translation given to drunkenness it almost sounds like if he's drunk every now and then it's okay but if he's given to it if it's all the time then that's not okay that's not what it's saying when it says he must not be given to drunkenness he must not be controlled by wine by alcohol he must not linger long beside the drink is the idea and it's not the forbidding of alcohol altogether right here in Timothy what does

Paul tell Timothy chapter 5 stop drinking only water and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses it's not a prohibition of the use of alcohol but he says don't be addicted to it don't be controlled by it don't be mastered of it moderation temperance self-control in all things should be obvious why this can't be so in the life of the minister you imagine calling him up in the midst of a crisis in your life seeking help and he's drunk he's of no use what a poor testimony of course but he's useless in that state imagine a preacher that came into the pulpit not in control of himself but under the control of alcohol I hope it's obvious why a minister must not be addicted to wine and that principle of moderation with it applies to all of God's people he must also not be violent in verse 3 he must not be a striker some translations use the word pugnacious and I don't have a good definition of that but it's not good it must not be violent

[34 : 48] I think violence is good even even physical violence might be in view here if a guy has such a temper that when somebody confronts him he hauls off and hits him man's not fit for the ministry he's got to be in control of himself you see all these start to fit together but even if it's not a physical violence a minister who is not gentle you see he must not be violent but gentle is what he must be if he can just tear down a person's spirit with harsh words that's violent and that's not befitting of a minister of the gospel it must translate to his preaching his teaching his counseling he needs to be gentle not violent not to be quarrelsome also in verse 3 literally awe-fighting without fighting without quarreling he needs to be peaceable he has to be able to answer those who oppose and so there may be some disagreements but he's not to be an arguer he's not to stir the pot up and seek these things and fight if there's arguing going on in the church the overseer is not to participate in it but to bring an end to it again he'll say later in his second letter to

Timothy in chapter 2 don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments that's the Bible talking because you know they produce quarrels and the be kind to everyone able to teach not resentful see how Paul keeps coming back to these things he doesn't just put them in a list he does that but then he comes back to them again and again in a church like Ephesus where vain speculation was rampant the elder is going to have to guard himself carefully here the minister is always fighting and taking sides in these arguments he's going to be alienating this person then alienating this one the very people to whom he must!

so he can't be quarrelsome and if it's not good for the pastor is it good for the people oh remember want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer without anger or disputing without arguing without quarreling it's going to be hard to worship if we're always at each other's throats won't it so let us lay aside such things he also must not be a lover of money he must be without greed a content man who's happy with what he has not one who hungers after money and the things that can buy we'll get to this in 1st Timothy 6 there's a section there that's true for ministers and for all of us we'll save most of it until then but think of it this way if the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil can that root be growing in the heart of a minister who is to be preaching against evil and to be proclaiming what is right and true and good no it can't be so you need look no further than the negative example of

Judas iscariot to see what a little love of money will do to a servant of God's heart you want a man oriented things who serves God and not man again more on this when we get to 1st timothy 6 for all of us not just the minister and finally in verse 6 he must not be a recent convert a neophyte a newly planted plant is the word he's using here this is someone new to the faith not someone that's young period Paul tells Timothy not to anyone look down on him because it depends on a person's maturity their gross and grace you can't say well you can't be a minister until 10 years after your conversion maybe somebody will be ready in 10 maybe somebody will have grown so much in five years that they're ready I think it'll be different but not a new convert not newly planted

Think in terms of a plant that's the word that's used if you're going to if it ever comes it's going be snowing again tomorrow night but once it comes and you're ready to plant your garden and you want to grow tomatoes and you're going to grow them from seed this year you're not going to buy the plants and you're going to grow them yourself what's going to happen if you take those seeds and you put them in the ground out in your garden if they do start to grow they're going to be destroyed by the fickle Indiana spring nobody warned me about all of this weather business when I moved here somebody might have but I blocked it out and I wouldn't trade it but anyway If it does manage!

[39 : 40] to grow! it's going to be destroyed out in the elements before it can grow and you're not going to get any tomatoes and so what are you going to do you're going to plant those seeds inside maybe take a little egg carton it's empty and put some seeds and you're going to grow those plants inside where they're sheltered where they're not going to be destroyed by the elements where they're not going to be subject to a late frost or something and you're going to protect them until they grow up into plants oh maybe this big I don't know anything about gardening until they grow and then once you're sure that the last frost has come and that just means there's sure to be another one here but once you're sure that it's passed then you're going to take it out and you're going to transplant it but if you do it too soon that plant is not going to live and if you take a new convert and you put them in the ministry too soon and you expose them to the elements that come with being in the ministry that that that honor from the people that's got the potential to go right to his head the power of!

position of authority not ready to handle that yet not mature enough in the faith yet and these things will be a snare and could be disastrous he might be puffed up with pride and the extreme would be that he falls into the same judgment as the devil who thought he was better than God and so he fell from heaven like the morning star and so this person might fall under the same judgment as the devil even as he fell Isaiah 14 12 how you have fallen from heaven oh morning star son of the dawn you have been cast down to the earth you who once laid low the nations so it could be if a new convert is thrust too quickly into the ministry and so there's what a man of God must!

be and what he must! be Matthew Henry sums it up this way what piety what prudence what zeal what courage what faithfulness what watchfulness over ourselves our lusts appetites and passions and over those under our charge I say what holy watchfulness is necessary in this work he's right and so I say who is sufficient for these things that's what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 2 who is equal to such a task and the implied answer there at first is no one there's not one person on the face of earth who can live up to the standards step before us here tonight so how is it that there are any ministers of the gospel well what have it's only by the grace of God right after Paul says that in 2 Corinthians 2 in chapter 3 he says not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves but our competence comes from

God he is made as competent as ministers of a new covenant blessed thing God equips ministers to labor in his church and so if we have men like this then all praise goes to him and if the only place these graces come from is God then what do we need to be doing praying praying praying asking the source asking the one with the power to grant it to us a large measure and what a marvelous thing that God can take sinners and save them by his grace and then equip them to be people like this you don't look at a man before he was saved to see if he's fit for the ministry you look at him since his conversion and think about the apostle Paul if you look at him before his conversion you think there's the last person you would want ministering to God's people but look at what the grace of

God does look how powerful the grace of God is what a remarkable thing that he can take an apostle Paul and he can radically change him and he can put him into the ministry and make him a faithful minister of his gospel and if he can do that with the apostle Paul do you know what he can do with anybody here tonight he can take your hard heart your rebellious heart and he can pour out his grace on you and he can save you maybe he won't make a minister out of you doesn't matter he can save you by his grace like he did Paul pour these things out on you that you might follow him you are not beyond his reach even as Paul was not and then if he does make you into a minister great if he doesn't if he calls you to be a plowman instead of a preacher and to serve his kingdom in that way praise the Lord and honor him in it whatever your calling is you can honor your God by exemplifying these gifts or these graces that we've looked at tonight and one last note

[44 : 38] I want you to see how important you all are to God how important the church is to God how important his people are to him he doesn't just say I'm going to take anybody and put him his head over the church and just hope for the best and he says I want good godly righteousness I want the best to be ministers in the church because he loves his church that much that's how important the church is to Christ the great shepherd that he gives shepherds to his church that are able to manage them to lead them and to care for them in a way that is pleasing to him that's how much God loves his church and so pray tonight that God would make us to excel in these things that he might raise up future elders in this place who will honor him by faithfully serving him and thank God that he loves us and he has been faithful to us this far in our lives may

God help us with these things let's pray together father we thank you for the blessings that are ours in abundance we thank you that your word makes these things plain to us and we pray that you would make your ministers in this place to be faithful to live up to the standard of your word we are not sufficient for these things and so we claim Christ is our only hope tonight we thank you for the grace that you have shown to us in him come and show that grace to some lost and dying sinner tonight sitting here show them that your grace is greater than their sin and come and do a great work in our midst preserve care for her so we pray that you would send us on our way thanking you praising you seeking your blessing do us good we pray for Jesus sake and we pray in Jesus name amen