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Qualifications of Christian Leaders - Part 2

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The Bible for Today with John Stott - Premier

John Stott unpacks the scriptural qualifications for a church leaders. He shows the things that should not be present in a leader as well as the requirements for eligibility.

Transcript

[music] Candidates for the Pastorets must give some visible evidence in their character and conduct that they've been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, and that their new birth has led them into a new life, and that their fallen human passions have at least begun to be mastered and brought under control.

[music] Welcome to the Bible for today with John Stott. Time magazine ranked John Stott as one of the 100 most influential people in the world.

But for all his global influence, he had an unassuming demeanor preferring to be known as Uncle John, and living in a small apartment above a garage of a rectory in London. Indeed, the rectory of all souls Langen Place, which was his home church for almost 60 years. We are privileged to be marking John Stott's centenary by bringing you just some of his timeless teaching.

[music] John Stott not only spent his whole life teaching the Bible, he was also concerned that he equipped others to do the same. Whilst he recognized how this can be achieved through Bible colleges, John Stott shows us that the qualification for church leaders are very clearly laid out in the New Testament. You'll find it helpful to have your own Bible open to Titus chapter 1, as John Stott concludes his message on church leadership.

The best training ground for future pastors is their own home. It seems to be a very solemn thing that parents are held responsible for the belief and the behavior of their young children. And yet the logic is absolutely plain.

Paul draws it out actually in his first letter to Timothy rather than to Titus. He says, "If anybody doesn't know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's family?" He'd better look after his own before he presumes to look after God's. Moreover,

we can hardly expect such a person to win strangers to Christ if he has been a failure in winning his own family to Christ.

So there is the first thing, blameless in his home life, marriage and home life. Secondly, candidates must be blameless in their character and conduct. And in order to enforce this, the apostle selects no fewer than eleven words or expression.

The first five are negative and the remaining six are positive. The negatives refer to vices that ought not to be present in candidates for the ministry, and the remaining six refer to virtues which should be present in candidates for the ministry. And the leading thought that covers all eleven of them occurs twice in verse eight.

The third word in verse eight, according to the revised standard version at least, is that he must be master of himself. And then the sixth word in verse eight is he, again in the RSV, is he must be self-controlled or disciplined. So self-mastery or self-control is the overriding quality that is to be looked at in church leaders.

Now, do I need to remind you that self-control is the final fruit of the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Same Greek word, and kretire is self-mastery. So, candidates for the pastorate must give some visible evidence in their character and conduct that they've been regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

And that their new birth has led them into a new life, and that their fallen human passions have at least begun to be mastered and brought under control. And that the fruit of the Spirit has at least begun to ripen in their lives and not least in their self-mastery. Now Paul begins then with the vices, the negatives that ought not to be present in the life of candidates for the ministry.

Verse seven, "Since the prespity of their ship is astured of the household of God, he must be blameless in what way." Well, not overbearing. Leaders often have a strong personality, but they've got to have their personality in check. They must not be overbearing, they must not throw their weight about, they must not be arrogant or autocratic.

Next, they must not be quick-tempered. They have, of course, to serve many different people in the congregation, but they must never be impatient or irritable. However, exasperating, they may find members of their flock, or however, exasperating the flock may find their bastards, which is probably more frequent.

Not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not having a tendency to drink too much, not violent, leading by example, rather than by the force of their personality, not riding roughshod over other people's sensitivities and sensibilities, and not pursuing dishonest gain, in other words being motivated in their ministry by service

of others and not greed for themselves. Five vices to be avoided. And these five negatives relate to five areas of strong temptation.

Pride, temper, drink, power, and money. Exposure to these five temptations is an occupational hazard for people in the public postorate. And all five challenge us to self-mastery.

And the principle you see now is not that candidates cannot control the church if they can't control their family, but that they can't be expected to control the church if they haven't learned to control themselves. Perfectly logical, again, is it not? So now we turn from the five vices to the six virtues, which are largely self-explanatory. A pastor must be hospitable, since pastors are expected to entertain visitors and strangers, as well as their own church members.

One who loves what is good. A pastor should be a person of large charity and a supporter of all good causes. Then we come to self-controlled yet again, and the great word here means both having a sensible and sober judgment, as well as a disciplined lifestyle.

Then upright, which clearly refers to his dealings with other people, while the word holy means devout in his attitude to God. And disciplined, we have it yet again. Self-control.

It comes last in the list as it comes last in the fruit of the Spirit, because it is an appropriate climax, and it covers everything that has gone before. Blameless in their marriage and home life, blameless in their character and conduct, and thirdly blameless in their doctrinal, author doc say. Much neglected today as a condition of eligibility to the postorate.

With verse 9, the apostle moves on in regard to qualifications of the postorate from the Herman family, from the individual character and conduct, to the candidate's grasp of revealed truth. Postures verse 9 must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, or according to the teaching, that is the teaching of the apostles. Well, you'll notice that the message, the logos, the word of God, is characterized there in two ways.

First it is said to be reliable, the reliable word, and the message is trustworthy because it's true. And it's true because it is the word of the living God who were told in the second verse of this chapter never lies. And since God never lies, he only tells the truth, and since the message is his word, we may be sure that it is reliable and trustworthy because it is true.

And then the second way that the message is described is literally according to the diddock, according to the teaching that is consonant with the teaching of the apostles. And the teaching of the apostles was already an identifiable body of instruction that is

called interchangeably in the pastoral epistles, the teaching, the faith, the truth, the deposit. And this body of teaching has been bequeathed to us in its definitive form in the New Testament.

Why do we hold the New Testament in our hands? Why do we believe it? Why do we submit to it? Because it's the teaching of the apostles. And those who aspire to the pastorate must hold on to the reliable word of God according to the teaching, the apostolic teaching. Why? Why is doctrinal orthodoxy necessary in candidates for the pastoral minister? Why is it at least in the Church of England when they are ordained? They have to recite the 39 articles.

Why is it that even if the subscription formula has been relaxed, they still have to read the 39 articles of the Church of England before they are appointed to any living any pastorate? Because it has been recognized from the beginning that commitment to reveal truth is necessary for those who are called to be teachers. And notice that their ministry is a double ministry. They will need the word of God in order to instruct and exhort people in the truth.

And then correspondingly, negatively, they will need the word of God in order to expose, contradict and refute error. Depasters have a double responsibility, teaching the truth or posing error, feeding the sheep, routing the wolves. That's very unpopular today.

We're told often today in many, many contexts I hear it always, but positive never been negative. People who say that have either never read the teaching of Jesus and his apostles or having read it disagree with us. Because Jesus and his apostles were often negative.

Jesus told us to beware of false teachers and false prophets, and so did the apostles. So in our teaching, we have to be negative as well as positive, teaching the truth, refuting error. By superior scholarship, by using strong arguments, we need to do this.

For I recapitulate, and then I crave your indulgence for a little time in the conclusion, which is not the same as the recapitulation you understand. The recapitulation concerns a threefold blamelessness, which is to be required in candidates for the pastoral ministry. They are to be blameless in their marriage and family life.

They are to be blameless in their character and conduct, and they are to be blameless in their doctrinal orthodoxy. Now the reason I want a few minutes for the conclusion is we must ask what lessons can we learn for the contemporary church from this important teaching of the apostle Paul to Titus? How can we apply to ourselves? I want to suggest that at least two major lessons that we have to learn. Firstly, let's copy Paul's strategy.

Maybe you haven't considered yet that he had a strategy according to Titus chapter 1, but he had. Let me unfurl it. Paul was deeply disturbed, as we should be, by the

prevalence of false teaching in the churches.

He refers to false teachers in every one of his thirteen epistles. He was deeply disturbed by this insinuation of heresy into the church. The pastoral epistles themselves, and that is to Timothy and Titus, are full of references to deceivers, empty talkers, and so on.

We do love them in the rest of chapter 1 that are not having time to go into, but these deceivers and empty talkers have deviated from the apostolic faith, and they were promulgating false doctrines instead. Now, how does Paul react to a situation in which false teaching is increasing? That's a question we need to ask, isn't it? Fourth teaching is increasing all around us, and in the churches as well. Church leaders who deny the divine human person of Jesus deny the atoning death, the bodily resurrection.

Fourth teaching is increasing. What strategy should we adopt when fourth teachers increase? That's the question. What was his strategy? Well, I'll tell you what it wasn't.

Firstly, he refused to give in to it. He refused to give in to it in a feeble spirit of defeatism. Secondly, he didn't remain idle or inactive on the ground that everybody has the rights to his or her own opinion.

That's pluralism. That was not his response. Thirdly, he did not secede from the church as being irredeemable.

No, he stayed in it. He wasn't a defeatist. He wasn't a pluralist, and he wasn't a secessionist.

So let's avoid those three things. What did he do? What was his strategy? I'll give it to you in this little epic ram. When false teachers increase, our duty is to multiply the number of true teachers.

That's what he did, verse 5, "A point elders in every town." What sort of elders? Elders who hold firm the reliable word according to the apostolic teaching, and who teach it with faithfulness, and who refute those who oppose it. Why do we want teachers like this in the church? Verse 10, "Because there are many rebellious people, and deceivers, and false teachers, and empty talkers." So the more false teachers there are, the more true teachers are needed. Can we find a contemporary application? How can we multiply the number of true teachers throughout the churches of the world? Well, I want to suggest this.

The key institution in the church everywhere is the seminary. Or, as we often call it in England, the theological college, the place where people are trained for the pastoral ministry of the church. And everywhere you go in the church, the church is a reflection of its seminaries.

The seminaries have an enormous influence on the future of the church, because all the

churches' future pastors pass through the seminary, and it's in the seminary that they're either made or marred, either equipped and inspired or frankly ruined. And there are seminaries that ruin their students and make them totally unequipped for their ministry. So, it seems to me the strategy must be that we seek to capture the seminaries of the world, for the gospel, for the evangelical faith.

If we can capture the seminaries, then of course they will influence the churches. And there is no better way to influence the church for good than to capture the seminaries for the gospel. And that's, I've had permission for this little advertisement that I'm coming to now.

That's the reason for my own commitment to what is called the Langham Trust's Third World Research Scholarship Program. Langham, of course, the Langham Trust is named after Langham Place, where all the servants are situated. And our Langham strategy is to offer grants or scholarships to younger evangelical scholars in the Third World so that they may gain a theological doctorate in UK or USA and return to their own country to teach in a seminary.

That's our strategy. Already 40 younger evangelical scholars have gained their doctorate and have returned to their own country to teach. And it's a reflection of the epigraph when false teachers increase, multiply the number of true teachers.

Let's copy Paul's strategy. And as I conclude, secondly, let's maintain Paul's standards. You see, when there's a shortage of pastors, the temptation is to lower the standards of eligibility and to appoint virtually anybody, whether they qualify or not, even if they're not blameless in the three areas that we've been considering.

Now virtually all churches have their selection procedures, but they don't always maintain the standards laid down by the apostle Paul. Instead, in some churches today, candidates could be married, divorced and remarried a number of times. They could be practicing homosexual people.

They could have children who are unbelievers and undisciplined. They could have a serious flaw in their character and conduct. They could hold liberal doctrinal views with little respect for the authority and supremacy of scripture.

Such people could still be recommended for training for the pastorate in many churches today. It is something of a scandal. So I conclude, let's do what we can in our own little way to copy Paul's strategy and to maintain Paul's standards.

And the church would be the church will be in a far healthier condition if we did just those two things. God give us grace to do so.

[Music] I'll spend a moment in silent reflection.

Some of us here are pastors. Some of Paul's teaching may have come close to the bone in our own lives. Others here are leaders of a different kind.

Church wardens, members of a vestry, the church council, deacons, elders. And all of us are concerned about the leadership of the churches in the future. So let's pray for grace to copy Paul's strategy and to maintain and follow his standards.

[Music] We desire to thank you, Heavenly Father, for your worldwide church and for your plan from the beginning that you should receive good pastoral oversight, especially in teaching. And we cry to you for your worldwide church that you will give it increasingly good, holy, orthodox pastors, so that it may grow into maturity to your honor and glory through Christ our Lord. Father, now.

Well, some hard-hitting teaching from John Stott as he concludes his message on the biblical qualifications of church leaders. John Stott explains how to be a Bible teacher in a book he's written on the subject. It's called *The Challenge of Preaching*.

And it's our book recommendation this week. It's produced by Lang and Publishing and you can find details on our Centenary website at premierchristinradio.com/JohnStott. The legacy of John Stott lives on and is growing, touching every level of society across the world. Today, Christian leaders throughout the majority world are being equipped to provide pastor training and resources in their own countries thanks to the vision of John Stott, who donated all his book royalties to support this ministry through Lang and Partnership.

To find out about this and other ministries, John Stott founded, go to premier.org.uk/JohnStott. Join us at the same time next week for more from *The Bible for Today with John Stott*.

[Music]

(buzzing)