

## TITUS 1:5-9 SERMON

### EXAMINE YOUR MEN

by

CHAD ASHBY

Turn with me to Titus chapter 1. Today's sermon is entitled "Examine Your Men", and spoiler alert—it's a sermon about pastors. Now, it might seem a bit self-serving for me to preach about my own job, but as you will see, it would actually be easier for me to skip this section and move on, because from now on, we are going to all be perfectly clear on what King Jesus expects of the men he has left in charge...and I'm going to be honest with you, the bar is set PRE-TTY HIGH. However, my hope is not only that you will examine me year after year and make sure I'm living up to these standards, but as the sermon title indicates "Examine your men"—all of them—praying that by God's grace we would find other men who are qualified and ready to serve with me as co-pastors at College Street Baptist Church.

Last week, in the greeting, Paul began to speak of the church as a house. We realized that every believer exists for the House of Faith, that every House of Faith is founded on Hope, and every Word of this letter is received by true children. So, let us go on to receive this letter from Paul—and all of its instructions—on how the

Lord Jesus wants us to be a well-ordered house of faith. Let's stand together as we read beginning in verse 5. (READ. PRAY.)

We often create this idealistic view of the early church, like it was some kind of amoeba, amorphous love-fest, something like a Christian Woodstock. Free love. No pastors. No leaders. Just disciples and free love and peace...mannnn. But in Paul explains: **“This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order...”** The idea here is of a bone being reset, of something crooked being put back straight. We think that a church without an authority structure is somehow more authentic, more Christian, more to the heart of God. But that's just patently false. Paul charges Titus with setting the church in order, and the thing of first importance is to set up the authority structure in the House of faith.

Paul commands Titus to go from church to church **“and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.”** The word “elder” here is used interchangeably with the word “overseer” in verse 7 which is used interchangeably elsewhere with the word “pastor”. When Paul says to appoint “elders” he's not talking about simply elderly men, but men who exercise specific authority, kind of like the “older brothers” of the church.

When I was growing up as a teenager, I was the oldest of four. My parents would go out for the night—I had a younger sister and two brothers—and

whenever they would leave, they would gather us together and give us some instructions for what they expected while they were gone, and then in front of my siblings they would say to me, “We’re leaving you in charge.”

Essentially, that’s what’s going on here. Paul is saying to Titus, “Go from church to church, and choose out specific men and say to them, ‘I’m leaving you in charge.’” These men were called elders or overseers. In Baptist life, we understand all of these terms—pastor, elder, or overseer—to refer to the same ordained office.

In all of these instructions, it’s interesting that Paul assumes Titus will be able to find the kind of men he describes in verses 6-9—in every town. He doesn’t say, “Go to the seminary, and select certain men, and then send them to each of these churches, and make them pastors.” Paul expects that in every place where the Gospel of Jesus Christ has been planted, Titus should expect to find elders. This is the first of our two points this morning: (1) Expect to find elders.

Brothers and sisters, if we consider ourselves to be a Gospel-believing house of faith, we must (1) expect to find elders. The Holy Spirit will not leave our church hanging. If we are clinging to the truth that Jesus Christ is our Savior and King who died on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins and rose from the dead in victory to be exalted to the right hand of God, and if we are a people filled with the Holy Spirit, then the Spirit has not left us without men to oversee and pastor this church. We should expect, year after year, to find elders.

Now, this is a paradigm shift for a church like us for two reasons. First, because Paul is telling us to expect to find elders here. In our congregation. That when we need someone to lead and preach and teach and shepherd and exercise authority at College Street Baptist Church, the first place we should look is not outside, but inside this house. The Gospel of Jesus Christ produces these kinds of men. So, if we are really believing and living out the gospel, and we are making disciples and teaching them to observe all that Jesus has commanded us, then College Street Baptist Church should be a pastor factory. Every couple of years, by God's grace, we should be producing another man fit to pastor, another elder, another overseer.

Which brings us to the second paradigm shift, which is the fact that Paul says we should expect to find *elders*. How do you make something plural? You put a S. You put a S at the end. Look at verse 5 again: "And appoint elders in every town as I directed you." So, if Titus has followed Paul's command down to the letter "s", he has not fulfilled Paul's directions until every church has elders...as in more than one. As in more than one pastor.

If we are going to be a true child of Paul, and receive his instructions for our house of faith, we cannot be satisfied until we have found elders. As in Chad is no longer the Pastor of College Street Baptist Church, but Chad is *a* pastor of College Street Baptist Church...along with several other qualified pastors. That is what I

have been praying for for more than four years now. That I wouldn't be alone. That God would help us to find other elders among the men here. That the Holy Spirit would be building these kinds of men here at our church, that it would only be a matter of finding them.

The reason why so many Baptist churches in South Carolina have issues is because they put one man in charge of the church. And either one of two things happens. They decide "Not one man should have all that power", that they can't trust one man to exercise authority over God's house, so they strip him of any authority and make him a "preacher", a hired gun who's just there to preach and do visitation...and they wonder why they are aimless and purposeless and visionless. On the other side, they put one man in charge of the church, and they trust him too much, and that man is eaten alive. Either he burns out or he falls into temptation or he grows proud and bullies the church.

And y'all might say, "Well, I've never heard of a Baptist church with more than one pastor." Y'all gotta get out more. Every church mentioned in the New Testament had elders (plural). Holy City Church down in Charleston, SC, our partner church plant—elders (plural). Immanuel Baptist Church up in Louisville, KY, who run the Immanuel Network that I'm a part of—they have elders (plural), like a dozen of them. Buenos Nuevos Church—the Hispanic Baptist church here in Newberry that uses our facilities from time to time—they have elders. There are

thousands of Baptist churches across the US who understand that the church was never meant to be lead by one pastor. Paul says appoint elders. Pray that God would help us find some more elders. I wasn't meant to pastor this church alone. We should be a church that expects to find elders. Year after year. Pray that the Holy Spirit would make College Street Baptist Church a pastor factory.

So, if we are clinging to the gospel, week in and week out, and training up new disciples, and teaching men and women who used to live in darkness how to walk in the light, and seeing new people come to Jesus year after year, and watching men and women begin to grow in the grace of God, and if we are actually praying that God would give us more elders, and if we are expecting God to answer those prayers, then we should (2) Examine our men. As an act of faith, we should be constantly looking for men who measure up to the standards for pastor. (2) Examine your men.

Three things we are commanded to examine. A man's house, a man's character, and a man's doctrine. When we are determining whether a man should oversee and pastor this church, we should look at his house, his character, and his doctrine. Let's look at Paul's instructions together.

First, we look at his house. Verse 6: **“[6] if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.”** Paul says, “Do you want to know if a man is

qualified to oversee the house of God? Look at his household: His marriage and his parenting.” It’s interesting, the very first thing in the list: his wife. If you want to know if you are qualified to pastor a church, the first person you should ask is your wife. That’s the first person I’m going to ask. The women in the church really hold all the power, according to Paul, because if your wife is not convinced you are qualified to pastor, we won’t be either.

A man should be faithful to one bride—loving her, caring for her, leading her—before he can ever be trusted to love and care and lead the bride of Christ. Often, the first thing a man puts on his resume is “Masters of Divinity in Biblical and Theological Studies”, when the thing Paul cares about most is your marriage.

Examine his house. The second part of that is his parenting. Now, the ESV translation puts it “**and his children are believers**”, but I actually think the King James Version is a better translation of the Greek here “having faithful children”, because the second half of the verse explains what Paul means, “**and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.**” The understanding here is that his children know who’s in charge. They are not prodigals. They respect and honor their father as the overseer of the house. You could see why that would be important if this man is being considered to oversee the house of faith. His own house needs to be in order—his wife is loved and cared for, his children are faithful to him, not disrespectful or full of debauchery and sin or insubordinate to

his authority. Do you want to be a pastor? How is your house looking? That is of first importance.

Secondly, we examine a man's character. Verse 7: “[7] **For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, [8] but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined.**” As we look at a man's character, there are things he shouldn't be and things he should be.

Not arrogant. This means he is not self-centered, self-focused, self-promoting, self-seeking. He has no concern for boosting his esteem or taking the credit. He does not make decisions based on what's best for himself.

Not quick-tempered. He cannot be red-faced. This is not just a personality trait, this is a character flaw. If someone flies off the handle and is quick to argue and fight and blow up, that's not just the way you are, that's a problem. And you should not be a pastor until you and the Holy Spirit figure out how to be like Jesus, who **“When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.”**

Jesus was beaten, insulted, falsely accused by wicked men—and said nothing.

When all of that happens to you—which it will if you are a pastor—can you do the same?



Not a drunkard. Paul writes to the Ephesians, “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.” A pastor should be the primary example of a man who is not controlled by alcohol but at all times in all circumstances is controlled by the Holy Spirit.

Not violent. The word here means bully. He is not a bully. This doesn’t mean he cannot be strong and authoritative, but it means he does not wield his strength to intimidate and dominate the flock. He exercises strength and authority to protect the flock. A pastor cannot beat the sheep.

Not greedy for gain. Sadly, you flip on TBN and the preachers you see there give you the impression that pastoring is a lucrative profession. Number 1: It’s not. And Number 2: If that’s your motive, do us all a favor and never become a pastor. A poor man can be just as greedy as a rich man because greed isn’t about how much money you have but about loving money more than God.

Those are the NOTs of a man’s character, but what kind of man should he be? Hospitable. Who would have put that as the first one on the list? When I first came to College Street Baptist Church, I remember having conversations with several long-standing members who said, “You know, I’ve never been in the parsonage.” When I heard that, my heart leapt and I thought, “Not on my watch.” A pastor is supposed to be a man known to open his home to strangers. Hospitality

is about caring for the needs of others, using your own house and table to minister to others. Hospitality is a matter of a man's character.

A lover of good. What pleases this man more than anything is to see his brothers and sisters doing good works. He loves what is good. Because all good things come from the Father.

Self-controlled. This is the opposite of being quick-tempered. He should have control over himself, his appetites, his temptations, his emotions. Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit, its something that God produces in us. A man who honors God and is fit to lead the church keeps himself under control.

Upright and holy. Is he a righteous man? Does he walk on the narrow path? Is his life wholly dedicated to the Lord? Is this a man who feels set apart for the Lord's purposes?

And lastly, disciplined. A child is out of sorts, has no long-term plans, cannot keep his calendar straight, shows up late for meetings, forgets obligations, and breaks his word. A man fit to pastor is disciplined. He has his life in order, he keeps his word, he is reliable.

This is the character we should look for in a man fit to pastor this church. Examine our men. Look for men of character. Lastly, examine his doctrine. It's interesting that Paul puts a man's doctrine last on the list. Unfortunately, there are many guys out there who think: "I've got all my doctrinal ducks in a row, I know

the difference between Pelagianism and Apollanarianism, I can explain traducianism, I know how to argue for monergism” but their marriage is a wreck, and they are not trustworthy.

The truth Paul wants us to see is that if a pastor’s house and character are not in order, they will undermine his doctrine. A life that is not shaped by the gospel will distort the gospel. A man should be living out the gospel before he is appointed to teach it to others. He should guard the gospel with his whole life—his house, his character, and his doctrine.

Paul writes in verse 9: “[9] **He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.**” Paul says an elder should set the example for what it means to cling to the blessed hope. If the house is going to be founded on hope, it should be lead by men who cling to the trustworthy word. A pastor shouldn’t be clever. He doesn’t need to be inventive. No. He needs to receive the gospel from Paul, and not do anything to it. He needs to hold to the word of God, and defend sound doctrine like his life depends on it. Like the life of his church depends on it. Because it does.

Go read the book of 2 Timothy this afternoon. You will see over and over again that the thing that gives Paul nightmares and keeps him up at night is the thought of handing the gospel off to a generation of disqualified men—men who

either in their home or their character or their teaching will deny the gospel. Men who cannot be trusted to carry the baton for the next leg of the race, who are sure to fumble the gospel, who cannot accurately teach and defend the gospel.

Pastors are not appointed to teach their own inspiring opinions, but the Bible. Our church covenant begins, “To humble and submit ourselves to the authority of God’s Word as the final arbiter in all matters.” The pastors of this church ought to be men who exemplify this in every respect. And they do this in two ways: **“so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.”** We examine a man’s doctrine to make sure that it is sound, healthy, orthodox, fitting with Paul and Titus and all others who have received the gospel, BECAUSE a pastor’s job is to give instruction in sound doctrine. He is the one that is going to be teaching the trustworthy word to the next generation of believers. And he must have sound doctrine so that when unsound doctrine tries to enter the church, he will spot it from a mile away, contradict it with boldness in the Spirit, and rebuke it. (On a side note, in many cases, it is helpful for a man to attend or be attending a good seminary because it further teaching a man sound doctrine, but its certainly not required.)

(1) Expect to find elders. (2) Examine your men. Here’s the thing. Is there anything in this list that we wouldn’t expect of any godly Christian man? Healthy marriage, good father, hospitable, not a bully, upright, holy, knows sound doctrine?

The things we expect to find in elder candidates, the things we are looking for when we examine our men are the things we would expect to find in any mature believer. All except the ability to teach. If we are teaching and living out the gospel as a church, we should be overflowing with men who fit these descriptions.

So, practically, what does this look like? As we are examining our men, the first step would be to come privately to me and tell me, “Hey, I’ve been watching this man’s marriage, his character; I’ve heard him teach faithfully the Word. I think we should consider him as a pastor of College Street Baptist Church.” And then I would get some of our leaders together and we would talk about it, and if they agreed, we would put together a team to examine him further, kind of like you would call a pastor search committee—except we are searching within the church. It might be that we need to put an suggestion box somewhere in our church, where members feel free to suggest men they would like to be considered for the position of elder. And as the Lord adds to the number of pastors here, some of them might be paid, some of them not, some of them bi-vocational—as the Lord allows financially. But they would all have equal authority with me to lead and teach and preach and shepherd and oversee this church.

Now, I know we have gone long today, but this is something that I think is probably new to most of you, and I wanted to give it care. Also, selfishly, I want fellow pastors. Men that can share the burden. I have felt the words of Moses come

true in my own life: “I am not able to carry all this people alone; the burden is too heavy for me” (Numbers 11:14).

As we close, I just want to answer the question, Why? Why do we go looking for elders, and why do we examine our men? Three very short reasons. Because you love your brother. It would be unloving to recommend and ordain a man to a job he is not ready for. If he is already teetering on the edge just trying to keep things together at home, the worst thing we could do is plop pastoring duties in his lap. That will destroy him and his family. What is more, if we are a church that is constantly examining its men, this continual examination gives men the accountability they need to grow in the faith.

Secondly, because you love your church. Paul knows the best thing for College Street Baptist Church is to be led by a team of elders and pastors. If you love this church, you will pray that God would raise up these kinds of men. Ladies, would things be a lot better in your home if your husband was this kind of man? Church, would things be a lot better in our house of faith if it was filled these kinds of men? If we love our church, we will seek after more shepherds, pastors, overseers, and elders to lead and protect it.

Lastly, because you love your Savior. This is what it’s all about. We need to be so careful and intentional about putting the right men in leadership at College Street Baptist Church because we want King Jesus to be glorified. We want our

church to be radiating with the good news that Jesus is the crucified and risen King. We are looking for are men whose homes show forth that Jesus Christ came to earth to lay down his life for the church. We are looking for men whose character shines forth “It is no longer I but Christ who lives in me.” We are looking for men whose sound doctrine proclaims Jesus Christ and him crucified. We are looking for me who are not interested in building their church, but who long and plead and humbly ask the Lord Jesus to build his church through them.

If we love your Savior, we will heed Paul’s instructions. Expect to find elders. Examine your men. And in so doing, we will proclaim the glory of Jesus Christ through the good news of his death and resurrection. Let’s pray.