

“Pay Careful Attention to Yourselves”

Sermon Notes

- **Shepherds are wise to love flocks over the long haul,
and flocks are wise to love shepherds over the long haul**

**5 benefits of long-term, church-anchored pastoral ministry of the Word...*

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Lives become <u>accessible</u> (vv.17-21)2. Motives become <u>discernable</u> (vv.22-24, vv.33-38)3. Ministry becomes <u>accountable</u> (vv.25-27) |
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4. Oversight becomes possible (v.28)

5. Protection becomes essential (vv.29-32)

Next Week: Acts 21:1-16 - “Let the Will of the Lord Be Done”

MEFC Community Group Study Guide

For the week of August 25th - 31st

Getting Started

1. Can you think of any lines of work or vocation where on-the-job training is impractical if not impossible (perhaps even dangerous)? What are some examples?

Digging Deeper

2. Though continuing education and training for elders is critical, why do you think the New Testament expects church leaders to come into the eldership more or less fully formed? When we consider those who might serve as elders in the days ahead, why is it essential that we look for those we are already basically ‘eldering’?¹

¹ These sorts of considerations notwithstanding, it’s obviously essential that churches develop some sort of pipeline for elder-training prior to men being called as elders. For many years, our church has sought to do just that. In fact, most of our elders for more than a decade have been the product of a slow process of mentoring and life-on-life discipleship (see 1 Timothy 2:1-2).

Open Your Bible to 1 Timothy 3:1-7...

3. Don Carson has astutely observed that the qualifications for elders are remarkable for being unremarkable. Read straight through 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Peter 5:1-5. Apart from the expectations that an elder be able to teach and defend sound doctrine (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9) and not a recent convert (1 Timothy 3:6), can you spot even one character quality to which all Christians everywhere aren't called in the pages of the New Testament? What does this indicate about the expectations for elders in the church? What does this indicate about the expectations for all Christians in the church?

4. 1 Timothy 5:17-18, 21 make it clear that while some elders will serve in a non-vocational capacity, others will be called to serve as vocational elders. How does this verse distinguish between the two (i.e. which elders ought to be paid)? What biblical passages does Paul point toward to strengthen his argument (consult the footnotes on v.18)?

5. The next three verses address the topic of the corrective discipline of elders in the local church (1 Timothy 5:19-21). Why does Scripture command us to take care when entertaining an accusation against an elder (v.19)? What specific protection is put into place for him in this case? On the other hand, how are we to deal with elders who have clearly been found guilty of unrepentant sin? How does this process for peacemaking differ from the general steps for conflict resolution found in Matthew 7:1- 6 and 18:15-27? Why do you think God's Word distinguishes between these two approaches in corrective church discipline?

6. In 1 Timothy 5:22, what warning is given to the church in the process of identifying and appointing faithful elders? What might be the consequences of not taking this biblical caution seriously?

7. What advantages might there be for an elder who is a single man? If you get stuck, consider what the apostle Paul says about singleness in the church more generally (1 Corinthians 7:6-8, 32-34a, 35). Nevertheless, Paul certainly does appear to assume that elders will be married (1 Timothy 3:2). Does being a husband and a father present some advantages for an elder as well? If so, how?

8. Does it seem strange to you that Scripture would address the importance of an elder having a good reputation among unbelievers (1 Timothy 3:7)? Why does this matter? How does a passage like Romans 2:19-24 speak to this issue?

Now Turn in Your Bible to Titus 1:8...

9. The first virtue in v.8 that elders (“overseers”) are expected to exhibit is that they be “hospitable” (see also Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:2; 3 John 5). Why is this such a crucial character quality for an elder? What’s the harm to a local church if they are led by elders who don’t display this Christian virtue?

10. Secondly, Paul tells Titus that an elder must be “a lover of good” (v.8). It’s a bit of a difficult virtue to pin down since it’s the only example of this particular Greek word in the entire New Testament. One way to get at this concept is to use Philippians 4:8 for definition. Imagine a church led by men whose minds are steeped in thought patterns like the ones Paul lists in Philippians 4:8. What benefits are likely to accrue to such a local fellowship with such leaders?

11. Next, Paul requires that elders be “self-controlled”. Notice that this quality is one which all those in the Cretan church are explicitly called to manifest (older men - 2:2; older and younger women - 2:5; and younger men - 2:6). Considering the reputation of the surrounding Cretan culture, can you appreciate why this virtue is mission-critical in their context (1:12-13a)? How about in our cultural context?

12. Verse 8 goes on to call elders to be “upright”. The word here can also be translated “righteous”. Though Paul is quick to remind Titus and the church in Crete that we are saved by God’s mercy and not by our “righteousness” (3:5), it’s also clear that Christians (particularly Christian leaders) must be upright / righteous in our conduct. To get a sense of what this means, consider how Paul uses the same word (“righteous”) in Romans 6:13-19.

13. Local church elders are also called to be “holy”. 19th century Scottish pastor Robert Murray McCheyne was well-known for saying that: “The greatest need of my people is my personal holiness.”¹ Do you think McCheyne is on to something here? If so, what is the corresponding loss for congregations who have unholy elders? Though Peter uses a slightly different Greek word than Paul, note that all Christians without distinction are called to be “holy” as God himself is holy (1 Peter 1:13- 16). Are you? According to Titus 2:11-12, what’s the role of God’s grace in becoming this sort of person?

14. The final Christian virtue that elders ought to model in Titus 1:8 is that they ought to be “disciplined” men. How many different practical areas of life can you think of where this quality is critical for a church leader? At the same time, Acts 24:25; Galatians 5:23 and 2 Peter 1:6 summon all Christ-followers to live “disciplined” lives. Where do you stand in need of the Lord’s pardon and power the most as it relates to personal discipline? As you turn to prayer, make sure to present these needs and requests to the Lord.

15. Using Paul’s words to Timothy as well as to the Ephesian elders (1 Timothy 4:12; Acts 20:32), take some time as a group to pray for our elders at MEFC (Dave, Aaron, Andy, and Scott) as well as for those who will serve our congregation as elders in the future.