

THE Rock COMMUNITY CHURCH

1 Timothy 3:1-7

“A Noble Task”

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Anaheim Hills, CA | RockCC.com

20:08

What are you qualified to do? What abilities or education and training do you have that make you qualified for a particular job or activity? For example, are you qualified to practice law or medicine or do electrical work or play a musical instrument or drive a car?

20:37

Have you noticed there are drivers on the road that think they are qualified to operate their motor vehicle but you watch them drive and you have serious doubts about that? In our passage today, Paul is going to talk about the qualifications required by God to be a pastor or elder of his church.

21:00

We're going to see that this passage is a picture. Yes, it's a picture of who God calls, prepares, and equips for leadership in his church, but or and it is also a picture of what the power of God can do in your life, in your life when you trust him to transform you into the person he created you to be.

21:29

We pray with me, please. Lord, a beautiful day. One of those just beautiful days, great days to be alive. You know, Lord, in the world there are so many confusing, distracting, and conflicting messages that bombard us all the time.

21:48

But when we turn to your word, we find your clear voice of truth and purpose for our lives. So now please give us ears to hear, hearts to receive your truth through your word today. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

22:05

Our passage is 1 Timothy, chapter 3 verses 1 to 7. Last week, we finished chapter 2, where Paul explained how God's plan for men is different than God's plan for women when it comes to spiritual and doctrinal authority in the church.

22:26

I am grateful that Pastor Drew preached on that and not me. Thank you, Drew. Today, Paul is going to give us further clarification because Paul did not want to leave the impression that just any man is qualified to lead Christ's church.

22:46

So let's read 1 Timothy 3:1-7. The saying is trustworthy. If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore, an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.

23:15

He must manage his own household well with all dignity, keeping his children submissive. For if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil.

23:34

Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders so that he may not fall into disgrace into a snare of the devil. Don't you think it's interesting that this list of qualifications to be a pastor or elder does not include the things we'd expect to find on a job application?

23:58

For example, there's no mention of an age requirement, educational degree, or previous years of on -the -job experience. Instead, Paul focuses entirely on heart and character. Why? Why just heart and character?

24:21

Because pastors and elders are called to be under shepherds of the Lord Jesus, and therefore they must reflect Jesus' heart and character to the flock. When we consider this list of intimidating spiritual qualifications that we just read, it's a fair question to ask.

24:43

It's fair. How can any sinner ever hope to meet these high standards? Paul answered this question for us at the beginning of his letter. Let's look back at chapter 1, verse 12. Paul said, I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service.

25:05

Paul thanked Jesus for the power that radically changed Paul from an enemy of Christ into a pastor, missionary, and apostle of Christ. Paul's transformation in everything Paul accomplished in his amazing Christian life was due to the strength of Jesus, not due to the strength of Paul.

25:27

Only the power of Jesus can transform you into the person God created you to be. Only by the grace of God can a sinner become a joyful and fruitful servant of the living God. And it's all for God's glory, not for ours.

25:50

Paul explained this a little later in chapter 1, verse 16. Let's look at that real quick. Paul said, but I receive mercy for this reason that in me, as the foremost sinner, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.

26:08

Everything God does in our life, in my life, in your life, everything he does, the changes he makes in us, and the gifts he gives to us are not so we can draw attention to ourselves, but so that we can draw attention to Jesus.

26:25

Pastors and elders have the specific responsibility to be Christ -like examples to the church. And pastors, elders, and every believer in the church have the responsibility to be Jesus' examples to the world.

26:43

As we've seen in the first two chapters of 1 Timothy, Paul is writing to help Pastor Timothy deal with some very serious problems in his church. As we start chapter 3, Paul is going to instruct Timothy how to appoint only qualified men to help him lead the church.

27:01

Let's look at verse 1 of chapter 3. The saying is trustworthy. If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. So, Paul begins by writing the saying is trustworthy. This is one of Paul's phrases he likes to use in his letters.

27:19

And it's Paul's way of saying, here comes a summary of key biblical doctrine. And then he Paul writes, if anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Did you notice? We just read it.

27:36

Did you notice how Paul described the man who aspires and desires the noble task of overseer or pastor or elder? Do you notice how Paul described him? Let's read it again. The saying is trustworthy. If the smartest, most handsome, talented, popular, educated, and successful man aspires to the office of overseer, he's the guy you want.

28:00

Is that what Paul wrote? He wrote, if anyone aspires to the office of overseer, that word anyone is really generic. You know what it means? It means any male believer in the church that feels called the leadership, anyone.

28:21

In other words, and this is probably going to really surprise you, okay? God calls average, run -of -the -mill men to be transformed by the strength of Jesus to lead the church to be humble examples to be humble examples to the flock.

28:39

Pastors are examples not of their own greatness, but of the greatness of God. By the grace and greatness of God, pastors can do amazing things because God does amazing things in their lives and the life of anyone who trusts and obeys the Lord.

28:59

So maybe the most extraordinary qualification for pastors and elders is just how ordinary they can be. So they can model how faith and obedience to the Lord can radically and wonderfully change anyone's life.

29:18

If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. In the Greek, the language word aspires means to reach out after. It describes an external action, an outward pursuit you're willing to sacrifice for.

29:34

Now we all know that when we really want to achieve something important, we're willing to make sacrifices to reach our goal. The word "desires" comes from a different Greek word that describes a strong passion or strong inward desire.

29:50

So Paul is telling Timothy, if you have any man in your church who strongly desires to be an overseer and he is ready to deny himself and devote himself to that work, you should approve him if he is qualified.

30:04

We'll get to the qualifications in a minute, but what exactly is an overseer? In God's church, leaders are given titles like overseer, bishop, elder, and pastor. In the New Testament, these titles are used interchangeably to describe the same person that performs pastoral or shepherding responsibilities as in addition to overall official leadership of the church.

30:30

These titles come from the first century when the New Testament was written. Now here in the 21st century, at RockCC, we don't use the title of overseer or bishop. If you go on our website, you're not going to find overseer Drew or Bishop Bruce, although I really like the sound of Bishop Bruce.

30:49

Maybe that'll stick. We use the word pastor elder interchangeably to identify the same person. So if it's okay with you for the rest of this message, I'm going to save words so we can get out on time, okay?

31:07

I'm just going to use the word pastor to refer to the role of overseer, pastor, bishop, elder. The word of God makes it clear that the pastor's title is not important. It's the pastor's heart and character that are important.

31:23

The church has been purchased by the precious blood of Jesus. Church is the bride of Christ. Jesus is the head of the church. A pastor must deny himself and devote himself to leading Jesus's church, Jesus's way.

31:46

In every decision and in every word and in every action, pastors answer to God and must lead the church according to the word of God, not according to their own desire. Now, if you do not happen to be a pastor today, you're not off the hook because every single person on earth will answer to God.

32:10

And if you call Jesus your Lord, then you too must lead your life according to the word of God. Paul writes, If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. The word noble means excellent.

32:23

But it means superior. The role of pastor is a very high calling. It's a very high calling. It's the high calling to be a lowly servant. That's the high calling. It's a high calling to be a lowly servant.

32:40

Let's look at what Jesus said to his disciples who would become the first leaders of the new church. Mark chapter 10 verses 42 to 45. And Jesus called them to him and said to them, You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them and their great ones exercise authority over them, but it shall not be so among you.

33:03

But whoever would be great among you must be your servant. And whoever be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came to be served, not to serve. Came not to be served, but to serve.

33:16

Let me read that correctly. For even the Son of Man came to, even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. There must be a reason I needed to repeat that so I learned it.

33:32

Every pastor, every pastor has a high calling to humbly serve the church, not come and be served by the church. And every member of the church has the same calling to serve each other because we all have Jesus as example to follow.

33:48

Let's look at verse one one more time. Chapter three, the saying is trustworthy. If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires an easy cushy situation. See that? Calls it a noble task. Do you know what that word task means?

34:10

It means work, job, duty, chore, labor. To be a pastor is a wonderful privilege, but it's not for the lazy. Right about now we can count on Spurgeon to have an insightful thought for us. So here's what Spurgeon has to say about this verse.

34:34

He said, what is the use of a lazy minister? He is no good either to the world, to the church or to himself. He is a dishonor to the noblest profession that can be stowed upon the sons of men. Serving the church as a pastor is such a high honor, such a privilege, such a blessing, but it's also hard work.

35:01

And because all pastors I've met are human, it means pastors are not infallible and pastors are not immune to fatigue and discouragement. And on that note, I'd like you to see the pastors of The Rock Community Church going from your left cross on the top is Pastor Mike, Pastor Drew, Pastor Dave, and then on the bottom Pastor 'Bishop' Bruce and Pastor Dave.

35:36

Apparently, apparently beards are a qualification that Paul forgot to mention. I put this picture up here hoping you might take a picture of it with your phones. Just so that you might remember to pray for us if you would be so kind.

35:56

When Paul signed off his first letter that he wrote to the Thessalonian Christians, Paul wrote at the end of his letter, he said, brothers, pray for us. So I would like to ask you, my brothers and my sisters, would you please pray for us so that we can be strong in the Lord even when our strength is failing and that we can serve the Lord and serve you to the glory of God.

36:27

Before we look at God's list of qualifications for elders, for pastors, let's look at another list that applies to all of us. It identifies the fruit of the Holy Spirit, the marks of the Christian life in Galatians 5 verses 22 to 25.

36:44

Paul writes, but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law, and those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

37:04

If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. The qualifications for pastor are all rooted in this list for every believer. Everyone receives the Holy Spirit the moment he or she trusts in Christ, and one of the main purposes of the Holy Spirit is to come into our heart and conform us to the image of Jesus, to produce Christ-like qualities in us that make us more and more like Jesus, and this transformation takes a lifetime.

37:38

When we see the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, it's really exciting because it shows us that the Holy Spirit is working in us. Now, you don't need to exhibit any fruit of the Spirit to come to church, but that fruit must be clearly visible for anyone God calls to lead the church.

37:58

Now, having just read the fruit of the Spirit for every believer, let's look at the qualifications for elders, pastors, verses two to three of chapter three. Therefore, an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.

38:28

That word must is an emphatic word. It means the qualifications for leadership in Christ's church are not suggestions, they're not guidelines, they're not nice to have, they're must-haves, must-have.

38:48

To be qualified, a pastor must have not some of the things on the list, but all of them, all of them. Also, these qualifications are not prerequisites to become a pastor. They are also the essential things that a pastor needs every day for the work of pastoring.

39:09

Paul is telling Timothy and us that pastors are not to be chosen at random, or because they volunteer, or because they want to be a pastor, or because they are natural -born leaders, or because they have a pulse.

39:29

Pastors must be chosen based on God's qualifications. And that qualification starts with a general overall statement that Paul makes. Let's look at it again. The pastor must be above average. Is that what it says?

39:45

Kind of wish it did. Pastor must be above reproach. Above reproach does not mean, let's talk about what it does not mean first. Pastors must be sinless and infallible because only Jesus lived a sinless perfect life.

40:04

In Christ, we can all look forward to the day when we get to heaven and we will be flawless and sin free forever. But until that day comes, imperfect pastors with sin natures must be above reproach. So what does above reproach mean?

40:23

It means, to live a life where obedience to God is your highest priority of your life. And you do not bring shame or disgrace on the name of Jesus in any way. When we read about the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5 just a minute ago, we saw that every believer is called to crucify the flesh with its passions and desires and to keep in step with the Holy Spirit.

40:52

A pastor must be a person who does that, who walks that kind of life so that his choices, his words, his actions and his life honor the Lord. Now in the rest of our passage, Paul is going to elaborate on what it means to be above reproach.

41:13

And he starts with the husband of one wife. This qualification has raised a number of questions as to exactly what Paul means. For example, is Paul saying a pastor must be married? That's not likely because Paul was a pastor and he was not married when he wrote this and it is believed he never married.

41:35

And of course, Jesus is the head of the church and Jesus never married. So it's likely that he's not saying a pastor must be married. Is Paul teaching against polygamy? Is Paul saying a pastor can be a husband of one wife but not two or more?

41:51

Again, not likely because polygamy was not common in the Roman and Greek society of Paul's day and a polygamist could not even be a church member, let alone a church leader. So another question is, is Paul saying that a pastor cannot be someone who has remarried?

42:09

This is the question that raises the strongest debate among churches. At RockCC, we believe the Bible teaches, scripture teaches clearly that a man is allowed to remarry after the death of his wife and the Bible does permit divorce in certain circumstances.

42:28

So a remarried man can be a pastor providing, of course, he meets all the other qualifications. To help us better understand what Paul means by husband of one wife, we could look at the original language Paul used.

42:43

In the Greek, husband of one wife would translate as a one-woman man, a one-woman man. This Greek term, a one-woman man, does not focus on marital status, it focuses on moral purity. It means if the pastor is married, he must be absolutely faithful to his wife.

43:04

Pastors both married and single must be morally pure. Let's go to the next one, sober - minded. This is a term used several places in the New Testament to mean clear - headed, it means alert, it means watchful.

43:20

Pastors can have a joyful spirit, pastors can have a delightful sense of humor, mine is questionable, but they must be vigilant. Pastors must be able to deal with serious subjects in a serious way. In fact, every single believer must be sober - minded.

43:42

Why? Peter told us why. Let's look at first Peter 5:8. Peter wrote, be sober - minded, be watchful. Your adversary, the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. None of us should ever let our guard down.

44:02

Satan is looking for any opportunity to destroy you, to destroy me, to destroy this church. Sober - mindedness is a must for pastors who watch over the church, and sober - mindedness is vital for all the people in the church because we have an enemy, powerful enemy named Satan.

44:24

Let's go back to our list in 1 Timothy 3:2-3. Overseer must be above reproach, husband of one wife, sober - minded, then we come to self - controlled. Self - control means the ability to control your thoughts, control your words, control your actions.

44:39

It's one of the fruit of the Spirit. It's one of the fruit of the Spirit for every believer. A self - controlled person is a Spirit - filled person. Pastors need to be under the control of the

Holy Spirit, not be slaves to their own emotions, their own moods and their own sin natures.

44:57

All believers need this fruit of the Spirit. Respectable is a word that has a similar meaning to above reproach, but this word emphasizes an upright, orderly life. Paul is saying that a man that lives at disorganized or undisciplined or chaotic life is disqualified for being a pastor because he cannot bring order to the church.

45:24

Hospitable, this is a person that's welcoming, welcoming to friends and welcoming to strangers and to believers and unbelievers. A pastor must be approachable, not standoffish. He must be caring and open with his life and his home.

45:42

Able to teach is the only qualification that relates to a person's spiritual gift. You do not, Pastor Drew covered this last week, you do not have to be a pastor to teach the word of God in church, you don't.

45:55

But teaching is listed here because teaching the word of God is one of the primary duties, responsibilities of the pastor. Pastors are under shepherds of Jesus and Jesus proclaimed the truth of God with love and clarity and pastors need to do that too.

46:15

And they need to do that in public and in private, in front of a congregation and a classroom and a small group and one on one. Not a drunkard. This is an example of self-control that pastors must have.

46:31

Scripture does not require a pastor to abstain from alcohol but pastors must be able to say no. They must have the self-control to say no to any kind of excess. Pastors must not allow their judgment and witness for Christ to be compromised by alcohol or anything.

46:50

In the book of Ephesians, Paul tells every believer not to be drunk but to be filled with the spirit. The next one, next qualification is not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome. Not violent also translates as not pugnacious which means you don't want your pastor to be combative, aggressive and hostile.

47:15

There is no place, there is no place in church leadership for a bully. That makes sense, doesn't it? Pastors should be quick to lay their hands on people to pray for them, not to hurt them in any way.

47:31

Gentle. Gentle means the pastor must model his life after Jesus, not an action hero. Being gentle does not mean the pastor is timid and weak. Means pastor is kind and respectful. Pastors should exercise the authority God has given them with the tenderness of a shepherd and with the sensitivity of a loving father.

48:00

Gentle pastors need to be peacemakers, not fire starters. Not quarrelsome means not argumentative, defensive or quick tempered. Pastors must react sometimes to difficult people and difficult situations and they must do that calmly and they must do that gently with the love of Christ.

48:23

Pastors must be good listeners, not good arguers. Not a lover of money. Pastors must be motivated by their love for God and his people, not for their love of money. Now this

does not mean, this does not mean the churches should pay their staff pastors as little as possible so they have no money to love.

48:47

Doesn't mean that. It means greed must not be the driving force behind a pastor's desire to be in ministry. Okay, let's move on, verses four to five. He must manage his own household well with all dignity keeping his children submissive for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?

49:15

Paul makes a logical point, right? If someone cannot lead his family at home, how could he lead God's family in the church? Makes sense. But let's think about this, because it's interesting. Let's think about this together for a sec.

49:31

The world, the world puts a big, huge dividing line between someone's public life and their private life, right? Take for example, a business leader. A business leader is judged on his or her ability to increase profits and follow company policy, not judged on the quality of his or her personal life.

49:56

But God has a radically different point of view. In the eyes of God, a pastor's home life and personal life matter immensely. In fact, marriage and parenting act as a proving ground for a pastor's fitness to lead the church.

50:12

It's huge. Pastors must keep their children submissive. Submissive is a military term. It simply means a child must have respectful submissiveness to authority. A pastor must be a loving father who leads his child or children to Christ and teaches them to honor and respect the parents' authority, and of course, ultimately, God's authority.

50:39

The word of God is showing us what kind of management skills a pastor needs to have. And when we think of management, we typically associate that with employees and policies, but God doesn't. God focuses on managing children in the home.

50:55

Verse six, he must not be a recent convert or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. A new believer, such an exciting time to be a new believer. Wonderful to be around new believers.

51:11

New believers love the Lord Jesus and they want to serve, but if a new believer is elevated to a position of leadership too soon or too quickly, it could easily tempt that new believer to become full of pride.

51:25

Being prideful or conceited makes any believer a new one or a not new one to be unfit to be a pastor. Pride makes a person unfit to be a pastor. Paul says a conceited new believer will fall into the condemnation of the devil.

51:44

What does that mean? Thank you for asking. Scripture teaches us that we cannot lose our salvation so Paul is not saying that a conceited new convert will be thrown out of the kingdom of God. Paul is using strong language to make an important point and here's Paul's point.

52:03

Satan's pride caused him to be barred from heaven. A man's conceit or a man's pride causes him to be barred or prohibited from leading Jesus' church. New believers need time to grow, they need time to mature because it takes a mature believer to better face.

52:26

Still not easy, but a new believer can better face the temptations and attacks that come with being a pastor. By the way, ordinarily I would never ever mention this, but I'm not a new believer. And I mention that because it just so happens that in just a few days, on March 30th is my spiritual birthday, March 30th.

52:54

On March 30, 1964, I gave my life to Christ. And in a few days, I'll be 59 years old in the Lord. And I like to count my spiritual birthdays. I'll be 59. Thank you, I didn't expect that, thank you, that's nice.

53:16

Yeah, I'll be 59, I'm excited about that. Let's read verse seven together. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders so that he may not fall into disgrace into a snare of the devil. We see here, a pastor has to be above reproach, inside and outside the church.

53:40

Pastors and all believers must make it their priority to obey the word of God wherever they are at all times. People outside the church can disagree with our beliefs, but a pastor and every believer should have the reputation for living a Christ-like life that even unbelievers can respect.

54:04

So, as we wrap this up, I'd like to share something else personal with you for just a second. I think I was about 10 years old when I realized I wanted to be a pastor someday. And then a lot of time passed.

54:24

God had a lot of work to do in my life. And as I got older and I got older and I got older, it looked like my desire to be a pastor was a pipe dream, was an impossible dream until September of 2013 when I was ordained by The Rock Community Church.

54:50

When I was 10, I could not have imagined, could not have imagined how much I would love you and love this church. From the bottom of my heart, there's nothing I'd rather do than serve the Lord and serve you.

55:11

And I am so grateful. I am so grateful for your patience and your prayers. Our passage showed us today how God calls and prepares certain members of His family to be pastors in His church. Okay? But what if you are not called to be a pastor?

55:37

What is God saying to you in this passage? Would you like to know? It's really great. Are you ready? This is what this passage has been saying to you. God is saying to you, if He can make something special out of the ordinary men that pastor your church, just wait to see what Jesus can and will do in your life when you trust and follow Him.

56:05

Just wait to see what Christ will do in your life when you trust and follow Him. Our prayer team will be here to pray with you after the service. Will you pray with me, please? Lord, we thank you for your word that shows us how much you love us and how much you love your church.

56:23

And Lord, we love your church too. Help us all to seek your will and your plan for our lives and for RockCC. Help us. I pray all desire, the fruit of your Holy Spirit and our lives so we can bring glory not to ourselves, God forbid, but bring glory to you as you guide us, stretch us, and teach us how to experience that transforming power of Jesus in our lives.

56:54

Now to Him, who is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think according to the power and work within us. To Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever. Amen.