

Leading with Character

Titus 1:5-9 - NCBC, February 14, 2016

Main Point: **Spiritual leaders are called to lead with character**

- In **the Family** (v. 6)
- In Sound **Living** (v. 7-8)
 - Not controlled by self (v. 7)
 - But controlled by God's Spirit (v.8)
- In Sound **Doctrine** (v. 9)

Application: **Pursue practical growth in Christ-like character**

Opening Announcements:

Thanks for the prayers for our team of 18 attending the **biblical counseling training conference**. Convicted. Inspired. Challenged. United. Strengthened. You'll be hearing more about this in the coming weeks and months as our elders have time to prayerfully consider the implications of this training on our disciple-making culture here at New Castle Bible Church.

Valentine's Day! Thankful for a day that helps us celebrate our loved ones. Let marriage be held in honor among all. In a day when our culture spits upon the God's good design for marriage... may the church rise up and proclaim the goodness of God's gospel!

<<How Great is our God>>



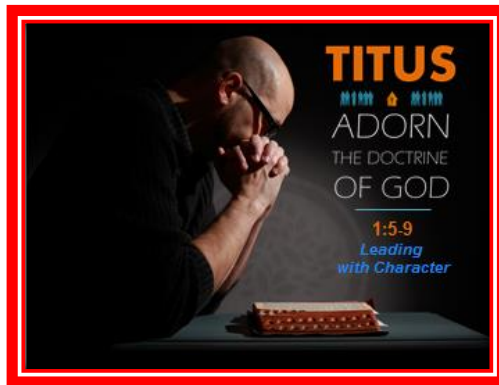
Amen. Thank you Paul and team. We appreciate so much your help in worshipping our great God this morning.

Well we are so thankful to report that little Joel Felix arrived safe and sound this past Weds.



Look at that sweet picture. Every child is a gift from the Lord. We rejoice with Tom and Jennifer and their family.

Please continue to pray for the them as they adjust to Joel's joyful arrival as a family together this month. We are thankful to have a number of guest worship leaders serving us this month, so please continue to give your warm welcome to them as they faithfully serve us in the coming weeks.



I now invite you to prepare for the public reading of God's Word from **Titus 1:5-9**. If you do not have a Bible with you today, our ushers are coming now to give you a Bible. Please catch their attention as they pass by and it would be our joy to give you a Bible. You are welcome to take this Bible home as our gift to you, or just simply return it after our service by placing it on the table in the back of the room.

Our focus this morning is on **Titus 1:5-9**. You can find this text on page **998** of the Bibles we've handed out. Please stand with me now in honor of God's Word, as I read God's Word from the ESV translation of Titus 1:5-9 this morning:

⁵ This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— 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. 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. 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.

These are trustworthy words of God. You may be seated.

Let's Pray.

In the last several months I've had the experience of reviewing a number of xrays for certain loved ones in my family. Xrays on the mouth – specifically xrays on the teeth of my loved ones. Yes, our family has bravely entered into the wonder of orthodontics together!

Now you have to admit – orthodontics is pretty amazing right? When I think about that first xray we saw... the emerging teeth looked like a cluster of grapes. There were teeth upon teeth, and many of the embedded teeth were going off in the wrong directions. Similar to how my mouth was as a young child as well, the teeth looked like a bunch of loose puzzle pieces that had been dumped into my wife's mixer bowl as she was making dough.

Every tooth – every individual piece was out of place and in need of being set in order for the greater function and joy of the body.

And that's exactly the state of the churches on the island of Crete as we come to our text in Titus 1 this morning. You see, Paul is writing this letter to all the churches in Crete through his partner Titus.

In verse 5 Paul affirms the authority of Titus publicly when he reminds him,

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.

I gave clear direction to you already Titus about how to do this, but now I want to make sure all the Cretan churches understand your responsibilities as well. You are to put things into order among the churches there. The word “put things into order” comes from the same root word as “ortho” – like orthodontics or orthopedics. Healing and making straight what has been broken, bent, or become out of sorts.

Titus – we've preached the Gospel together in Crete. There are many brand new churches around the island. But there's still foundational work remaining to be done. These individual believers are designed to work well together as a body – like individual puzzle pieces these new converts are all beautiful on their own...but the greater beauty and glory to God comes when they are

functioning together in an orderly way so that the entire puzzle can be clearly seen for the glory of God.

So Titus – like we discussed – you need to humbly and prayerfully ask God's Spirit to help you appoint elders and overseers in the household of God.

For the puzzle of the Cretan churches to come together well, you need to build the outer frame first – you need to develop and recognize leaders. Elders. The men God has called to serve the church in spiritual leadership.

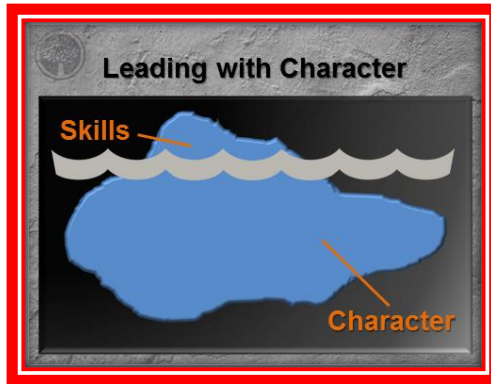
Now if you were Titus – what kind of men would you be looking to recognize as biblical elders together in each of these churches?

I found it fascinating this week to consider what Titus is not looking for. What's not listed here as a quality of readiness for spiritual leadership. As you skim through the biblical qualities of spiritual leaders in verse 6-9, are you surprised to notice what doesn't make the list?

No mention of the candidate's education, ministry experience, or visionary entrepreneurship. Titus is not primarily looking for men who are cultural architects, promoters, entertainers, or administrators. No – what qualifies a man to serve in Christ's church is his personal character. The inner transformation of His own soul that gives evidence to the fact that he has been with Jesus.¹

I think an iceberg could help us illustrate this.

¹ Acts 4:13



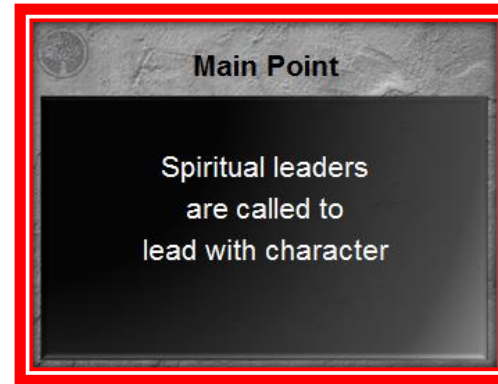
It's common knowledge that the largest part of all icebergs are hidden under the water. Only a small fraction of the iceberg is represented by that which is easily visible to passer-byers on the sea.

So it is with spiritual leaders. **Godliness is more important than giftedness.** A leader's love is more important than his learning. His prayer is more important than his planning. His character is more important than his craft. **Who he is, is much more important and significant than what he does.**

Yes of course an elder must be gifted, taught, and skillfully competent... but the evidence of his readiness to serve as an elder in Christ's church is first and foremost His character.

Which leads us to our main point this morning:

Spiritual leaders are called to lead with character



Your character is **who you really are when no one is watching.** That's your character.

Church leaders are called to exemplify the Christ-like character that all believers are commanded to exhibit. Since the text before us lays out the necessary character qualities for a spiritual leader in Christ's church – then in many ways our text is defining what spiritual maturity looks like for *all believers*. Elders aren't perfect Christians, but they are called to be exemplary.

So does that change how you want to approach this text this morning for yourself? As we walk through these character qualities of spiritual leaders... ask yourself where God would have you take that next practical step to pursue greater spiritual maturity for yourself.

In verses 6 and 7, Paul repeats an overarching emphasis that a biblical elder should be "**above reproach.**" This simply means that his reputation is one of character. No

accusation can be brought against his way of life in these areas. He is unimpeachable. His reputation is beyond suspicion. It is a summary term whose specifics are enumerated as the text goes on.

First then in verse 6, we learn that spiritual leaders are to reflect Christ-like character **In the Family (v. 6)**



Please look at verse 6 with me,

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.

It's instructive to note that a person's true character is first demonstrated in the home, isn't it? **How we relate to the people closest to us reflects the most honest reality about who we really are.** In many ways then, the home is the first training ground for spiritual leaders.

Note the two evidences of spiritual maturity that demonstrate themselves in the family:



Biblical elders are called to be a “one-woman man”, and to have faithful children.

A one-woman man means that this man is faithful to his spouse, and is sexually pure both in his mind and in his actions. This doesn't require an elder to be married, any more than it requires an elder to have more than 1 child in the second part of the verse.² But the emphasis here is on faithfulness. A biblical elder must have a reputation of being faithful to his spouse.

Now when the text says that “*his children are believers*”

² 1 Cor. 9:1ff, esp. v. 5; c.f. 1 Cor. 7:7-8, 32ff

Please understand that this Greek phrase is difficult to translate. It could legitimately be translated either as “believing children” or “faithful children.” The **ESV, NIV, and NASB** all take this to mean “children are believers.” The **KJV, HCSB, and NET** translations all read “faithful children.” In fact it is very difficult to know which phrase is intended here.

Personally I believe “faithful children” best fits the context – meaning children who are under submission and obedient to their father’s shepherding while they are living in his home. I humbly hold this position for the following reasons. The rest of the verse seems to explain what it means for a child not to be faithful. **Debauchery** refers to a wild lifestyle of partying and drinking. **Insubordination** refers to those children who are rebellious and unwilling to submit to the shepherding influences of their father.

And in context here, the Cretan churches were young enough that it was unlikely that a second generation of believers were established yet in the believer’s homes. Understanding this to be “children who are under submission” seems to keep the focus on the spiritual leader’s character, and is consistent then with the same instructions Paul gave to Timothy in **2 Timothy 3:4-5**.³

³ “[the overseer] 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.”

And remember biblical elders are called to exemplify the Christ-like character that all believers are commanded to exhibit... and so we find that true character is first evidenced in the home.

But in verses 7-8, we discover that Christ-like character is also demonstrated **In Sound Living (v. 7-8)**

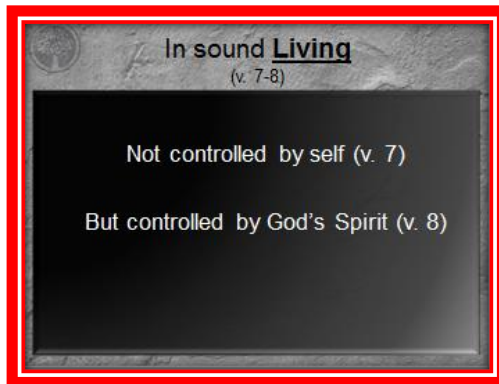


Sound living. His walk must be one of godly morality and Christ-like virtue in all his relationships.

You might ask why Paul is so specific about what it means to have a character “above reproach.” We find the answer at the beginning of verse 7 where he says an overseer or elder is God’s steward. The reason a church leader must be above reproach is because the Holy Spirit has made him a steward in Christ’s body. Therefore his

life must demonstrate the evidences of God's transforming grace.

All spiritually mature believers must demonstrate a lifestyle that is **Not controlled by self (v. 7)**



But controlled by God through His Spirit (v.8)

Look at verse 7 with me first:

An overseer... must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain.

Spiritual Leader ≠ Self-Governed		
Pattern of Sin	Controlled By	Godly Quality
Arrogant	Pride	Servant-hearted
Quick-tempered	Anger	Patient
Drunkard	Substance	Clear-Headed
Violent	Domineering	Peace-maker
Greedy for gain	Greed	Generous

In brief, a biblical elder cannot be a self-governed individual. Spiritual maturity has experienced freedom from such self-reliance and self-rule.

So as we consider this list, think about your own life. Is God graciously showing you a pattern of sin that He longs to set you free from?

First, all Christ-followers are called to put off **arrogance**. Self-assertiveness. Stubbornness. Pride. This is inconsistent with the servant-hearted leadership that Christ modeled and taught.

The spiritual leader must not have a reputation for having a short-fuse either. Can you imagine the damage a **quick-tempered** man could bring to the glory of Christ as he sought to manipulate other's behaviors and thinking through explosive anger?

But how many sad stories do we all know of spiritual leaders who have disqualified themselves and brought reproach on the church of Jesus Christ because of their patterns of life-dominating sins with **substances** like alcohol, drugs, pornography, or sexual experiences?

Spiritual leaders must likewise not be **violent**. Literally, a “fist-fighter.” A bully. Such attitudes are inconsistent with people who have been transformed by God’s peace.

And finally, elders must **not love money**, or desire to seek wealth at any cost. It is impossible to serve both God and money.⁴

Instead, a person of true spiritual character will be submitted to the Lordship of Jesus Christ – governed by His transforming rule. And in verse 8 we find 6 virtues which mark sound biblical living:

Spiritual Leader = God-Governed	
Godly Pattern	Meaning
Hospitable	Affectionate to Strangers
Lover of Good	Loving what is good
Self-Controlled	Sensible, “Saved-Mind”
Upright	Righteous, Equitable, Fair
Holy	Devout, pleasing to God
Disciplined	Having a grip on oneself

This person is **hospitable** – meaning his heart is so transformed by God’s welcoming gospel that he joyful and readily welcomes strangers into his own life and home. His life is marked by “love in action.”

The mature Christian **loves all those things and people** who are truly good and from God above. The leader who is a lover of good is a joy to be around. For their life is marked by thanksgiving, praise, and kind service.

His mind is **self-controlled** – literally he has a “saved mind.” His life is marked by prudence, he is a person of priorities and discipline.

And he is **upright** – or righteousness. One who is filled with God’s Spirit will not be partial, but his behavior will be right, and commendable, and impartial.

⁴ Matthew 6:24

Upright and **holy** often go together in the scriptures,⁵ as holy highlights the believer's separation from the world, and devout desire to live for the pleasure of God more than for his own self.

And then, it is important to recognize that spiritually mature people are **disciplined** and self-controlled. This quality is evidence of being Spirit-filled.

So where could you grow and excel yet more in these qualities of spiritual maturity? Remember – elders are called to model the very maturity that all believers are commanded to grow more and more into through time.

Perhaps you could honestly acknowledge this morning that anger or pride or the idolatry of some addiction has far too much power in your life these days. You know that such living is inconsistent with God's gospel provisions, but all your efforts at true change have come up short.

Well ... look down and read **verses 12 and 16** of ch. 1:

The Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons. This testimony is true... verse 16 ... They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

⁵ Luke 1:75; Eph 4:24; 1 Thess 2:10

This is the population that Titus is seeking to appoint elders from. Titus – I want you to appoint people who will lead the church with character ... But doesn't it make you ask... where would Titus find people with a reputation of such godliness in the midst of such detestable and disobedient people?

Well loved ones – the answer is found in **verses 11-14** of chapter 2:

For the grace of God has appeared, [It's good news whenever God's grace comes marching onto the scene] bringing salvation for all people [that's right – all people can be saved and rescued from sin's power and penalty... for how does God's saving grace transform our brokenness? By...], training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age [don't miss this – God's grace is a transforming grace. His gospel produces godliness within you. Christ produces character... as we are], waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness [we've been bought out of sin's slavery] and to purify for Himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. [yes, even for spiritual leadership in His church.]

This is the amazing grace of God. Christian – we’ve been set free from sin – so that we can live right. And our true inward character can be transformed by God’s grace from the inside out.

Verse 9 gives one more important virtue for a spiritual leader who leads with character. A biblical elder must lead out of His character **In Sound Doctrine (v. 9)**



Verse 9 reads,

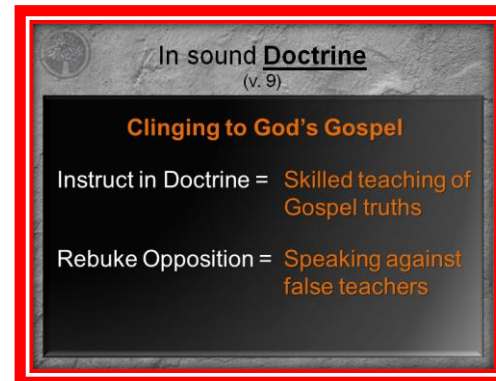
He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

Here the character qualities transition from moral to theological. From walk to talk. From morality to ministry.

For in truth, if God’s grace has so transformed his heart

to bring about his sound living, then a spiritual leader must be wholly dependent upon the sufficient Gospel of God to bring about transformation in the lives of others as well.

Remember – at this time the prospective elders in Crete were dependent upon the verbal and oral proclamation of the Gospel. They didn’t have the luxury of bound Bibles they could pick up and read anytime. The Gospel message of grace was something that church leaders must hold firmly to – or you could say, “cling to.”



Growth in godliness will only increase your devotion to the trustworthy message of God’s saving grace. There’s a lot of pressure these days to be devoted to other sources of truth, other sources of help, other ways of so called wisdom. But in the midst of the swirling winds of false doctrine – cling to God’s sufficient gospel!

In 2 Timothy 3 Paul says that biblical elders must be “apt to teach.” But here in Titus, he charges them both positively and negatively.

You might just put a “plus” and “minus” sign in your notes this morning. Besides the “plus” sign – write the word “instruct.” Biblical elders and overseers are responsible to teach Gospel truths – to teach sound doctrine to the family of God. The word used here is *parakaleo* or *paraclete*. Just like the Holy Spirit in John 14... Meaning – elders are called by God to “come alongside” to encourage, exhort, urge other Christians with Gospel truths.

This is the first time we find the word “sound” in Titus, and its root is similar to the word “hygienic”... so in other words, Paul is speaking of healthy, wholesome doctrine. Doctrine that is well... because it accords with the true Gospel of God.

But notice the negative aspect of biblical eldering as well – besides your “minus” sign on your notes, write the word “rebuke.” This literally means to speak against those who are opposing or contradicting the teaching of sound doctrine in the church.

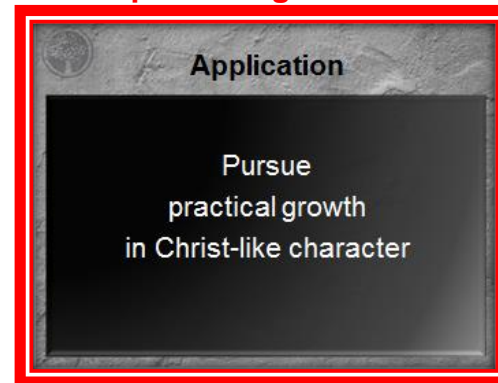
Loved ones – it is not loving to stand idly by as your loved ones poison their souls with ‘counterfeit gospels’ that do not save. It is not loving to remain quiet while

false teachers – even many who are well-intentioned – undermine the sufficiency and power of Christ in the daily lives of believers. Godly leaders of character fear God more than they fear people. And so they humbly seek to correct anyone who seeks to add to God’s gospel, take away from God’s gospel, or in any way pervert the trustworthy words of Christ.

So now, what difference does all of this make for you?

As we’ve considered a very practical profile of spiritual maturity together, I urge every one of you to likewise

Pursue practical growth in Christ-like character



No matter who you are today. If you are a brand new believer – pursue practical growth in Christ-like character. If you are a seasoned saint – today I seek to awaken your soul to excel yet more in the God-given character of Christlikeness.

Here's the reality – no matter who we are - if we aren't growing in Christ-like character, then we are growing in worldly compromise. There is no middle ground, right? There is no neutral zone as a disciple of King Jesus.

So what part of your relational character is God calling you to grow in? Your relationship with your spouse? How you shepherd your children?

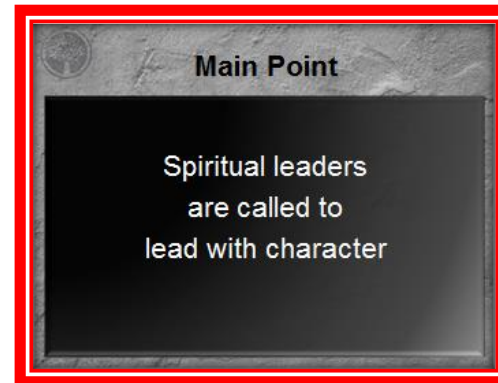
Or what aspect of your moral character would you ask God to strengthen by His amazing grace this week? Anger? Lust? Substance? Love of money?

Or perhaps God is calling some of you to develop your theological character – calling you to hold more firmly to the trustworthy Gospel as its revealed in the Word?

Do you want to grow in your spiritual character this week? Do you really? Does God want you to grow in your spiritual character this week? (O yeah!) Is God willing and able to help you grow in this aspect of your life this week? (Yes, by His amazing grace!)

So then will you take an action of faith and repentance this morning? Will you just write down the character issue that God has convicted you about – just write it down on your notes page this morning. If you're embarrassed about it...just write the first letter. And then will you commit to pray and ask God to transform this part of your family, your morality, or your ministry this week? Pray as if your spiritual growth depends on it...really. For sound doctrine always produces sound

living...so that our lives might more and more adorn the Gospel of God to His eternal glory and praise!



Spiritual leaders are called to lead with character. May God help all of our lives to more closely align with the message we proclaim this week!



Let's pray. **Closing prayer.**

Closing Song – <<Amazing Grace...My Chains are
Gone>>

Benediction

*Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and
to present you blameless before the presence of his glory
with great joy, ²⁵ to the only God, our Savior, through
Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and
authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.
Jude 24*