

Elders, 1

Titus 1:5-6
Pastor Jeremy Cagle, February 10, 2019

Open your Bibles to the book of Titus. And as you're doing that, if you're joining us for the first time today, we're in a series called the "How to Plant a Church" series because that's what the book of Titus is about. It was written to tell us how to plant a church, which means they had a lot going on. I don't know if they had a building fund discussion or things like that, but they were a busy church, especially their pastor.

Verse 4 says that this letter was written (if you look in chapter 1:4), "To Titus, my true child in a common faith," because that was the pastor of the church. Titus was their leader. Of all the letters that Paul wrote to churches, only four were named after a person. There was First and Second Timothy named after Timothy. There was the book of Philemon named after Philemon, and there was this book named after Titus, who's name meant a "titan" in Greek.

You guys aren't from Tennessee like I am, but we have the Tennessee Titans football team. They're not living up to their name because "titan" means "great one" and they haven't won a Super Bowl in a long time. But this word referred to someone who was great in size or appearance. They made an impression. The titans were the parents of the Greek gods. They were the greatest gods there were. And to be named after them was an honour because it meant great things were expected of you. And that was this guy. That was Titus. And he lived up to that because every time you see him in the New Testament, he was in the middle of a problem trying to bring peace to a fight.

Just a little background about this guy the letter was written to. His name appears 13 times in the New Testament, mostly in relation to the church in Corinth. If you remember your New Testament history, Corinth was a very tough place to be because they were always fighting. If you read the book of First Corinthians, it's just one fight after another. Titus was in the midst of all that. Second Corinthians 8 says, Paul sent him there to pick up one of the collections they had made. This means Titus went to Corinth asking for money. Can you imagine going to the worst church in the New Testament asking for a donation? That's what this guy did (one of his tasks in the Bible). We also see in Second Corinthians 7 that he carried Paul's sorrowful letter to the Corinthians, where Paul confronted them and rebuked them. Titus stood there while the Corinthians read that. He might've potentially read the letter to them and waited for their response.

Galatians chapter 2 says he went with Paul to the Jerusalem Council to show them that a Gentile could be saved. If you remember in that Council, the Apostles were arguing about what to do with Gentiles, the non-Jews who were coming to faith in Christ. The Jews considered them to be unclean people, so could they be saved? Could they join the church? So, Paul brought Titus, a full-blooded Gentile to them and he said, "Why don't you see for yourself? Ask him if he's saved." That was this guy's role in the early church.

Titus was a fix-it man. He was the special ops forces you would send in when there was a battle breaking out. He just went from one bad situation to another. One commentator said he was the kind of man for any weather. He would sit with you through any storm. When Winston Churchill became prime minister of England, right before World War II, he said, “All I have to offer you is blood, sweat and tears.” Titus was like that. He was a blood, sweat and tears kind of guy. He said, “Is there a problem? Put me in coach, I’m ready to play. I’m ready to handle it. Is there a fight? Get me in there, I’ll bring peace, I’ll make it better.” Some men, you don’t want to put in a fight because they’ll make it worse, right? They’re going to add gasoline to the fire. Titus was the opposite of that. And I think we need more men in the church like this guy, amen? We need more men who will step into a fight and calm things down.

And this is important because verse 5 says that Paul sent him to the Church in Crete. If you look in verse 5, it says, “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains.” Crete was another place in the ancient world that was known for fighting. It was an island located off the coast of Greece in the Mediterranean Sea, and it was the meeting place of three continents; Europe, Africa, and Asia. So, if you look on a map, it’s right in the middle of all those continents, which made it very powerful. A lot of sea traffic went through there. And for one reason or another, the Cretans developed a reputation for being quarrelsome. It was just a very turbulent place.

It was said that bronze was invented on the island, which gave them an edge in military things. So, the Cretans loved to fight. They loved it so much they would contract themselves out to other countries to fight on their behalf. It’s bad enough if you fight your own battles, it’s even worse if you go fight other people’s battles. It was also said that the Philistines (you guys remember Goliath and all those guys in the Old Testament?) came from the island of Crete. They were nasty people, big fighters.

They invented several types of wine on the island, which made them debauched. People went there to drink wine and get drunk to the point that one officer said...I’ve told you this before, there were three “C’s” in the ancient world. You remember what they were? Chilliwack, Kamloops and what was the other one? Kelowna, right? (Those were “K’s”. I couldn’t find “C’s” in ... British “Columbia” - there you go. There’s another C.)...So, there were three evil “C’s” in the ancient world. There was Cilicia, Cappadocia and Crete. I told one of the men in our church, we were going to teach on the book of Titus, and he said, “Those Cretans!” That was these people. They were a rough group. Their name became synonymous with lying. To act like a Cretan meant to lie or to trick someone. To “out-Cretan” a Cretan meant to tell a really good lie.

And yet despite all of this, the interesting thing about this letter is that this is where God planted a church. Isn’t that interesting? This is where the Lord, despite all their failures and all their shortcomings, this is where he told Titus to go (in verse 5) “set things in order.” That’s a very interesting phrase because the one thing you didn’t have in Crete was order. I mean, culturally speaking, this place didn’t have any kind of peace. And yet this is what Titus was told to do.

If you read verse 5 one more time, it’s says, “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city.” That phrase “set in order” comes from the Greek word *orthos* from which we get the word “orthodontist”. And just like an

orthodontist straightens teeth, it was Titus's job to straighten out the church. Just like the dentist comes in and pulls out the bad teeth and builds up the good ones, it was Titus's job to do that.

It says in "every city", which means that there were churches scattered all throughout the island. We don't know how many there were, but Crete was known as the island of 100 cities. The poet Homer called it that because there were cities all over the place and many of them had churches in them, and it was Titus's job to go from church to church to church and straighten them out. To go from city to city to city and build them up in the faith, get them established, get them running and off the ground.

And we might add (and this is important), he was very thorough about it. If you read through this letter, the one thing you pick up on is, it's a very thorough letter - very extensive. The standard is very high for these churches. The bar's high. God didn't lower it so the Cretans could live up to it. He didn't dumb it down so these people could do it. I mean, here we are 2000 years ago, looking at a book like this written to a place like this, to learn from in our church.

On May 8th, 1957, Jim Elliot and four of his friends were attacked by a group of Auca Indians they were trying to witness to in the jungles of Ecuador. Some of you may remember that story. Elizabeth Elliot wrote about it in her book "Through Gates of Splendor". But they were speared to death, all five of them. They became martyrs. And what you may not know is that afterwards, their widows came back to the jungle to tell the Indians that they forgave them. They didn't hold it against them. And they said, "God wouldn't either, if you trust in Jesus." And the Indians believed, and they planted a church there - very good church, we might add, a very thorough church. They appointed elders, they installed deacons. They wrote good bylaws, the whole nine yards, right there in the middle of the jungle.

This is what Titus did. He went to a place of murderers and thieves and liars, gave them the gospel and then planted a very sound church. I mean, God didn't lower the standard just so they could live up to it. He didn't lower the bar. He kept it high and you could ask the question why? And the answer is this, because when God saves a man, He saves him completely, amen? He leaves no stone unturned. When God changes someone, He changes them completely. To say it this way, the gospel is the same everywhere and the results are the same. You don't have to change it when you go to the jungle. You don't have to change the message when you go to the island of Crete. It's the same message, same God, same church.

When I spoke at the Men's Retreat in Sumas, Washington a couple of weeks ago, I told them, "I've never preached in Washington before. This is the first time, so I don't know much about your culture. But I know that you're a sinner and you need a Saviour." Amen? I said, "Just by looking at you Americans, you guys really need a Saviour. You look like you're in bad shape." Just kidding. Just kidding. Every time I bring an American here, they always wander off and I go looking for them thinking they left for the border, you know, here at the church. The message is the same. You've broken the law and you need forgiveness. It doesn't matter if you're in Sumas, it doesn't matter if you're in Chilliwack, it doesn't matter if you're in Crete, it's the same gospel.

Several years ago, there was a preacher in Seattle who became famous for becoming known as the cussing pastor. Because he taught good, sound doctrine from the Bible while cussing and

using foul language. And when he was asked, "Why do you do that?" He said it was because Seattle was the least churched city in America. He said, "I talk like this because I can't reach people, otherwise." I wonder what Paul would say to that. I wonder what Titus would say. Listen, Seattle, maybe a bad place, but I'll tell you what, Crete was worse than Seattle. All the ancient cities were. The ancient world was a rough place. And God expected the same thing from them that he expects from us in the church. He had the same message for all of us because it's the same gospel, same impact in our lives.

And this especially applies to the issue of leadership. This especially applies to those who lead in the church. The book of Titus has a very simple outline at the end of the day. You're welcome to write this in your notes. It's very easy to follow. Chapter 1 talks about leadership and chapters 2 through 3 talk about Christian living. That's the outline of the book. Leadership chapter 1, living. And 2 to 3 - who can lead, and then how the rest of us can serve in the church. But it starts with leaders, because so goes the leaders, so goes the people, right? So goes the shepherd, so goes the church. A church can't rise above its leaders, it can't go past them. So, Paul says, he begins the letter by telling Titus, "Be sure to choose the right leaders. Put the right men in office."

And to talk about that, in the opening verses, we've already been through this. But Paul talks about in verses 1 through 3, he talks about his own leadership and he mentions why he was qualified to lead the church and be an elder. And in the rest of chapter 1, he talks about leadership in general. And he tells us who an elder can be, what an elder looks like, how you can identify them. And I really can't emphasize this enough. As we go through this this morning, you're going to have to have this in the back of your mind. You got to notice he does not lower the standard. He doesn't lower the standard for leaders.

And if you read through this list in the first century in chapter 1 of what an elder should be, you would probably put the letter down for a minute and look at Paul and say, "Seriously Paul? There's not a person like this on the island. You want a one-woman man, you got to go somewhere else. You want someone who's not addicted to wine, this is not the place." Paul says, "You can find a man like this, because when God saves a man, he saves him entirely, completely. And this is what you need to look for." And that's what I want to talk to you about this morning.

If you're taking notes, in Titus 1, I want you to see three qualifications for an elder in the church. This is just Titus 1:5-6. We're not going to get through all of the qualifications this morning. We're just going to look at the first few. But here's three qualifications for an elder in the church, specifically as it relates to the family, because that's where Paul starts all of this discussion. He gives us three qualifications for an elder as it relates to his family. Family life was...just because of all the sins in Crete, and the sins in the ancient world (we'll talk about this in a minute)...Because of that, family life was taking a really bad hit in the first century. Families were a mess. And Paul says here, if you want to see that a man is ready to lead, that's where you have to look. A man can hide from a lot of things, but he can't hide from his family, right? He can fool a lot of people, but he can't fool his wife and kids. And so, Paul says, when you're looking for someone to be an elder, take a long, hard look there. And he starts off with three qualifications to look at.

The first one is this, an elder must be above reproach. If you're taking notes, that's the first qualification. An elder must be above reproach. And this doesn't relate to the family as much as it just relates to everything. "Above reproach in everything" is the idea, family included. This is a man who has integrity. You guys know what the word integrity means? It comes from the word "integer", which means a whole number. A man with integrity is a whole man. He's the same at church and the same at home and the same at work, and the same out in the hockey rink.

I don't know if it's this way here in Canada but in the States, preachers have to break up fights at softball games. That's why if you're a preacher, you're kind of nervous about going to a church softball game, because you might have to break up a fight. Is it like that with church hockey? I don't know. Okay, alright. Well, I'll keep that in mind. If you guys ever say, "Hey pastor, come with us to the hockey rink." I don't know. But Paul says, this is a man who's the same in the hockey rink. And if you look in verses 5 through 6, he says it this way, he says, "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, namely, if any man is above reproach."

Just a couple of thoughts on this, but the word "elder" here is the Greek word *presbyteros* from which we get the word "Presbyterian". Presbyterianism is a denomination built around the idea of eldership, around this form of government. And if I understand my church history correctly, this is one of the reasons the Presbyterians were persecuted in the 1600s because they thought the elders should lead the church and not the King of England. That's where this word comes from – *presbyteros*. But it's not the only word used for this office.

Just to give you a few other words so you can see a full picture of this. there's the word *episkopos* from which we get the word "Episcopalian". It means an "overseer" or "administrator". If you look down in chapter 1 in verse 7, Paul says, again, "For the overseer must be above reproach." That's another word for this office – *episkopos*. It's the word you see in First Timothy 3:1 where it says, "If any man aspires to the office of overseer, it's a fine work he desires to do."

There's also the word *poimen* from which we get the word "pastor" or "shepherd". Paul tells the elders in the Church of Ephesus to shepherd the flock of God. That's this same office here. But the point is, these are all different ways of saying the same thing. These are all different words for the same office. But an elder is someone who leads the church in a shepherdly way. We could put a simple definition on it. That's what they do. An elder is someone who leads in a shepherdly way or we might even say an elderly way with maturity and wisdom. You see that in the word "elder". This is someone who has shown themselves to have wisdom. It's not necessarily a reference to age because you can be old and be a fool and you can be young and be a fool. It's a reference to the pattern of their life.

And we might add on the front end of this discussion that every church in the New Testament had elders that we know of. We don't know of any other form of government, church government in the Bible. So, for instance, in the New Testament, there were elders in the Church of Jerusalem, Ephesus and Galatia. We saw elders in Pontus, Cappadocia and Bithynia. They were in Philippi and in Antioch and Thessaloniki. Derbe had them and Lystra and Iconium and the churches of the Diaspora. And they did different things. They would preach and teach and

they would counsel people. James 5:14 talks about the elders praying over those who are sick - another important function of the elders.

And there were always more than one of them. And this is important. You never see just one elder. There's always a plurality. There's more than one, and they always had to be qualified before they took on office. That's important as well. You couldn't just say to someone, "Do you want to be an elder? Okay, go for it. You're an elder. Do you want the job? Okay, you can have the job. Take it." Paul says in First Timothy 5:22, "Do not lay hands on an elder too hastily, and thereby share in his sins." He says, "Give a man time to prove himself." You can just imagine with all those churches in the New Testament, there would be a temptation to say, because they were so small and because they were new, "Who wants to be an elder? Let's draw straws." Right? They were desperate for leadership and Paul says, very clearly, "You can't do that. There are qualifications for office."

And he starts off the list in verse 6 with this qualification, "...namely, if any man is (it says) above reproach." That phrase "above reproach" is one word in Greek; *anenkletos*, "to call into account." This is a man who shouldn't be called into account for his sin. He shouldn't be accused of anything. He can be accused, but the accusation won't stick. He can be called into account, he is accountable, absolutely, but he is supposed to be living a godly life. Some of your translations may have the word "blameless" there. It means the same thing. This is a man who was not sinless, but he is blameless. He's not perfect, but he is free from disgrace.

I don't have to tell you there's enough people bringing disgrace to the church today, right? You know that. You can just turn on the news and you see it all the time. There's plenty of men bringing shame to the church. And Paul says, "You need to stop that on the front end by putting the right people in office." This particular qualification shows you the importance of this because it sets the stage for all the others. Everything following from this, it shows you what it means to be above reproach. And this is so important that Paul repeats it again in verse 7 for emphasis. He says, "Find a man who is above reproach, and just in case you don't forget, remember to find a man who is above reproach."

And before I go further, I think it'd be helpful to stop here and ask the question of you, do you think this is possible? I mean, practically speaking. Do you think it's possible for a man to be above reproach today? Let's just be honest. We live in a very cynical world, don't we? We live in a world where leaders fall all the time. It seems like every time you turn on the news, there's another one. And then you turn on the news again, and there's another one. It's been said that dirt doesn't stick on a clean man, it falls off. But can anybody be clean like this?

As some of you know, a few months ago, one of the champions of the reformed faith R. C. Sproul died. He was the founder of Ligonier Ministries and the author of several great books. And he died amidst a scandal. Not his own scandal, but someone else's scandal. I'm not going to say who, but at the time he was passing away, there was another famous leader that had just fallen into sin. But the one thing you kept hearing about R. C. Sproul is that he didn't do that. He lived a godly life. He lived that way and he died that way. One friend of his said that, "R. C. Sproul was as bold as a lion. And at one meeting we were at together, he disagreed with a panel of liberal scholars so passionately that he literally jumped up on the table." I would pay money to

see R. C. Sproul jump up on a table. I would just pay money to see him jump. And he said, "...until each person on the other side made eye contact with him." He said, "There was no malice in his gesture, and everyone in the room understood this. The passion that motivated him was his love for the gospel and his zeal for making it clear. Yet, while doing that, he always remained a godly man. He lived a life of integrity. There were no skeletons in his closet."

And I mention that just by way of example to say this is possible for a man to live like this today. It is possible for a man to have no skeletons in his closet; not sinless, but blameless, not free from any dirt, but free from dirt that would bring shame to the church.

In fact, I bet if we went around the room and I asked everybody in here, you could all remember someone who impacted your life for this reason because they were above reproach. All of you could. You have all known godly men that impacted you for this reason. They had their faults, they had their sins, but they handled them in a God-honouring way. And that's what this is talking about here. I tell people all the time, if you repent of your sins up here, it won't bear fruit out here. Right? If you deal with it in your head, it won't have an impact in your life, and that's what you want in an elder. Someone who repents of his sin up here.

I heard the story once of a man who walked into his pastor's office to inform him that one of his deacons was saying bad things about another deacon in the church. He was criticizing him severely, and at once the pastor stood up from his chair and he said, "The scoundrel, how dare he? You tell him to come talk to me at once." At which point the man went on to inform his pastor that the deacon was saying bad things about him too. He was criticizing the pastor. And so, the pastor sat down and with tears in his eyes, he said, "Can you leave me friend? I need to examine myself." You want men like that in leadership. Men who will examine themselves with a humble heart so they will be above reproach.

And that leads to the next qualification for elders that Paul gives us in this list. It builds off of that one. We spent quite a bit of time on that one because it's really foundational to all of these. But Paul says an elder must be above reproach. He must be blameless in every facet of his life. And then he goes on to tell you what that looks like in the rest of this chapter.

And it leads to a second qualification, which directly ties into the issue of the family. And that is that an elder must be the husband of one wife. The second qualification is that an elder must be the husband of one wife. I think we all understand if a man's going to be blameless, it's going to start with his home. It doesn't do any good being blameless out here if he's not that way at home. I think it was Robert Murray M'Cheyne who said that a hypocrite is a man who's a Christian everywhere but in his home. And you don't want that in leadership. And so, this is where Paul starts off in verses 5 through 6 or where he continues. He says, "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife."

As Paul goes into this list of qualifications, he just starts checking them off one right after another. And he goes right into the statement of "husband of one wife" or in Greek, it means a "one-woman man". It doesn't mean that a man has to be married, it means that he is pure in this area of his life. It doesn't mean he has to have a wife. Many of the leaders in the New Testament

didn't. Paul did not have a wife. Most of the Apostles were single. As far as we know, Titus was. But their minds were not on other women. That's the idea here. They did not have a roving eye or a lustful heart. They were above reproach in this area. I might also mention this doesn't mean a man can't get remarried if his wife dies and he becomes a widow. He can marry again and serve as an elder. And it doesn't mean that he has to be married for a long time. There's no timeline in here as far as how long he has to be married. The point is he has to be faithful to the woman he's married to. In his actions and in his imagination and in his life.

And this is really an interesting one to start off with here because sexual morals were very low in the first century. We complain a lot about our sexual morals today and we should, they are low. But I really think they were worse back then. It's been said that the greatest impact Christianity had on the ancient world was in this area, in the area of sexual morality. Because Christianity said that sex was to be between one man and one woman within the bounds of marriage, and that was it. And nobody else did that back then - very, very few anyway.

So, for instance, just about every Roman emperor was either gay or bisexual. They had their wives, and then they had their lovers. They were very immoral people. And most of the wealthy citizens had concubines or slaves in the home for those purposes. Most of the gods were that way. They were very immoral people. Plato said that, "Our men are better than our gods." He said, "If you want to read some really disgusting stuff, read about our gods," Plato said. And in fact, if you walked along the island of Crete, you would come across temples that had paintings and carvings of gods committing lewd acts together. And you would meet temple prostitutes that were used in the worship of them.

And Paul says that an elder can't have any of that on him. He has to be different from all of that. He has to be a one-woman man. He is faithful to his wife and to her alone. He is faithful to his spouse and no one else. This also I think needs to be mentioned because a lot of our people are forgetting this today. I mean, even Christians, we're forgetting what it means to be faithful.

Several years ago, Leadership Magazine conducted a poll of a thousand pastors and they found that 12% of them had been unfaithful to their wives during their ministry - 12%. And a few years after that, Christianity Today did a poll of non-pastors, just ordinary folks in the church and they found the number doubled. A fourth of them had done that, 25%. And that's the act of being unfaithful. It doesn't get into the issues like pornography and things like that.

And Paul says an elder has to stay away from that. We could even just say a godly man has to stay away from that. If you just want to please God in your life, you have to stay away. Remember when Jesus saves a man, He saves him completely. When He changes a person, He changes all of them. And it even goes into this area of your life. Henry Ford, the great automobile maker was once asked, what is the secret to a successful marriage? And he said, "It's the same formula that I've used in making cars, you stick to one model." Paul says, "If you're a godly man, if you're a godly woman, it's the same formula. You stick to one model, one person." You can look at it this way, when it comes to the issues sex, there is your spouse and then there's every other person on the planet in a totally different category. You have eyes for them and them alone.

This is why when you bring a man on the elder board, you always talk to his wife. You want to know, “How are things going at home? How are things between the two of you?” You ask the wife very gently, but you ask her, “Do you think he is a qualified man?” Because if she doesn’t think he is, then he’s not. It all starts here in the home. I would even say brothers and sisters, if you came to me and said, how is my walk or if I was going to ask you, how is your walk with the Lord, one person I would ask would be your spouse. They’re going to know more than I am. I just see you at church on Sunday. This is a very important facet of our lives as believers, our one-flesh relationship with our spouse.

And it leads to one more qualification for elders we’re going to look at this morning. Just to review these other ones. First, Paul says that an elder must be above reproach. He must be blameless and without disgrace in his life. Paul says there’s enough shame and disgrace in the church already, don’t put a man in office who will bring more to it. And he begins to talk about that, and he says the second qualification is that an elder must be the husband of one wife, a one-woman man. Not only is he above reproach, but he’s above reproach at home. Not only is he able to lead the church, but he’s able to lead her, his wife, his closest companion.

This brings us to a third qualification we’ll look at this morning. I will end our list with this one today. We’ll pick it back up next time with the other ones. But for this week, a third qualification for an elder in the church is that he has children who believe. And I’m going to explain that phrase. But the third one is he has children who believe, or, who are faithful (depending on your translation). Some of your translations may say “children who are faithful” there or “trustworthy.” But in the flow of the text here, Paul says an elder must be above reproach and he ties that to his wife. And then he goes even further into the family, and he ties that to his children. So, we can cover it from every angle. His wife knows him best and his children know him best. I think it was Stuart Scott that called them “little sanctifiers” running around his home. You go to the “little sanctifiers” and you can find out a lot about daddy. Very humbling to say that.

If you would read back in verse 5 with me again, we’ll just cover the rest of this. Paul says, “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion.”

There’s been a little bit of debate as to what this passage means because the word “believe” here could be translated a couple of ways. It could be translated “saved”, as in having children who are saved or walking with the Lord. That is one way to translate this. Or it can mean “faithful”, as in having children who are faithful or loyal to him. They may not believe but they respect their father. They may not be saved, but they acknowledge his leadership. I tend to lean toward the latter view because Paul goes on to say, if you notice in verse 6, that the children are “not be accused of dissipation or rebellion.” Those are pretty strong terms. They seem to indicate more than just that the child is lost. The word “dissipation” is the same word used to describe the prodigal son’s behavior in the Gospel of Luke. If you remember that story, the prodigal son was just out of control. He was drunk as a skunk. He was eating with hogs. That’s how bad his life had gotten. And the word “rebellion”, it just means what it says. This is a child that doesn’t

submit to any authority. He has no one over him in life. He is just off the handle. This seems to indicate, at least in my mind anyway, there's more going on than just being lost.

But that's not even the main point here. The point is, how does this man handle all of that? That's the point. If the children are saved or lost, the point is, what is this man doing about it? A lot of people ask good questions about this text. They say, "Well, what if the children are in the home?" or "What if they're out of the home?" or "What if a child is just going through a phase?" Right? Sometimes children have phases. "Or what if the man has six kids or seven children and only one of them is struggling?" And those are all important questions. But I think what Paul is really getting at here, is how is the man responding to all of that? How is he handling those challenges in his home? Because that'll show you how he's going to handle things in the church.

William Barclay, the commentator, says this, he says,

Nothing can make up for a man's failure in the home. Nothing can bring a leader back from that. A man must lead his family with the same easy hand: no tragedies, no quarrels. If a dispute breaks out, he settles it promptly. If there is a disagreement, he resolves it as soon as he can until the house breathes the air of happiness again. The true training ground for eldership is in the home as much as it is in the church. Failure in one area will lead to failure in the other.

The idea Paul's expressing here is that a man can't lead in the church until he leads at home. He can't lead God's family until he leads his family.

It's been said that eldership is very similar to fatherhood in many ways because a lot of the tasks are the same. You know, resolving conflict, dealing with problems, correcting bad behaviour, (sometimes correcting your own bad behaviour). And a man has to be able to do that in both areas. If he blows up every time his kids are grouchy or out of control, then he can't lead the church, because adults are grouchy, amen? Don't look at me like that. You guys know ... you haven't had coffee yet. You guys are grouchy already. And we don't want him blowing up at them, right? If he turns on the TV and zones out and lets the wife lead everything every time the children are acting up, he's going to do that here. To say it another way, leaders handle problems. That's what they do. They make peace. Paul says, we have the ministry of reconciliation. We reconcile things. And it starts in a man's home.

And I want to say a few words about this as well because this is very important. We have a lot of young families in our church. We have been so blessed with young husbands and fathers and dads and I think it's so wonderful. I pray for you guys regularly. But speaking to the men here, I don't know if you're interested in pursuing eldership or not, if that's on your radar someday. But even if you're not and you just want to please God with your life, then you have to do this. You have to lead your home in a God-honouring way. You have to deal with problems there. You can't just come home and turn on the TV and let your wife handle everything. You can't go into the living room and look at your iPhone and just zone out. You have to be involved. Fatherhood is an active thing. It's not passive. It requires action. And a big part of that is the kind of things we're talking about here.

A husband was once asked how he stayed married to his wife for so long. And he said it was because he learned how to say two words whenever there was a conflict. “Yes, dear” and that was it. He would say, “Yes dear,” and go in the other room. You can't do that and honour God. You have to take an active part in your family.

I've only been a father for a short time, just a few years, and I'm amazed at how much conflict comes up in our home. Our kids are so little and so great, but they're just not free from conflict. And if you're not careful, you can begin to get a bad attitude about that. I remember one time my wife and I were going on a date. We were so excited to go on a date. We hadn't been on a date in months and we had one child who was just having a bad day. He was worn out. I can say “he” because you don't know who that is. I have two “he's”. So, you guys are wondering who it is. I'm not going to tell you. But he cried all the way down Promontory that he didn't want to go to the babysitter's house. So, we turned around and went back up the hill and he cried all the way back up that he didn't want to go home. And there could be a temptation at a time like that to just lose it. I was thinking about jumping out of the car and just ending it at all right there. “Lord, I will see you soon. Here I come.” You can't do that. You can't do that. You have to make peace. You have to reconcile things. That's what leaders do. Listen, God doesn't blow up on you every time you have a bad day, so you can't blow up on your kids every time they have a bad day. God doesn't check out on you every time you have a problem and you can't check out on them.

I don't know what all the men's experience is here. I know some of you have had wonderful fathers growing up. Some of you have had maybe not so great fathers, but it doesn't matter. You have a good heavenly Father, amen? You have someone to set the bar high for you and you can love and follow Him, and you can do this in the home.

And there's more we could say about that, because it's such an important subject. In fact, there's more qualifications in this list that we could go into. Like I said, we're just scratching the surface here. I counted 17 in all. There are 17 qualifications in this list. This other lists as well that we might dive into a little bit in our study here. But let me just say this one more time to drive this point home. I think a big point in this passage that we can take away from this, is that the gospel changes a man. Amen? When God saves someone, He saves him completely, utterly. He leaves no stone unturned. And you see this right here. Only the grace of God could turn a man into this. Only the power of God could do it. And I pray that if you haven't experienced this power before, you would experience it today. I pray that if Jesus has not changed your life like this yet, He would start to do that this morning.

We've been talking a little bit about islands today. So, let me say one more word about an island. Several years ago, there was a revival on the island of Madagascar, just off the coast of Africa. Hundreds of people were coming to the Lord and being saved. And when they were asked why, they said it was because of the change they saw in their neighbours. They said, “I know that this man was a thief and that one was a drunkard and that one was cruel and mean, but they changed. And now, the thief is an honest man and the drunkard is sober and the cruel man is gentle and kind.” And they said, “There must be something in a religion that changes a man like this. There must be something in this Jesus Christ.” Friends, I want to tell you this morning, there is something in this Jesus Christ, there is something life-changing. And if you come to Him today,

you can experience that life change now and be born again. Let me pray and pray for us as we take the Lord's Supper and remember the life changing power of God.

Father, we thank you that You are a God that even cares enough to change us, and a God that even cares enough to listen to our problems in our troubled lives. None of us can read a list like this and not be convicted because we're all falling short somewhere. But it's a great reminder of the way You change us and the fact that You are a God that can save any lost soul.

Lord, if there's any who are lost here this morning, I pray that You would save them. I pray that they would be reminded of what Christ has done and they would come and believe and be born again. For those who are saved, Father, I pray that as we take the Lord's Supper here this morning, You would be honoured and glorified in it as we remember what Christ has done in our lives. Thank you for a Saviour like this, Lord, thank you for Jesus. We pray this all in His name. Amen.