

Sermon Notes for 02 August 2020

Series: What the Bible says about Church Leaders

Title: The Gifts of a Church Leader

Text: 1 Timothy 3:1-7

Our focus during this four-part series has been to equip our church families with bible-shaped glasses to help us know what to be looking for in our next vicar

- It has also been to help our church family understand that we each have a wonderful role to play as part of the body of Christ

Today we consider the "gifts" of a church leader

- Some of our passage appears quite similar to what Bart covered last week from Titus 1, please refer back to that sermon for more detail on the "character" of a church leader
- Here we see that God has given word ministers two gifts:
 - The gift of teaching
 - The gift of leadership

1. The gift of teaching

Look at verse 2:

- *"Now the overseer is to be... able to teach"*
- It would be an odd way of doing things if God entrusted his ministers with the task of helping a church grow in their knowledge about Jesus, but did not equip them to be able to do it

What are word ministers to teach with this gift?

- About Jesus
- What accords with sound doctrine

1.a. About Jesus

- Ephesians 4 says that God's church mature as they increase in their knowledge about Jesus
- Jesus showed His disciples after his resurrection on the Emmaus road that all of scripture pointed to Himself
- Paul writes to the Colossians church that we are to preach nothing but Christ, and Christ crucified
- Our message should always centre on Jesus, from every part of the bible and in every situation

1.b. What accords with sound doctrine

- A common instruction in the New Testament

- Some see doctrine (what a church believes) and theology (how we live out our doctrine) as outdated topics that are off-putting for modern Christians
- However:
 - Church leaders are instructed to teach this way, and so must
 - And the way we live out our lives is entirely grounded in the doctrines we believe whether we realise it or not Jesus
- Jesus was quite strong with the religious leaders for their failure to teach doctrine and theology well
- Jesus has given word ministers to His church to continue His work
- We must prioritise the teaching gift of our next vicar and their faithfulness to Jesus and sound doctrine above their other perceived successes

2. The gift of leadership

Look at verses 4 and 5

- As in other parts of the bible, God is linking the household and the church
 - We recognise that there have been bad examples of male leaders in the home and sadly in the church
 - Their abuse and neglect do not nullify these words, but instead help us to see that our longings for a man
 - Jesus is the perfect man who loved His bride, the church/us, to the point of self-sacrifice in love to rescue us
 - God is our perfect Father who adopts us as His children, caring for, teaching and raising us to know Him

Church leaders are to care for, raise and teach their family as their first priority

- Church leaders should not neglect their families
- Not just church leaders, do those who serve in children's ministry spend time preparing for and teaching the children at church, but fail to open their bibles with their own children at home?
- Are we so committed to our areas of service in church life (the coffee rota for example) to the exclusion of our own family?

The passage is not saying church leaders must be married, nor that they must have children (see Bart's sermon last week)

- Nor does it expect our children will be perfect
 - There is sin in our own hearts, and the hearts of our children
- The question is how the church leader "manages" their family should they have one
 - When their children sin, are they:
 - Too relaxed?
 - Overbearing?
 - Or rebukes them in love and grace leading them back to the gospel, with consequences where necessary
 - Do they seek forgiveness from their spouse and children?

- Do they model repentance and leaning on Jesus in their home context?
- 1 Samuel gives a warning to parents who do not correct their children who continue to live sinfully (Eli, 1 Sam.2, and Samuel, 1 Sam. 8)

Poor management and neglect of a household is at best hypocrisy, and at worst, evil

A wise minister once shared the following with me:

- My responsibility is first to God, then to my wife, then to my children, then to my parents, and only then to the church
- When I get this order wrong, then I am not truly loving God
- Pray for all married members and parents in our church family to be committed to the care and discipleship of their families
 - Pray that all of us in church, including those who are single, would have the courage to remind other members of our church of their priorities when we think they have lost their focus

Conclusion

So, God has given church leaders two gifts to help them in their work

- The gift of teaching
- And the gift of leadership

As we close out this series, do join me in praying for our church councils as they seek to discern whom God is appointing as our next minister, that by God's Spirit he would give our reps eyes to discern the priorities, the work, the character and the gifts these candidates display, and to appoint a faithful minister of God's word as our next church leader.