

## Godly Leaders Titus 1:5-9

**(Show slide 1 as soon as Bible Reading ends)**

Is it more difficult for someone to become a follower of Jesus from a country where the majority live by **Christian values** or from a country where the majority live **anti-Christian ways**?

We know it's more challenging to persuade someone of what we believe if the conversation is with a person who speaks a **different language** or with someone who doesn't understand **our accent**. In those cases we might easily have a ranking system of which group of people will more easily change their minds.

However, imagine trying to convince the residents of **the hospital morgue** that your views are best. In that scenario it doesn't matter which country the person is from, their chosen life priorities or their previous social pressures. It's the same level of difficulty for everyone. Trying to persuade the dead to change their minds is an impossible task for any human to do.

**Here's the spiritual reality for everyone in the world.** Regardless of the cultural norms of a country and irrespective of which religion or philosophy is the common currency of the day, without the intervention of the Holy Spirit we are spiritually dead. This means it is no harder for someone to believe the gospel in Nigeria than it is in Nottingham. Or in Norway rather than North Korea. **Dead is dead.** All of us need the saving intervention of the Holy Spirit so that we are born again.

However, depending on our **Christian starting point**, the **amount of transformation** required will vary from person to person.

**(Change to slide 2)** Here's the wonderful news. **We come to Jesus as we are.** It's not that we get our life sorted out first and then when we are ready we sit a few spiritual exams, and if Jesus is happy with us then we're in. No, Jesus says, come all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. He says that to sinners who are in mess.

**We come as we are. But we don't stay as we are.** That's because Jesus is in the business of change, restoration and renewal.

**The UK is not a Christian country.** Increasingly the majority are choosing to live in ways that are contrary to the values and commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ. This doesn't mean it will be harder for people to become Christians. However, as the gospel powerfully opens their eyes to the wonder of Jesus, it means there are a lot of areas to **straighten out** and bring under the loving control of the Saviour.

We don't need to be **unnerved** by that or **worried** by it. We're not the first generation to face these questions. In fact, this was exactly the scenario as the message about Jesus spread throughout the ancient world! Suddenly those who had given their lives to Jesus, who had responded to his **invitation**, were faced with the challenge of changing their **attitudes** and **actions** so they increasingly embraced the values of the kingdom of God.

**(Change to slide 3)** One of the reasons I love the **book of Titus** is because it presents us with God's strategy for helping this transformation become a reality.

Look at verse 5. **Read verse 5.**

There is stuff that needs to be put in order or, to change the picture language, things that need to be finished.

The reason is simple. Deciding to follow Jesus is **only the beginning**. It is real and forgiveness is immediately granted as we now live from that moment as secure and loved children of God. However, it's still just the beginning of a lifetime of inner and outer change.

**How is this going to be done?** What would your strategy be if you were put in charge of the **spiritual development programme** for the followers of Jesus

In **Titus 1:5** we are presented with one of God's key **initiatives** for producing spiritual fruit in the lives of Christians.

Titus is told, appoint elders in every town.

In order to see this we need to make the connection between the two big ideas in **verse 5**.

Titus, put in order what was left unfinished. Titus, appoint elders in every town.

**What's the connection?** The way Titus is to finish what the gospel started is to appoint leaders in local churches.

Many of us have had **enough with leaders**. We are constantly faced with those in many different spheres who are failing dramatically in their responsibilities.

Therefore, our temptation is to minimise the importance of spiritual leaders in the church of God.

However, that's a big mistake because God has **planned** it so that our godly development is linked to the presence of godly elders.

This means we will suffer as God's people if either elders don't exist at all or they do exist but they aren't godly as the Bible defines it.

Or **put positively**, one of the best ways to build a healthy church is to have healthy pastors.

Godly pastors are not the only thing a local church needs but they are the focus of these verses of Titus.

### What kind of pastors do we need?

- Men who have godly character (Vs 6-8)
- Men who have godly convictions Vs 9)

### First, elders must be men of godly character (Vs 6-8)

**(Change to slide 4)** Look at verse 6. **Read verses 6 to 8.**

How **refreshing** that the first spotlight for church leaders isn't on their **competence** but on their **character**..

You'll notice that the word **blameless** is mentioned **twice**.

Blameless doesn't mean perfection. It's about the **public reputation** of a **particular person**.

What are they known to be like in **specific** areas? That will give us a trajectory of how they will **cope** and **perform** as an elder.

There are **two areas of behaviour** highlighted in these verses.

- How they behave in their family
- How they behave in general life

**First, how they behave in their family.**

Those to be appointed as elders must be **faithful to their wife** and **faithful to their children**.

There must be a home where there is love, commitment, and order. The reason is simple: if a man cannot be faithful to his wife, he will not be faithful in his commitment to the church.

If a man cannot spend the time his children need to grow into those who are trustworthy, respectful and obedient then he won't spend the time with the people of God either.

### **The home is the proving ground for the church.**

What a man does in his own household tells us what he will do in God's household.

### **Second, how they behave in general life**

In God's wisdom **11** different **attitudes** or **actions** are listed in **verses 7 and 8**.

Or more precisely, there are **5 negatives** in **verse 7** and **6 positives** in **verse 8**.

The elder **must not be** overbearing, not be quick-tempered, not be given to drunkenness, not be violent and not be someone who pursues dishonest gain.

Instead, the elder **must be** hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined.

This is not a random list of qualities. No, these are essential requirements for being a pastor.

There are **two reasons** for this.

- The pastor will face lots of pressure
- The pastor is to model a godly lifestyle

**The role of a pastor is very demanding.** It is a privilege and a joy but people's lives are very messy. This means a pastor will face situations of **significant stress** as they seek to help the sheep of the Lord Jesus increasingly become more like him.

When they do the temptation will be to become angry or pushy or short-tempered or even seek an escape in alcohol.

If a person displays these qualities before they become an elder then no way should they be put into the stressful environment of pastoral ministry. It will **hurt them** and hurt those around them.

What if a person feels called to be a pastor but doesn't have the godly conduct required? No matter what skill-set they have, we must remember that character is king. If God has not supplied the character, he is not calling someone to be an elder.

**More positively,** the pastor is also to **model** the Christian life.

I know the temptation is to see pastors as a bit keen and fundamentalist in their lifestyle choices. And to conclude that perhaps if I was a pastor I could live like that as well. But no, that's to misunderstand the role of pastors in the plan of God.

Elders are not like the players you turn up to watch as they play the game on the pitch as the church watches from the stands. No, the pastors are the player-coaches who model to our team mates the best way to live for Christ.

Do pray for Pastor James and I as we continue to contemplate this list in verse 8. As we seek to live like this, then please do copy our example.

## Second, elders must be men of godly conviction (Vs 9)

**(Change to slide 5)** Look at verse 9. **Read verse 9.**

An elder must hold firmly to the trustworthy message.

Not just hold onto it but **hold firmly** to it.

We hold on tightly to things that are important and precious.

The elder is to hold firmly to the trustworthy message.

Isn't that an outstanding description of God's word? It is a trustworthy message.

This shouldn't surprise us because it comes from the God who does not lie. This means his words to us are trustworthy and true.

- Whatever they tell us about God – they are trustworthy.
- Whatever they tell us about ourselves - they are trustworthy.
- Whatever they tell us about salvation - they are trustworthy.
- Whatever they tell us about the good life - they are trustworthy.

This is what we need our elders to hold onto. Firmly, deeply and personally.

**The reason?** In fact, there are **two reasons** mentioned in **verse 9**.

**So that** he can encourage others by sound doctor **and** refute those who oppose it.

Sound doctrine is healthy doctrine. It's **spiritually nutritious food for our souls.**

It is the responsibility of elders to feed this to the sheep.

**Do you see the link between godly elders and godly disciples?**

Healthy elders serve healthy food and this makes healthy followers of Jesus.

We all know that **preemptive medicine** is best. The same is true spiritually. However, here's the great news! Even when we have mucked up and made bad decisions as Christians, the trustworthy message still helps us to godly, grace-filled, maturity!

When sound doctrine isn't taught the sheep are left weak and malnourished. This isn't because they don't receive any food. No, it's because they receive food that is harmful and dangerous.

That's why godly elders are told to refute those who oppose sound doctrine. The alternative messages will hurt the precious ones of Jesus. Therefore, false teaching must be exposed and expelled from the church.

**John Calvin**, "A pastor needs two voices, one for gathering the sheep and the other for driving away wolves and thieves. "

## In Conclusion

**(Change to slide 6)** As I finish, I want to emphasise **four** points.

**First**, if you are not yet a Christian, come to Jesus as you are. You won't stay as you are. However, no matter the transformation that is ahead, be assured that we will walk with you as God continues his work..

**Second**, let's get ready for messy discipleship. Every church is **messy** church!

**Third**, do pray for the bishops in our AMiE diocese as we seek to appoint elders in every town. Whether that's in new churches or our current churches.

**Fourth**, let's be reminded of the importance of belonging to a church with godly pastors, that is those servants of God who have both godly character and godly convictions.

Our responsibility is **not** to go to the church which is closest to our house. No, it's vital that we find a nearby church which has the type of pastors described in these verses of Titus.

When we do find such a church, let's be thankful for what we've found and let's be expectant that, as a result, our lives will be changed as, day by day, God makes us more like Jesus.

**Let's pray.**