

Titus 1:5-9

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- [0 : 0 0] Amen. Amen. As you can see, my name is Andy Constable, as it was just behind me. So I'm one of the pastors at Nidra Kimi Chesh.
- I've been here for, I've been at Brunfield preaching the last three years, I think. So it's my fourth year. So it's very good to be with you. Just to share a little bit more about that video that you saw earlier.
- So 20 Schemes is our church planting and revitalization ministry of Nidra Community Church. It's not a separate organization. It's a ministry of Nidra Community Church.
- If you look across Scotland, we know in general that there's 2% who are claiming to be Christians in Scotland. I would say that that would be even less in the housing schemes and council states in Scotland.
- Churches are dying. in these places. And so a few years ago, as we were working in a deprived area, we thought, well, let's have a look at 50 of the most deprived areas and see how many churches are in these areas.
- [1 : 0 9] And we worked out, not very many at all. And so we thought, well, why don't we start an organization that specifically plants and revitalizes churches in those areas for the glory of Christ?
- And that's what we're doing. We have four church plants at the moment, one in Dundee, one in Glasgow, one in Grace Mount, which is South Edinburgh, and one just coming online in Aberdeen at the moment.
- And all we want to do is to see souls saved in these areas, like Tasha. So three or four years ago, she was, like you saw in the video, a mess, struggling in life.
- And the Lord saved her miraculously. And now she's our youth worker. She used to be the one terrorizing us, doing the youth work with her. Now she's saved and doing the youth work, which is a testament to God's grace, isn't it?
- And that's what we want to see across Scotland, more and more plants in poorer areas to the glory of Christ, and more souls will be saved. If you want to see more of the work, I know I'm not really supposed to be advertising 20 schemes.
- [2 : 1 2] We're going to get into God's word in a minute. But if you want to see more of the work, 20schemes.com, there's videos, blogs, things you can look at there to find out more of the work. So let's pitch over. Let's get into God's words.
- We're in Titus 1 this evening, verse 5. So if you open up, we'll read, we'll pray, and then we'll get stuck in to God's words together.
- This is God's words. 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. 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, 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. But hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined, he must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught so that he might be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

Amen? Big amen there. Amen? That's God's word. Amen. Let's pray. Amen. Dear Lord, thank you so much for your words. It is precious to us this evening.

[3 : 48] And when it's opened up and preached by the power of your spirit, you change and transform our lives. And so we pray, Lord, that you might send your spirit now.

Help us to have ears to listen and hearts that are soft so we might glorify Christ and hear from him.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. So leadership, I'm sure you'll agree with me, is important, isn't it, in any organisation? Whether that's business, whether that's sport, whether that's in the army, or whether that's in the church.

So in business, if you have a good leader, then workers are happy and business generally booms. That's why leaders get paid the big bucks, don't they? In sport, if you have a good manager, again, the club flourishes, doesn't it, under their leadership.

In war, your general is absolutely vital and can be the difference between winning a battle and losing. It can almost be the difference between life and death.

[4 : 59] Bad leadership, on the other hand, can mean a mess, can't it? Bad leadership can lead to corruption. Bad leadership can bring a whole organisation down in a matter of minutes, days.

And while the same is true in the local church, the church needs good, godly elders to lead the church to the glory of Christ.

If the leaders do not carry out the duties given to them by the Lord, then the church will crumble. It will be a mess. It will be unhealthy.

And that's why early on in this letter, Paul instructs Titus to appoint elders in every town. Just look at verse 5 again. 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.

Paul and Titus have been on this island preaching the gospel. They've seen converts. Paul obviously had to go away and he left Titus with this sole task of appointing elders to make sure the churches are in order.

[6 : 15] This is the reason he is left behind. To make sure the churches are in order with good, godly leaders. And this is a vital ministry because in verse 10 Paul says there are false teachers on the prowl of the circumcision party.

And Paul is saying here in these verses the way that we guard against heresy and false teaching is by the leaders that we appoint who will preach the gospel, who will refute heresy, and make sure that we are hearing sound doctrine.

And I want us to notice in this text what kind of leaders Paul tells Titus he should appoint. It's striking in a way. He doesn't say I want a winning personality who's going to galvanise the troops.

He doesn't want people who dress well in a nice suit who have a good business acumen. He doesn't say Titus should appoint people with super spiritual gifts or who are flashy or a celebrity pastor.

But he says here men men of character. Men of character. Men with godly integrity. You see young men in our generation often get it twisted don't they?

[7 : 36] They think if they have a degree and they know the Greek word for chicken that they're ready for leadership. But Paul says it's the character of our lives that is most important.

Yes we have to know our Bibles but we have to live out what we know in our lives don't we? We have to talk the talk but we've got to also walk the walk.

It's vital. I mean leaders are often chosen by how good they are at attracting people around them because they're winning personalities. What Paul says here is by the attractive way that leaders live for Christ that people will follow them and give their allegiance to them and trust them.

not just by cracking a few funnies in the pulpit but by godly integrity of their lives. And before we get into this some of you might be thinking this text and this sermon is only for elders so I can switch off or it's only for wannabe leaders here.

You might be thinking I'm a woman here this has got nothing to do with me or I'm not interested in leadership and so I can switch off again from this text. But the characteristics in this list are all ones that we as a church should be striving for.

[8 : 57] These characteristics are all characteristics we should be seeing in our lives. They're not supernatural super spiritual character traits that only elders should have but ones that we as Christians should be known by.

The standard of this list are the standards of Christianity in general. This list is basic Christianity. Nobody should be saying this list is just for elders.

This is how we should all act and pay attention to. But this is the plumb line isn't it? This is the plumb line for us to judge who we should be appointing as elders and who we shouldn't.

And as a church you need to know this list because you guys are going to be one of the appointing elders aren't you with the elders you have already. So you need to make sure the guys that are being appointed are in line with the list in the Bible and so we need to know it don't we as a church.

So who should be appointed as elders? Just three headings for you. This evening I'll group them in. Firstly they have to be a godly head of the house. Secondly they have to be blameless and thirdly they have to teach sound doctrine.

[10 : 07] Godly head of the house blameless teach sound doctrine. Paul says immediately in verse 6 if anyone's above approach he should be the husband of one wife.

Let me first say here an obvious thing that eldership is male here it's not a wife of one husband but the husband of one wife and a woman can serve in every capacity in church I think except that of an elder overseer.

And Paul says that if a man is married that he has to be a one woman man. A one woman man. Here's the thing every husband and especially an elder must be dedicated to his wife and love her well.

This is so important. Many people run after leadership but their home lives are an absolute train wreck. They don't communicate within their marriage.

There are constant arguments behind the scenes. But a leader's home should be his oasis. It should be a place of love and peace in the storms of life and ministry that is built on a good healthy solid marriage.

[11 : 32] Because marriage shows us who a man really is. What he loves how he leads. If you want to find out about the men in this church ask their wives.

And they'll tell you what kind of man they are. And here's the thing if you're a leader this evening or want to be leader it's really for all of us.

Too many leaders don't they love their ministries more than they love their wives. We need to love our wives more than we love our ministries.

We need to serve them. We need to treat them well. We need to communicate and lead in a Christ honouring way. Our greatest ministry as men in this church is to lead our homes.

If we aren't able to lead our homes we will not be in a position to lead a church or have any godly influence in it. He also says here that an elder must be a godly father to his children.

[12 : 37] Now verse 6 is one of the most debated texts in the New Testament. Let me read it again. It says here if anyone is above reproach to the husband or the wife and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.

Now does that mean if your children aren't Christians that you cannot be an elder? It's the question that came to mind as I was reading this text. Does that mean if your children aren't Christians then you can't be an elder?

Well I'm not sure if that's exactly what Paul is saying here. Let me tell you why. Three reasons. One, the verb here to believe, *pista*, is passive in the Greek and is better translated faithful, not of faith.

Faithful, not of faith. Two, if you say it's just elders with believing children then you automatically disqualify half the church who might have young children because they're not Christians yet.

It would mean that you could only appoint men who have children who are professing faith, who have been baptised and are showing evidence of walking in step with the spirit. It would mean you could only choose men who have children of a particular age bracket.

[13 : 50] Rule Graham and myself out who have under twos. We couldn't be elders. Our children aren't Christians yet. And three, I think it puts a crushing responsibility on the parents the scriptures doesn't warrant.

A parent is not in charge of his sons and daughters salvation. Yes, they share the gospel with them. Yes, they model it in their home, but it's not God who saves.

It's God's responsibility to soften the heart and convict the child of sin and his or her need for salvation. I think what Paul is saying here is that the character of the household should be a godly one.

Does the man lead his children in the faith? Does he read the Bible with them? Has he passed on a Christian worldview? Are the children in church and under the word of God?

They might reject the faith of their parents. They might wander off. They might not get converted straight away, but as the father and head of the house, is he bringing them up in the instruction and discipline of the Lord, a.k.a.

[14 : 58] Ephesians 6 verse 4. I think you see this, the outflow of this in the character of the children.

The children of an elder, as Paul goes on to say, or a potential elder, should not be disobedient and wild. Does that mean if your toddler drops in the middle of a service that the man is disqualified?

Does it mean if a child in the supermarkets throws a big shop, a strop, and throws his hands in the air, going he's disqualified from eldership?

I don't think so again here. No, Paul is talking about wild, sinful behaviour. He's saying there should be order in his household.

Kids can have fun, can't they? They'll put a straitjacket on our kids, do we? They'll have to be the Waltons. They'll mess up, they'll disobey their parents, but is the father leading his house with consistent discipline and consistent godly love?

[16 : 09] See again, here is the thing, if a man cannot lead his household, then how is he going to lead the church? It's not possible. A godly leader, if he has a family, must lead well in his home and be in private what he is in public.

Again, if you want to choose godly leaders, do not look on a Sunday at a person and how they act and the words they use and how they dress. Look at them in their homes.

We're choosing elders. The way we do it is that we get into people's lives. We go around to people's houses. We observe their marriages. We see how they interact with the children. Because you can hide things on a Sunday, can't you?

But you cannot hide things at home. And we're good at that, aren't we, in Christian circles. We track a smile on a Sunday, everything's fine, nothing's going on in my life.

And yet, back at home, everything's a mess. If you want to find out a true mark of a man and woman, what they like, who they are, when they are by themselves, all alone, when no one else is watching.

[17 : 25] Paul is saying, we need to choose guys who are going to be men of integrity, who are going to love their wives, who are going to lead their children, and be what they are in private as they are in public.

So firstly, a man needs to be a godly leader in his home. Secondly, a potential elder must be blameless. Paul mentions twice in these verses, in ESV, they need to be above reproach, or in other translations they need to be blameless.

This doesn't mean that a man mustn't sin, but that he's not liable to accusation or question as to his personal character and integrity.

It means even if he's accused of something, people will laugh it off because they know what he's truly like. Again, it means being what we are in private, what we are in public. What does that look like?

He gives us a list doesn't he? Here. He goes negative first. He says a leader must not be arrogant. In other words, a leader must not be full of himself.

[18 : 33] A leader can do much damage to his congregation when he's pig-headed and arrogant. That's not just leaders, men in general, isn't it? Pig-headed and arrogant. A man who's overbearing and stubborn and inconsiderate of people's feelings.

He's like a bull in a china shop, isn't he? But a godly leader is a servant above all things, isn't he? He will admit when he gets things wrong.

He will let others make decisions. He's a humble man because he knows that God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble.

At Nidra again, when we're choosing our leaders or we're hiring staff or interns to our program, the first task we will get people to do is clean the toilets. If they're willing to clean the toilets, then they're ready for service in the church.

If they're not, then they have a pride problem and they are not fit for service, are they? Jesus is clear, whoever will be great among you must be your servant, whoever will be first among you must be slave of all, for even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.

[19 : 48] Paul then goes on, he says, a leader must not be quick tempered, he must not be a bully, he must not fly off the handle every time he doesn't get his own way, but be patient and forbearing with those around him.

He must be slow to anger like the God who he follows. You see, a short fuse does not help the work of God at all, but hinders it, doesn't it?

Hudson Taylor, a missionary from the 19th century said this, my greatest temptation is to my temper over the slackness and insufficiency so disappointing in those on who I depend.

It is no use to lose my temper, only kindness is good, but oh, it is such a trial. ministry can be tough work, church can be tough work in general, can't it?

Meeting up with people you wouldn't usually hang out with in general, old and young, different backgrounds coming together, but as leaders, we face trouble, don't we?

[20 : 55] We have to feel the complaints and the grumblings of the congregation and we need the strength of the Lord to be patient with those around us because a short fuse does not help the kingdom of God, it only hinders it.

He must not be a drunkard or violent. In other words, he must be able to control his passions, he must be able to have self control in his life. Again, if he can't have self control in his life, how can he counsel someone who is struggling with it?

He cannot. Paul rounds off his negative list by saying that Titus should choose men who are not greedy for gain.

When I think of those words, I think of Judas Iscariot who filled his pockets with the money he was supposed to be collecting for the disciples and for the Lord Jesus.

Money should not be a man's motive for serving in leadership. We serve Jesus Christ and him alone for his glory, not for money.

[22 : 00] We do not go into ministry to make millions, but for the glory of Christ. Christ. That's why I can't understand these leaders in America who paid themselves six-figure salaries, making names for themselves of their books.

They're not really about the glory of God, but about them. We do not do ministry to make money from it. 1 Peter 5 2 is clear. Shepherd the flock of God is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly as God would have you, not for shameful gain.

Then Paul goes positive. A godly leader is to be hospitable, he says.

That means that a leader must be hospitable to the alien and stranger in the land. He must love them. There's a great picture of this in Job 31, 32.

Job says this, the sojourner has not lodged in the street. I've opened my doors to the traveller. A godly leader opens up their hearts and opens up their homes to those around them.

[23 : 12] No matter who they are, they're not standoffish, but they are warm towards outsiders. They open up their lives to people. They show the world their family or they care for and they're vulnerable before people.

And a lack of hospitality is only a sign of a selfish heart, isn't it? And hospitality in our culture can be sorely missed, can't it?

Because we're so individualistic. We have this great idol in our culture and it's called this, me time. people of Christ, we are called to be hospitable and letting the stranger into our homes, the feet, to love, to care for.

A godly leader will get into people's lives and allow people to see theirs as well. It goes on and he says a godly leader loves what is good.

Someone who loves what is good is a virtue lover. They love the things that Christ loves and they hate the things that Christ hates. Romans 12 verse 9, let love be genuine, abhor what is evil, hold fast to what is good.

[24 : 38] Godly leaders self-controlled. This means that a leader has complete self-mastery over their passions and their impulses. In today's language, a man has a good grip on himself.

Too many young men do not have a grip on themselves, do they? And older men, and middle aged men. They have a grip on themselves, do they? And their passions. A godly man monitors himself day in and day out and he submits himself to the x-ray and cat scan detail of God's perfect words.

As leaders and as men in general, we must not forget what kind of men we are. At root, we are sinful rats. We are rat bags who have only been saved because of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And yes, we are changed from the inside out afterwards, but we still have sin in dwelling. We still struggle. We still have a battle going on in our hearts.

Let me warn you as a church, do not put your elders up as a pedestal up here that they're going to be a super Christian compared to you guys. They have the same struggles and issues that every other person faces within the church.

[26 : 05] Eldership can be a lonely experience. I felt it. It can be a very lonely experience. And so you as a congregation need to pray for your elders, don't you?

You as a congregation need to keep your elders accountable. And as leaders here at this church, you need to make sure you have good, godly people around you that you can talk to about what's going on in your heart and mind.

Do not sweep things under the carpet, because it always comes out at some point under the stresses of ministry. God is upright or sensible.

This is a man who has a balanced life. He acts with wisdom and common sense. He sees things from God's perspective and acts accordingly. There's a difference, isn't there, in life between someone who knows the Bible and someone who knows the Bible and knows how to put that into practical terms in their lives.

Someone who has wisdom to implement it. Charles Purgeon said this when thinking about selecting leaders. He said, certain good men appealed to me who were distinguished by enormous passion and zeal and a conspicuous absence of brains.

[27 : 24] Brethren who would take forever and ever upon nothing, who would stamp and thump the Bible and get nothing out of it, are all earnest, awfully earnest. Mountains and labour are the most painful kind, but nothing comes out of it all.

Therefore, I have usually declined their applications. In other words, a man must not just have zeal, but he must have common sense as well.

Finally, Paul says to Timothy, they need to be disciplined and holy. To be holy in this context means to be pure and unpolluted. Again, this is a man committed to godliness and Christ likeness.

People often think in our culture that holiness is just not doing what the culture does. Back in the day, it was like holiness is I don't go to the cinema, I don't go to the dancing, I don't smoke, I don't do this, I don't do that.

And that's part of it, isn't it? Standing against the culture, but it's deeper than that, isn't it? Holiness is about being totally transformed inside out into the likeness of Christ.

[28 : 33] That's what we should all be striving for in our lives. It means to love the things that he loves. Again, it means to hate the things that he hates. It means to value the things that he values. So we need to be looking for men who are pursuing Christ, who love him first, who want to serve for his glory and not for their own.

Again, let me say these are characters that are not super spiritual ones. There's an absence of unusual qualities here, isn't there? We should all be known by holiness.

We should all be known by hospitality. We should all be known by self-control. And all the other things on this list. As Alistair Begg writes, these are just down to earth, common commodities of the Christian life.

This job is not for the flashy. It's not for those who are good in the business world, or just for the those who are good in the business world. The position of leadership is for men of character.

And if you are a wannabe leader, if that's something you want to do, that's a noble thing to want to do. But let me warn you, you need to pray deeply about it. Because James 3, 1 says this, not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

[30 : 01] Greater strictness, that's scary stuff. We need to think twice. There's no greater privilege than being a leader, I can tell you that. We must go into leadership with the right heart and with humility before God.

We challenge you again as a church of Brunford, you need to pray for your elders. You need to ask them constantly, how are they getting on in their Christian walk? Hebrews 13, 7, remember your leaders, don't forget them, keep them accountable.

the health of this church depends in part on your elders to commit them to prayer. I don't think we realise sometimes the heavy pressure that elders come under from the evil one.

Satan knows if he can sift a leader then the ministry goes kaput. He knows if he can get to the top men or women that the house of cards will tumble.

So members, get on your knees daily for your leaders and pray for them. And leaders, be on guard constantly, wearing the spiritual armour of the Lord because Satan is roaring around like a wild lion seeking to devour.

[31 : 24] We need Christ, don't we leaders? We need Christ. So secondly, a leader needs to be blamed and thirdly, a godly leader and finally, needs to teach sound doctrine.

Look at verse 9 again. He must hold firm the trustworthy word as taught so that he may be able to give instruction to sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

An elder has two jobs, to preach the word and to defend the truth. This means an elder must know the word of God. They must know the foundational truths of the Bible so that he can equip the sheep and keep them from error.

Our churches, don't they need the word of God, people? They need to know that it's sufficient for all of life's problems.

They need to know that it is a mighty unstoppable river. they need to know that it's only by God's words that we will be changed.

[32 : 34] They need to know that this word is dynamite, isn't it? As we read it, as we pray upon it, as we hear it preached week in, week out, it puts us in our place, doesn't it?

It reminds us who God is. It reminds us that we are sinners in comparison. It reminds us constantly of our need for the Lord Jesus Christ to be close to us.

The word transforms us as the spirit of God takes it and applies it to our lives. In short, God's words brings revival and spiritual awakening.

And so as elders and pastors here, do not try flashy techniques. They don't work. Only the word of God can transform our lives.

Preach it, know it, trust in it, be transformed by it. Listen to Paul's instruction to Timothy, I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who's judged the living and the dead, and by his appearing in his kingdom, preach the word.

[33 : 46] Be ready in season and out of season. Reprove, rebuke, and exhort with complete patience and teaching. Again, I revert back to that testimony that you heard earlier.

We didn't do anything special. There's no zip wire at our church, no smoke machines. We preach the words week in, week out.

People come, they hear, and they are transformed. That's what's going to transform your hearts and your minds here at Brunfield.

Let me say again, this is not just a man thing. Men and women and children need to know God's words. We need godly wives, don't we? We need older women here to teach younger women and sound doctrine and get into that in Titus 2.

You see, it's not just the job of the elders to protect the purity of the gospel of the whole church. In Galatians 1.6, he doesn't write to the elders, he writes to the church.

[34 : 54] And he holds them accountable for protecting the gospel. We need more women, don't we, who are theologically astute and can train younger women and be a godly influence in their lives.

Just because we're complementarian does not mean that we cannot train women to train others, other women. It's sorely missing in our land. And your main job as a listener, week in and week out, is to be attentive to God's word, but not to be like the man who looks in the mirror and walks away and doesn't do anything about it, but to obey God's words.

Listen to it. Listen to what your elders are saying through God's word and respond to it in repentance and faith. Let me end with one, Peter, if you want to turn with me there.

1 Peter 5 says this, So exhort the elders among you as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as the partaking of the glory that is going to be revealed.

Shepherd the flock of God that is among you exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly as God would have you, not for shameful gain, but eagerly, not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

[36 : 14] And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. one day, Jesus is going to come back and what a glorious day it's going to be.

And he's going to hold us leaders accountable for our service to his flock. our people and our churches are only on loan for us so we might protect them, build them up, guide and love them well.

And it is a tough job, it is a difficult job at times, it's a thankless task, but here's the encouragement from this text, if we have been faithful to Christ then we will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Let us remember the Lord Jesus Christ as we end, because this list in this book of Titus is really just a description of Jesus Christ isn't it?

He is the perfect leader and shepherd who laid down his sheep for his flock so that we might come into the presence of God and worship him in spirit and in truth.

[37 : 32] As Christians here this evening we need to keep our eyes focused on him, don't we? The founder perfecter of our faith and keep running this race with our endurance. Our leaders might not be perfect, in fact they are not, but he was and he will lead us all the way home under the leadership of his under shepherds.

Seek Christ this evening and imitate him. Amen? Amen.