

## “WHAT TO EXPECT IN A PASTOR” 1 Timothy 1:1-7

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Talking about people is a popular sport. But you need to be discreet.

When Sir Winston Churchill was in the twilight of his career, he attended an official function. A couple of rows behind him someone whispered to a companion: *There's Churchill. They say he's failing badly.* The other answered, *So I've heard. They say he's becoming quite dotty in his old age.*

At the close of the session, as Churchill was leaving, he stopped and said to his two detractors, *They also say he's hard of hearing.*

Talking about people can backfire on you.

When I was a freshman in college, one of the professors had this statement posted on his office door:

*Great minds talk about ideas. Medium minds talk about events. Small minds talk about people.*

I think the professor spent a lot of time alone in his study!

Would you want to drop by to make small talk about some event or somebody with a teacher who had that notice on his door?

Being young and impressionable, I assumed the Professor had snagged a gem of profound wisdom. If a professor said it, it had to be true, didn't it?

It took me several years to revise my opinion, and to tag the pompous professor's dictum what it really was--a pile of putrid poppycock.

People are worth talking about. The issue is not whether you have a great mind or a small mind. It's whether you have a good mind. A good mind also talks about people.

- Something I intend to do as your interim senior pastor is talk about a particular person—the new senior pastor who will come to you.

I have no idea who that person is, so I can talk about the kind of person he ought to be, according to God's word.

There's something else: if I talk about the pastor, I must also talk about the church—that's you. And I can't talk about the church without talking about the divine truth we call the gospel, or the good news of God's grace to sinners. The Church is Christ's designated custodian of this treasure.

Three Books in the New Testament are chock full of what we should know about the pastor. They are even called Pastoral Letters/Epistles. They're addressed to Timothy and Titus, two men sent by the Apostle Paul as his representatives to serve as pastors in Ephesus and on Crete.

Today I'm starting a series of studies on the first of those letters: The First Letter of Paul the Apostle to Timothy the pastor. I'll interrupt the series occasionally to address other themes.

- We'll be rummaging through someone else's mail. Keep that in mind. .

The letter was written to a pastor, not directly (but obliquely) to a church. But it's all about leading God's flock, the Church

- I'm not so naïve as to suppose that none of you has ever talked about how your pastor measures up according to your estimation.

So I think you'll be interested in this question: “What should you expect in a pastor?”

Experts in church dynamics tell us that the average pastor's job is much harder than average.

My wife Liz says being a pastor is not for the faint of heart.

According to an old saying, the role of a pastor is to disturb the comfortable and to comfort the disturbed.

A pastor has a God-given responsibility to nurture the church in the Word of God so that it stays faithful and strong, and to protect the church from false teaching, wrong attitudes and ungodly behavior.

Look again at Paul's words to pastor Timothy.

*1:3 As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine,*

*1:4 nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.*

Right from the start the Apostle Paul emphasizes that a pastor must be bold.

Paul uses some strong terms in his letter: *Command and teach these things. Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.* (1 Timothy 4:11, 12.)

Is Paul telling the pastor to be an ironfisted, crack-the-whip, leave-no-prisoners kind of guy?

Not at all! This is not about seizing control. The authority is always in the word of God, never in the pastor. But the pastor must not shrink from his responsibilities.

- The Apostle Paul was under Christ's authority. That's why Paul wrote and spoke so confidently and boldly.

You see it in the very first verse: *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope.* (I Timothy 1:1)

- Paul was not an impressive specimen of masculinity whose presence and voice compelled people's attention. He admitted this in his letter to the Corinthian church. *'For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily appearance is weak and his speech of no account."'* (2 Corinthians 10:10)

He knew what people said about him.

A couple had invited the pastor over for Sunday dinner. While they were in the kitchen preparing the meal, the pastor was making small talk with their little boy. He asked if the boy knew what they were having for dinner. *Goat*, the little fellow said. The pastor was startled. *Goat! Are you sure?* The boy said, *I'm pretty sure. This morning I heard Dad tell Mom, "Might as well have the old goat for dinner today."*

At the very start of his letter to Timothy Paul made it clear that regardless of what people thought of him or said about him, he knew he was an Apostle of Christ by the command of God.

So Paul told Timothy not to let people intimidate him by their words.

- It is not a pastor's calling to be a diplomat, although there are times when a pastor must be very tactful and exercise diplomacy.

A pastor is called by God to teach God's word plainly and clearly and without apology--but with utter humility and often with tears.

- Scripture says, *'For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.'* (Hebrews.4:12)

You do not want your pastor to blunt the edge of what God has made sharp and incisive into people's souls because he's afraid it might upset some people.

- Let's take a few moments now for some background to this letter.

Paul founded the church at Ephesus where Timothy was serving as the pastor. (Acts 19)

Paul probably wrote this letter from Macedonia after all the events recorded in the Book of Acts.

There is strong historical evidence that Paul was released from his first imprisonment in Rome that we read about at the end of the Book of Acts. Then he set out on additional apostolic journeys.

It was during these journeys that Paul wrote the First Letter to Timothy the pastor at Ephesus and the Letter to Titus the pastor at Crete. (According to the writings of Clement of Rome. AD 95).

Paul wrote this letter sometime between AD 62 and 66 (probably AD 64) to Timothy, the young pastor of the church at Ephesus, about 400 miles from Macedonia.

The responsibility of pastor today is the closest biblical equivalent of the responsibility Paul placed on Timothy at the Ephesian church.

- What do we know about Timothy, the pastor?

Timothy's mother Eunice evidently led her little boy Timothy to faith in Jesus in his early years.

The Apostle Paul first met Timothy at Lystra (Acts 16).

Paul was so impressed with Timothy that he took him along as an intern on his apostolic travels.

Paul was like a father to Timothy, as we read in verse 2: *'To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.'*

There was a very strong bond of affection between Paul and Timothy.

- What is the benefit of a study of 1 Timothy? It answers these questions:

1. Why do churches need pastors
2. What is a pastor's chief responsibility

This letter shows us that pastors are to care about the souls of people, first and foremost.

Look at the compelling way Paul states this fact to the pastor Timothy:

*'God our Savior (who) desires all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all'* (2:3-6)

*'The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, so that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.'* (1:15)

*'The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.'* (4:9, 10)

Paul leaves absolutely no wiggle room. A pastor's priority must be the good news of salvation through personal faith in Jesus Christ who came into the world to save sinners. That's the main thing.

There were occasions in my ministry when some people tried to get me to promote their agenda. I had to explain unequivocally that was not my priority.

The pastor's priorities are:

1. To keep the church on the right track, biblically.
2. To make sure Christians are growing in maturity and obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ.

About 14 years ago I attended a conference in Colorado for senior pastors of the largest churches in America. I promised myself never to join them again. Most of them only wanted to talk about strategies to increase church budgets and church attendance.

Some pastors are naturally gifted and persuasive in matters such as fund raising. Some have an outstanding talent as a communicator. They can make things happen in a church. The tragedy is that it may be all their doing, apart from the Spirit of God.

I urge you not to lay that expectation of your pastor when he comes here.

There's no denying that a pastor needs to provide effective leadership for a myriad of spiritual and administrative matters in a church.

But the pastor's priority is the people and the good news of forgiveness of sins and new life through faith in Christ. His responsibility is to provide for the spiritual growth of the believers. Numerical growth should never be the pastor's main focus.

- I have a request. Please take time this week to read the First Letter to Timothy at least once. Ask our Lord to use this series in whatever way he chooses in your life.

Now let's get started by looking at the first few verses. In 1 Timothy 1:1-7 we find **three essentials** that a church should expect in a pastor.

- **Certainty of Location.**
- **Confidence in Vocation.**
- **Clarity of Vision.**

### **I. CERTAINTY OF LOCATION. 1:3a.**

You and your new pastor must be confident that our Lord is calling him to come here.

1:3 *As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine,*

Between Paul the church's founder and Timothy his apprentice there was a firm conviction that First Church in Ephesus was where Timothy was supposed to be.

As you pray about a new Senior Pastor, please pray there will be no doubt that this will be right place at the right time.

Just about every year there are devastating forest fires in California. In the early 1990's there were wild fires that destroyed many homes in Riverside County. After the fires were put out, firemen found in the charred ruins of a house the body of a man who seemed to have broken every bone in his body.

There was something very strange thing about it The guy was wearing scuba gear. A scuba suit in the midst of a deadly fire? It took a while to figure out what happened. The forestry department uses special airplanes called "superscoopers" that swoop down onto lakes and scoop up 1000's of gallons of water which they then take and dump on the blaze.

Well, you can guess what happened. That hapless diver surfaced just in time for a plane to scoop him up with the water and dump him onto a burning house. He was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

I heard this from a pastor on the Central California coast. He said he didn't believe it, until he called the Riverside fire dept. and they confirmed it was true.

Maybe Timothy would have preferred to join Paul on another missionary trip. But Ephesus was the right place at the right time.

- This is always a huge issue for pastors and churches.

Pray that the man who comes to be your pastor will be the right man in the right place at the right time.

### **II. CONFIDENCE IN VOCATION. 1:3-4**

Do your utmost to be sure that the man you call here to be your pastor has truly been called by God to be a pastor.

1:3 *As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine,*

1:4 *nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.*

A pastor must be prepared to do whatever it takes to guard the gospel of Jesus Christ and to prevent false teachers from leading God's people astray.

Your pastor has a huge responsibility to maintain the purity and the priority of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And that should be obvious when you talk to him.

Everything about a church is founded on biblical truth.

- Without truth, what we call worship blurs into entertainment or emotional catharsis--a 'feel good' experience at church.
- Without truth, the teaching becomes either ear-tickling or guilt-provoking. Ignore the truths of God's grace, and teaching becomes legalistic. Christians remain tormented by guilt instead of rejoicing in God's forgiveness.
- Without truth, outreach is just a strategy to increase attendance.

There are lots of Americans who call themselves Christians simply because they sometimes go to church. It's nothing more than a name. They don't have a faith grounded in the bedrock truths of Jesus Christ.

Maybe the one who served as their pastor did it as a job, not a divine calling. Maybe he only gave the people what they wanted to hear, instead of God's truth..

Sooner or later a faith that is not founded on solid gospel truth comes crashing down.

- Paul told Timothy in verse 4 to stop the people who drew others into silly speculations and the latest fads. Pastors who have been called by God don't meddle with speculations. They proclaim God's truth.
- One of the chief responsibilities of a pastor is to defend Christian truth from distortion or perversion.

### III. CLARITY OF VISION. 1:5-7

A pastor must be able to tell you clearly what the goal of his pastoral ministry is. Paul could do that.

1:5 *The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.*

1:6 *Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion,*

1:7 *desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.*

It's a lot easier for Christians to argue about silly issues than to live right—to demonstrate real Christian love.

I have met some Christians who obsess over doctrine and theology, but there's no evidence of love in them. They just want to argue their point and win.

Always remember: *'Truth without love destroys; love without truth deceives.'* (Anon.)

Love is the hallmark of authentic Christianity. Jesus said all people would know his disciples by their love for one another (John 13:35).

- Where does this love come from?

He tells us in verse 5: From a pure heart; a good conscience; sincere faith.

- How's your love life?

Is your heart pure? (5) Are you nursing grudges? Should you ask God to purify your heart today?

Do you have a good conscience? (5) Are you a person of integrity who will have nothing to do with dishonesty, or slander, or gossip?

Is your faith sincere? (5) Are you a true Christian who has repented of your sins and now has a sincere faith in Christ--or are you just religious?

I can't emphasize enough the point Paul makes in verse 5. If you don't have a *pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith*, no matter how hard you try, you won't have love. It will be a facade, hypocrisy.

Without love, a church will be nothing more than a collection of proud, spiritually impotent people keeping up appearances.

But when you have this love from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith, people who come here will say, *I want what you've got here at Crossroads Church. Tell me, what it is.*

And then you have the joy of leading them into a life-changing and growing relationship with Jesus Christ.

- A pastor with clarity of vision will keep this goal of in focus.

You may be thinking, "This is all about the man who is going to be our lead pastor. This isn't about me."

But it is! It's all about you, and me. We are the church of God—and incalculably precious to him.

There's no point in praying for the right pastor who has the right calling and a clear vision unless all of us are eager to be what God wants us to be.