

# Qualifications of an Overseer

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[ 0 : 00 ] 1 Timothy chapter 3, verses 2-7, would you please stand with me as we honor the reading of God's word together, looking at the qualifications of an overseer.

! Therefore, an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.

He must manage his own household well with all dignity, keeping his children submissive. For if anyone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Every kid loves being the line leader in school because the line leader gets to be first.

[ 1 : 30 ] First on the playground for recess, first in the cafeteria to eat lunch, first in the library to pick the most comfortable seat and check out the best book.

We like being first. We like feeling in charge. We like being first.

We like being first.

We like being first.

People who lived during Jesus' time on earth knew a lot about shepherding and they knew a lot about sheep. Shepherds care for sheep by meeting their needs, by making sure they are fed, searching for them.

[ 3 : 34 ] When they go astray, protecting them from predators, tending to their wounds, and nurturing them back to health. In all these ways, in John 21, we see an example of Jesus shepherding one of his sheep who is strayed.

At this point in redemptive. At this point in redemptive history, Jesus had laid down his life for his sheep by dying on the cross and rising again.

Three days later, just as he said, proving that he is the Son of God, that he is the Son of God, that he is the giver of life, that he has saved his sheep from the ultimate predators, sin, Satan, and death.

In John 1, verses 15 through 19, the straying sheep that Jesus is shepherding is Peter. Peter was one of Jesus' closest disciples.

He was courageous and he was bold. Qualities that earned him praise from Jesus at times. And qualities that led to him being rebuked by Jesus many other times.

[ 4 : 59 ] When Jesus told his disciples they would abandon him as he was arrested, and crucified, we read in Matthew 26, 33 through 35, that bold, courageous Peter answered him, saying of all the other disciples, though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.

And Jesus said to him, truly I tell you, this very night before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times. And Peter said to him, even if I must die with you, I will not deny you.

And all the other disciples said the same. Yeah, what he said. Peter did deny Jesus three times. He denied knowing his shepherd in an effort to save his own skin or to save his own wool.

In John 21, the shepherd has returned and he has words for Peter. And his words for Peter are shocking.

Jesus doesn't, you know, kick him out of the group. Forget about you, Peter. You've denied me. How could you do that? He doesn't do that. He doesn't even make Peter grovel for forgiveness.

[ 6 : 21 ] Jesus doesn't even say, I told you so. He knows his sheep. And he knows that Peter is repentant.

He knows that he's going to return back to heaven soon. And so he prepares this imperfect sheep to shepherd his flock.

John 21, 15 through 19 record that conversation that Jesus had with Peter as he's reinstating him, as he's preparing him to shepherd his sheep.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, and whenever you read Simon Peter, that means Peter's in trouble. Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?

Peter said to him, yes, Lord, you know that I love you. And he said to him, feed my lambs. He said to him a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

[ 7 : 26 ] Peter said to him, yes, Lord, you know that I love you. And he said to him, tend my sheep. He said to him the third time, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, do you love me? And he said to him, Lord, you know everything.

You know that I love you. And Jesus said to him, feed my sheep. Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted. But when you were old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.

This he said to him to show him by what kind of death he was to glorify God. And having said these things, he said to him, follow me. Jesus asked Peter three times if he loves him.

And each time, Peter says he does. And Jesus commands him to feed his sheep and to tend to his sheep. From the little lambs to the full-grown sheep, Peter was to lead them in a supervisory role, to oversee the Lord's sheep by tending to them, providing them with the spiritual food that would give them spiritual nourishment and growth.

[ 8 : 50 ] He was to lead the sheep by following Jesus Christ, the good shepherd. And the other disciples would join Peter in this task, serving together as they oversaw, as shepherds, as they pastored the Lord's sheep.

And we've been going verse by verse through 1 Timothy. Last week, we looked at the first verse of this chapter, where Paul explained that those who aspire and desire to lead the church, they seek a noble task.

And now, in verses 2 through 7, Paul provides Timothy with a list of qualifications to use as he evaluates men in the church to lead.

And while Paul says it is a good thing for a man to aspire and to desire to lead the church, that they must be evaluated to discern if they possess the qualities needed to lead by serving the Lord as his under-shepherds.

And so the main idea for this morning's message from our text is that men who aspire to lead the church must be evaluated to determine if they meet the qualifications.

[ 10 : 04 ] Men who aspire to lead the church must be evaluated to determine if they meet the qualifications. The church in Ephesus, as we've talked about, as we've gone through these verses, was in disarray.

In large part, due to leaders who didn't meet the qualifications to shepherd the Lord's sheep. Paul removed two of those leaders already.

He writes about that in 1 Timothy chapter 1, verse 20. And he had left Timothy in Ephesus to continue to work of putting the church back into order.

This is why Paul wrote this letter to Timothy. In 1 Timothy 3, 14 through 15, he says very clearly, I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.

A large part of putting the household of God in order for Timothy, for the church, is to find men qualified, in Timothy's case, to help him oversee the church.

[ 11 : 15 ] For the church to be a pillar and a buttress of the truth, it needs men who demonstrate that God's word is not just something they know, it's not just something they teach, it's foundational to their lives.

Paul tells Timothy to evaluate three areas in the lives of the men who had aspirations and desires to lead the church to determine if they were qualified, if they possessed what was needed for the task of shepherding the Lord's sheep.

Now, why is this important? Well, it's very important. If you're a follower of Jesus, if you have been born again, if you are a believer, if he's been gracious to save you, he will also, the Bible says, preserve you.

He will keep you. And he will provide shepherds, overseers, elders, to feed you, nurture you, and protect you. Because sheep need shepherds.

Maybe when you think of being one of the Lord's sheep, you think of cute, cuddly, like precious moments, figurines, you know?

[ 12 : 25 ] Those sheep look so cuddly. But that's not the image that Jesus was going for when he calls us his sheep.

If you know anything about sheep, sheep aren't smart. I recently heard a story about an entire herd of sheep who drowned in a flash flood, even though there was land that they could easily access on higher ground nearby, they drowned.

Sheep are also easy targets for predators because sheep are slow and sheep are defenseless. So whether we like it or not, Jesus has called us sheep.

And he's saying that without a shepherd, we are helpless. Overseers, undershepherds, need Jesus too. The Lord's sheep are precious to him.

And to some men, he's given the task to feed and to tend his sheep. Shepherds don't fleece the sheep for their own gain. But if they truly love the Lord and they truly love his church, they aim to serve them by leading them and pleasing Jesus, the good shepherd.

[ 13 : 59 ] If you're an unbeliever this morning, you need to know the good shepherd. This message is also very important to you because it is better to be the Lord's sheep than food for the devil whose desire is to devour you.

You will hear the gospel today. As Jesus has said, Satan is waiting to snatch that truth up before it can take root in your heart.

And we're glad you're here. And we've prayed for you. And we hope that today you will know the good shepherd.

Men who aspire to lead the church must be evaluated to determine if they meet the qualifications.

The church needs good shepherds like Jesus who live for Jesus.

And so we must discern their ability to oversee the church by evaluating three areas of their lives to see if they qualify.

[ 15 : 06 ] And the first area comes from verses 2 through 3 and verse 7, which is that we must evaluate their character. Must evaluate their character.

In verses 2 and 3 and 7, Paul lists several traits that should characterize the man who is qualified to lead the church. These qualifications serve as bookends to stress the importance that God puts on character over ability.

A man may be a great speaker. He may be a great administrator. And he may even possess great knowledge of God's word. But if he doesn't possess a Christ-like character, then he is unfit to shepherd the Lord's sheep.

Why does Paul stress character over ability? Well, I think to show us that the elder should not or is not dealing with numerical growth, or he's not aspiring for just numerical growth, for just more and more people so that we can just get bigger and bigger.

He's not aspiring for numerical growth. His aspiration is for spiritual growth amongst the sheep. This is the task that elders labor for.

[ 16 : 36 ] It's a task Paul talks about in Colossians chapter 1, verses 28 through 29. There he says, him we proclaim, speaking of Jesus, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. An elder must be mature in Christ if he is going to shepherd others to be mature in Christ.

The evidence of his ability to do this is seen in his own maturity as exemplified in his character. And so Paul lists these qualifications first and last because if an elder does not possess this kind of character, they won't possess the other qualifications listed in between.

And so beginning in verse 2, Paul lists seven traits that should characterize an elder. The first, in the beginning of verse 2, he says, therefore an overseer must be above reproach.

Above reproach is one word in the Greek and it means not able to be held. It's a legal term used to describe someone whom no charges could be fought against.

[18:00] In verse 7, Paul says, moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders so that he may not fall into disgrace into a snare of the devil. The Greek word translated there as disgrace can be translated as reproach.

The idea here is that an elder is someone who presents himself in ways that honor the Lord, whether he is with Christians in the church or with unbelievers outside of the church.

The convictions they preach and teach are the same convictions they live by whether they are in the church or if they are in their community. If they are one person in the church and another outside of the church, their testimony to the transformation Christ brings in salvation is ruined and it brings disgrace to their congregations.

And so the church should not overlook an elder's character because of their giftedness in other areas. My favorite baseball team is the Baltimore Orioles and I've recently read a book about their Hall of Fame manager Earl Weaver.

No manager had more success with the Orioles than Earl Weaver but that success came at a cost.

[19:26] Earl Weaver often blew up in major fits of rage at umpires and at some of his own players.

Sometimes other teams' players sometimes other teams' managers. He was also a heavy drinker and he would often be found passed out in the hotel lobby as his players were getting ready to leave to go to the game.

But Earl Weaver won. So a lot of people overlooked his character flaws. Some people even think those flaws contributed to his success as a manager.

But here's my point. I think many churches are tempted to overlook character flaws in their leaders because they are enamored with numerical success.

Sometimes numerical success is a result of the Lord's working through men with Christ-like character but I think in fact I know we've seen the disgrace that a lot of churches have had to endure unfortunately because their members either excused or chose to turn a blind eye to flaws in the character of the one or more of their leaders because in their mind they thought we're winning.

[20:56] We're winning. So we should evaluate the character of a man who aspires to lead the church and continue to evaluate the men who serve as elders in the church so that Satan does not ensnare them or the church in ways that will disgrace our Lord.

Elders should be above reproach but so should everyone else who follows Jesus. Paul lived a life for Christ that was above reproach and he instructed the Christians in the church in Philippi to do the same.

There in Philippians 2:14-16 he tells them do all things without grumbling or disputing that you may be blameless and innocent children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation among whom you shine as lights in the world holding fast to the word of life so that in the day of Christ I might be proud that I do not run in vain or labor in vain.

Peter likewise instructed believers in 1 Peter 2:11-12 beloved I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh which wage war against your soul keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable so that when they speak against you as evildoers they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

all Christians should seek to live in ways that honor the Lord but especially those who have received the task to oversee his church.

[22:31] Paul continues his list of characteristic traits in verse 2 adding that an elder must be the husband of one wife. Now in the Greek that literally reads a one woman man.

This doesn't disqualify a man from being an elder if he's never been married. Jesus was never married. Paul wasn't married. In fact he encourages singleness in 1 Corinthians 7 because single people can better be singly devoted to the Lord.

This also doesn't disqualify a man whose wife has passed away. Paul is talking about a man who is devoted and faithful to his wife. Who loves her in the ways that Christ loves his bride, the church. Few things bring more dishonor to the Lord than a man who violates the covenant of his marriage because marriage is a symbol of the Lord's relationship with his church.

And Jesus is faithful to his church. Jesus demonstrated his love for his church by making the ultimate sacrifice for it. So not only must an elder be a one woman man if he is married, but he must demonstrate a love for his wife that reflects Jesus' love for his church.

[ 23 : 50 ] A man may be married, but if he doesn't treat his wife lovingly and respectfully, then he isn't fit to lead the Lord's bride.

Next, Paul says that an elder must be sober-minded. This literally means wineless or unmixed with wine. In verse three, Paul talks about an elder not being a drunkard, so here he's probably communicating the idea of a man who is characterized by sober regard for the position of overseer in that it's not something he takes lightly.

It's a duty that he doesn't treat as unworthy of his time or unworthy of his effort. They truly care about the sheep, and because they truly care about the sheep, they stay alert.

They stay awake so that they can watch over the Lord's sheep. If one has gone astray, if one is unhealthy, if one is hurt, if one is being attacked, they snap into action as shepherds.

They don't think, well, someone should do something about that. As the Lord's under-shepherds, they know that they are the one to do something about that. Paul continues and says that an elder must be self-controlled.

[ 25 : 13 ] The self-controlled man is a sober-minded man. He is self-disciplined. He is serious about spiritual things. He spends time with the Lord in prayer and in his word to be shepherded by his spirit.

They don't allow circumstances or sinful things to influence or to distract them from their priority, which is to live above reproach.

Next, Paul says that an elder should be respectable. In the Greek, this carries the idea of orderliness. A well-disciplined spiritual life should produce a well-disciplined life.

Now, we all have moments in life where there is a lot of things going on and there's chaos. You're trying to manage that chaos.

But the man who is qualified to lead the church is not someone who is living in constant chaos. There is order. They are also hospitable.

[ 26 : 17 ] In the Greek, this is a compound word that means to love strangers. To love strangers. Oftentimes, we think of hospitality as how we treat and entertain those who we know, who are often those who we like.

But here, the idea is showing hospitality to those who we don't know. When Jesus was invited to eat at the leader of a ruler of the Pharisees' house, he pointed out how the other guests sought to be seated in the place of honor.

He taught that those who seek to be exalted will be humbled and those who humble themselves will be exalted by God. Then, he addressed the man who invited him to his house.

In Luke 14, 12-14, he said to the man who had invited him, when you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid.

But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.

[ 27 : 33 ] persecution, poverty, orphans, widows, traveling Christians made hospitality an essential aspect of a Christian's life in the New Testament.

Inns often doubled as brothels, and orphans and widows often had no place to live. And so it is incredibly important that the church be hospitable.

so the door of the Christian's home was, as well as the door of their heart, was to always be open to serve others. Also, I think the idea here is that elders are not to elevate themselves to a position where they are unapproachable.

they are to be available, especially to the members of their church, and hospitable to those who aren't members of their church.

Shepherding sheep requires spending time with the sheep. As someone has put it, shepherds smell like sheep. an elder must love the Lord. He must love his sheep, despite all the frustrating things that sheep do at times.

[ 28 : 49 ] Shepherds must know their sheep so that their sheep know them, and see them as someone whom they can trust, and see them as somebody who cares, and see them as somebody who will give them and be used by them, I should say, to serve them for the Lord.

In evaluating this qualification, we should discern if the man desiring to be an elder spends time with the sheep. If he makes an effort to greet guests in our church, do they lead the way in showing hospitality?

In addition to these characteristics, Paul says an elder must be able to teach, this is the only qualification that specifically addresses a skill an elder must possess.

Jesus was a teacher who taught his disciples to teach others the truths that he taught to them.

While all believers are responsible to pass on the truths they learn from God's word, not all have the gift to preach and to teach God's word.

That task belongs to the elders. elders. They must have the ability to teach. Now, I don't think this means that elders are the only ones who can teach or that they are the only ones who should teach, but it must be a gift that they have.

[ 30 : 17 ] They must be able to teach when they're needed to teach. And as a result of being able to teach, they should have a desire to teach God's word.

They should oversee what is being taught in the church as well. And they should care a lot about what is being taught because of the destructive consequences that false doctrines and false teachers bring into the church, which was the case for the church in Ephesus.

The ability to teach is the major difference, again, between the role of an elder and the role of a deacon. The office of deacon was created so that the elders wouldn't have to give up preaching the word to serve tables.

We read about that in Acts chapter 6 verse 2. And so, in a sense, elders prepare the spiritual food and deacons help them to serve it to make sure that everyone in the church is well fed.

In the rest of verse 2, Paul addresses traits that should not characterize an elder. He says that they should not be a drunkard, not violent, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. Elders aren't men who frequent bars.

[ 31 : 29 ] I mean, imagine a drunk shepherd stumbling after one of his sheep. Hey, come back here. Or trying to fight off a wolf.

They're not going to be very good at that. Because you know what? Sometimes an elder might get a call late at night from a church member who's in desperate need of help, and they can't help them if they're drunk.

They need to be ready. They need to be alert. They need to be in control of their actions and their words.

They also shouldn't have short fuses. They aren't easily offended. They don't pick fights. And if they find themselves in a fight, they don't throw punches.

They don't love money in the sense that their master is the Lord and they see themselves as stewards, not as owners. I think this can also relate to the church's money, which is God's money.

[ 32 : 36 ] Elders shouldn't love seeing money in the reserves more than they love seeing how that money is being used, how it's being spent to advance the Lord's kingdom.

children. When I was in India in January for our pastors' conference, I preached the passage in Titus that goes over the qualifications of an elder to all of these Indian pastors.

And at the end of my sermon, I was met by one at the back door. He was a young man and he looked sick. So I asked him what was going on and he told me, well, I see from Scripture that there should be other elders in my church, but the only men who come to my church often come drunk or hungover.

And so he said, do I have to make these men elders in my church? And the answer was emphatically, no!

No, they don't meet the qualifications. But pray. Pray for those men. Pray for others. Pray for help. And keep pressing on.

[ 33 : 55 ] So I think it's important that we should stop and just express gratitude to the Lord that we have men in our church who possess this kind of character.

And I think it's also that we stop and think about men like my brother in India, pastors whose churches are less blessed with men who are shepherding, who can help shepherd and many times pastors who find themselves as the only elder, the only one qualified.

And they're doing all the work on their own. We should pray for them. We should pray that the Lord would do a thing, a movement in our churches that more men would rise up, meet the qualifications, that our churches would be healthier and thriving, and that the Lord would be pleased.

Now the second area of evaluation is to evaluate their care for their families. Evaluate their care for their families. Verse 4 says, He must manage his own household well, with all dignity, keeping his children submissive.

As we saw a few weeks ago, it is God's will, it's God's design that men be the spiritual leaders in their homes and also in his church. The family is the proving ground for leadership in the church. [ 35 : 23 ] The word translated as manage can also be translated as rule. An elder must rule over himself, exercising self- control, and then rule over his children in a similar way.

Ephesians 6, 1 through 2, we read, Children, Obey your parents and the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother. This is the first commandment with a promise, that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.

And then fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. As long as the elder's children are children and live under his roof, he is responsible to care for them and nurture them in ways that cause his children to love and respect his authority over them.

I think this aspect of an elder's life could lead someone to act differently towards his kids in the church than he does at home.

You could, if you're an elder and aspire to be one, put a lot of pressure on your kids to maintain a certain kind of appearance in the church so that it looks like you meet the qualification, that you look good in front of other members of the church, but then ignore them or give them little attention in the home, little attention to their spiritual growth and development.

[ 37 : 04 ] But an elder should discipline his children and train them up in the ways that they should go, not so that he can look like a good father, but because he is a good father.

He doesn't want it merely to appear as if his kids know the Lord. He wants them desperately to know the Lord. So he makes sure that he cares for them in ways that show them that the Lord is true, that he is good, and that he's worthy of following.

Paul then asks rhetorically in verse 5, for if someone does not know how to manage his household, how will he care for God's church? If an elder does not manage those whom he's supposed to love the most, how can he truly love others in the church?

If an elder can't manage and be a good steward of his finances in home, how can he manage the church's finances? If an elder can't keep order in his house, he won't keep order in the church.

He can't. And so now we go to the third area of evaluation. Evaluate their commitment to Christ. In verse 7, Paul says he must not be a recent convert or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil.

[ 38 : 33 ] New believers are really exciting to be around, aren't they? They are fresh off the miracle of their conversion, of their salvation, and then they often have an insatiable appetite for God's word.

They are eager to also serve in the church. They are eager to share the gospel. And their energy is contagious. And sometimes people in the church can see all of those things and think or say to them, you're called to ministry.

Or elevate them in a leadership position before they are mature enough to handle it. Or it could be the case that unfortunately they are like the seed that fell on shallow soil or the plant and the seed that fell on the shallow soil that Jesus talked about in Matthew 13, 5-6.

Other seeds fell on rocky ground where they did not have much soil and immediately they sprang up since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched.

And since they had no root, they withered away. If a new believer is truly saved, elevating them to a position of leadership could, as Paul warns, inflate their ego and cause them to be prideful, which is what caused Satan to fall.

[ 40 : 02 ] The opposite of pride or conceit is humility. For a person to truly be saved, they must be humble.

They must repent of their sins. That requires humility. It takes realizing that you are truly incapable of saving yourself. That takes humility.

That you are utterly helpless and hopeless without Jesus. That takes humility. It takes realizing that you are truly unworthy of the sacrifice that Jesus Christ made for you on the cross.

That takes humility. In humility, we commit our lives to Christ. In humility, we die to self so that we can live as new creations in Christ.

A person who has truly experienced this never forgets this. And so they are continually humble.

They never forget that Jesus exchanged our worthlessness for his infinite worth and our sin for his righteousness.

[ 41 : 14 ] To be great in the kingdom of God, to be great in the church, to be great as an elder, you must lower yourself to the position of a slave.

No one is too good for you. No one is too good for your time. And if God tells you to do something, you're not too prideful to say, no, that's not good enough for me.

Like the good shepherd oversees as the Lord's under shepherds don't view his sheep either as means to their own ends. But as the ends and the means through whom they are able to serve the Lord by serving them.

In 1 Timothy 5, 22, Paul warns, do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others. Keep yourselves pure. And here he's talking about do not be hasty in separating someone from the church for leadership in the church.

Don't be hasty, he says, in doing that. And so how should we adjust in our church, in our lives, to what we've just heard from God's word?

[ 42 : 25 ] I think it's this, be cautious as you consider who is qualified to lead the church. Be cautious as you consider who is qualified to lead the church.

In our church, we have some elders like Pastor Tyler and I who are vocational. We serve here in full-time ministry.

And we also have elders who are lay elders and they serve five years terms. And every year one of those elders terms expires. And they can be renominated by the congregation or not.

Or others can be nominated by the congregation to serve as elders. And we have a form. And on that form is the verses of scripture that you should look for as you evaluate who is qualified to serve. And so be cautious as you do that. Be prayerful as you do that. Also, be prayerful and cautious of those whom you would bring into the church to serve the church in a role such as Pastor Tyler or I.

[ 43 : 37 ] That you make sure that you've done your part to see that they are truly called and you will know that through looking at if they are qualified through the evaluation.

And as those men are brought before the church, the church should do their part as well to evaluate whether or not this person is qualified. And honestly, you should do that with us as elders all the time.

Do they still measure up? Are they still meeting the qualifications? And if not, don't be afraid to let someone, let another elder in the church know.

Because this is something that we all, I think, do take seriously. And we need to continue to take it seriously. Because it is a major responsibility to be given oversight of the Lord's church.

And an elder who oversees the church the best is an elder who is close to the good shepherd. And a church that is close to the good shepherd will better evaluate those who are serving as his under shepherds.

[ 44 : 51 ] And so we must be cautious as we consider who is qualified to lead the church. Because if we put the wrong men in the church to lead, the consequences are detrimental. But the worst and most detrimental consequence of all is dying without knowing the good shepherd.

Without knowing and believing and trusting that he did lay down his life for you. That apart from him, you cannot be saved. But apart from him, there is no peace with God.

He had to come. And he came to live the sinless life that we could not live. To die the death that we deserve, to conquer the enemies that we could never conquer. In being the good shepherd, he knows his sheep by name.

He calls them to his flock. And he keeps them forever. And if you're here this morning, he's brought you here for a purpose. That you would know him as the good shepherd.

And if you have questions about that, please come and find me after church is over. I want to talk to you. Or you can find me in a couple moments as we'll have our time of prayer.

[ 45 : 54 ] For now, will you bow your heads with me? And let's pray. Lord, thank you for men in the church whom you have gifted and who have striven to measure up to the qualifications that are laid out in your word.

Men, Lord, who love you. And in loving you, they love your bride. They love your sheep. In loving you, they're willing to give up pride, give up any kind of selfish motivation because they truly desire to serve you by serving others.

Lord, thank you for the men in our church who meet these qualifications. And God, we pray for them, knowing that their work oftentimes is hard. It's not an easy thing to shepherd sheep.

But Lord, it's a great and wonderful privilege to be tasked by you to do it. And so Lord, we pray that you would just continue to encourage them, that you would continue to guide them.

that Lord, that the elders of our church would lead in ways that please you, that they would lead in ways that nourish your sheep. Lord, I pray for the men in this church who have that aspiration and they have that desire and they have it for all the right reasons and motives.

[ 47 : 15 ] Lord, I pray that they would continue to, in their lives, meet these qualifications so that Lord, when the time should come for them to serve, they're ready to do it.

And God, I pray for our church. Lord, I pray that for our members, we would be cautious about who we call to lead our church, who we put in those positions. Lord, that we would truly have sought your will first before doing that.

And Lord, I pray that our church will just continue to, you know, love the shepherds as they love us. And that Lord, together, collectively, we would be a church that's committed to doing the things that you've called us to do, commanded us to do.

Lord, that this would be a healthy and thriving church. That we wouldn't seek numerical growth so that we can boast in that, but that we would seek spiritual growth because that's what we should seek. And so Lord, we pray for our congregation that every member in this church would have a place, would be cared for, so that they can grow and that they can be spiritually nourished.

Lord, that they would be more like you and that you would look at Highland Park with pleasure because we are doing what you've commanded us to do. God, we pray that you will receive all the glory for it.

[ 48 : 30 ] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.