

## The New Normal

### The Shepherd's Mantle-Part 4

#### *Titus 1:8*

I read some time ago about a woman who made a very interesting and insightful observation about men. She wrote, "I have learned that you can tell a lot about the character of a man by how he handles these three things: first, how he handles his golf plans that get rained out; secondly, how he responds to the airline who loses his luggage; and thirdly, what he says when the Christmas tree lights are all tangled up.

What kind of man you are tends to leak out into the open during times like that. You just can't help it, can you?

A number of years ago I can remember being invited to speak out of town to the student body at a Christian college and seminary for their annual Bible Conference. It would be my first visit to that campus and I took time to bring along just the right suit and necktie and shoes to wear. I arrived, but my luggage did not.

The president of the graduate school ended up having to loan me some of his clothes: a sport coat four sizes larger than I wore; a necktie I would never have bought for myself; and because I had arrived in casual cloth slip-ons that were really not any different than slippers, he had to loan me a pair of his dress shoes – I wear size 10 ½ he wore size 13. I can still remember clomping across the stage to the podium.

I told the students that morning what had happened – mainly because I didn't want them to think I normally dressed like that.

My luggage arrived the next day.

Showing up to speak somewhere for the first time is a lot like showing up for an interview. You want everything to be right.

You want to put your best foot forward.

You don't pack a bag, but you do polish your resume. Every good thing you've ever done – every project you've accomplished – every title you've earned and every award you've been given are somewhere on that resume.

They're going to want somebody with experience . . . executive management skills . . . personal charisma . . . physical attractions is a plus . . . good taste in clothing . . . the right educational background . . . all the right connections.

The people that matter are the people of intellect and attraction and intimidation, prestige, power and popularity and even the right amount of pride to prove you're better than all the other candidates.

Nobody gets the job because they're humble . . . or holy. In fact, you need to fit in with the crowd; keep your religion to yourself; you need to be able to play the game.

And that kind of thinking has a way of spilling over into the church doesn't it.

Titus shows up on the Island of Crete in the first century, and his apostolically commissioned job is to find shepherds who are qualified to wear the mantle of leadership in the church.

The Apostle Paul says to Titus in *verse 5*, "**Go appoint elders in every city as I have directed you.**"

In other words, Titus, you might be tempted to fill the office with the wrong kind of men . . . so do what I'm directing you to do.

Here's the resume list of qualifications – these are my directions.

You see, Titus, Paul implies, there are gonna be plenty of candidates who want to be in charge;

they'll want the office of elder, like Diotrephes, who wanted it simply because he loved being out in front and up in front – he just loved being the first guy in line and then telling everybody how to line up.

**(Third John 1:9)**

Titus, you're gonna run the risk of looking at men for the wrong reasons – men with prestige or charisma or charm or personality or intellect or stature . . . and on and on.

Like Samuel in the Old Testament who went looking for a king among Jesse's sons – assuming that the tallest and the oldest and the strongest would certainly be God's candidate for King of Israel.

And God said to him, "Samuel – that's how the world runs its business – they look on the outside, but God looks where? ***On the heart***" (***1 Samuel 16:7***).

So as you look at the resume of a shepherd in Titus chapter 1, you don't find anything about speaking ability; or leadership skill sets; or business accomplishments; or physical attributes – in fact, the list has almost nothing to do with what the man has done – it has everything to do with who the man is.

What's normal on the island of Crete can't be normal in the church.

What's considered normal in the culture isn't gonna be the standard for the believer.

The elder is actually going to change the norm. By his own character and lifestyle he is going to model a new pattern.

For the church, he will lead the congregation into a new normal.

So, here's the new normal.

Watch this – beginning in ***verse 8, the elder/pastor/bishop is to be hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled.***

I couldn't help but think, can you imagine a job interview where the questions related to the Candidates chance of getting the job are anywhere remotely connected to ***Titus 1:8***?

Can you imagine this question in an interview – "Are you a good person?"

Can you imagine – this question – are you personally devout?

Can you give me a personal illustration of self-control?

Are you kidding? The average person being interviewed would respond by saying – that's none of your business.

Those aren't normal questions.

Well it happens to be the business of the church – and this is the new normal.

Not just for elders either, by the way, but for the entire flock they lead and influence.

In fact, you'll find every one of these qualifications encouraged throughout the New Testament in the lives of every maturing believer. Many of these listed in Titus 1 are given in Galatians 5 as the fruit of the Spirit controlled life.

And the elders just so happen to be progressing men under the influence of the Holy Spirit as they lead the flock by way of example, so that the flock can have a living pattern they can actually see so that they will know how to live as well, under the Spirit's influence.

The elder is, in many ways, nothing more than a living demonstration of the "new normal".

And we all pursue it together . . . because we are all submitting to the Holy Spirit.

In other words, we aren't submitting to our culture we are creating a new culture. We don't try to fit into our culture, we are determined to redeem and reform our culture – one person at a time.

And if we don't act like redeemed believers in here, how do we ever hope to redeem anybody out there?

If we aren't reformed in our thinking in here, how will we reform the thinking of anyone out there?

And remember this distinction: while the congregation *may* progress along in these characteristics, the elder *must* progress in these qualities of character and heart and soul.

So, here's the new normal . . .

Now Paul has just given the elders 5 vices to avoid should they rise to the authority and office of elder – 5 vices to avoid; Paul now gives 7 virtues to embrace for those who will be qualified to shepherd the flock of God.

The first five were negative and now, this set of 7 are positive –and we're not gonna get through all of them today.

The first positive qualification is this: (you'll notice in ***verse 8***) – an ***elder must be hospitable.***

**1. In other words, first of all, an elder must model personal care for others.**

This word in the New Testament is made up of two words – one of them is philos – for love or

strong affection and the other word is *zenos* – which is the Greek word for stranger.<sup>i</sup>

Hospitality is a love for strangers . . . literally translated, “stranger loving”.<sup>ii</sup>

Now he’s not necessarily saying you are to love people who are strange – so we’re not setting a new standard for who your daughter can go out with – he’s referring to people you don’t know.

Which is rather unexpected because you’d think that the first thing out of the gate in these 7 virtues would be how the shepherd loves the members of his flock, right?

So Paul implies here that love for the flock would be a little too easy – a little too rewarding – a little too self-congratulating – and many men might qualify.

They love the church and never miss an activity or a service.

But Titus is told to look for men who show care and concern for people when there’s no such church obligation – no family connection – no kudos or badges of honor – no public affirmation.

The true test of hospitality is not what we do for those that we like to be around or those who are likely to repay us in some way, but in what we do for others out of sincere concern for their welfare.<sup>iii</sup>

And this certainly extended to the church at large. The Apostle Peter commanded the church to ***show hospitality to one another without complaint (1 Peter 4:9)***

In fact, during Paul’s day, traveling was especially hazardous if you didn’t have anywhere to stay for the night.

Inns were not only expensive, they were notoriously evil. Travelers could expect to be robbed and even beaten.<sup>iv</sup>

Plato referred to an innkeeper as a pirate who held his guests for ransom. Inns were notorious for their immorality – often serving as the village brothel.

It would be the last place you would want to stay if you were traveling.

Because of all of these issues and dangers, the world of the Apostles had created a system of what were called Guest Friendships. Over generations, families made arrangements with other families to give each other accommodation and hospitality. Often, the members of families became unknown to the other family by sight and so they devised a coin or placard of metal or wood which they cut in half.

Over the years, when one member of the family traveled to a distant city and needed lodging, he carried with him the other half of what they called a tallie – half of a coin or stone. And the host family he visited would have the other half – and when the two halves fitted each other, the host knew that this was a legitimate member of another family with whom they had guaranteed hospitality.<sup>v</sup>

So . . . come on in.

That’s why this first characteristic from the Apostle Paul would have been so counterculture.

Paul is saying that the basis for biblical hospitality is not family agreements or tallies or connections but a love for strangers – a love and care for those in genuine need.

Here’s the new normal – open your doors to people in need, whether you know them or not.

By the way, this same Greek word for hospitality is found in our English words, hospice and hospital. And for good reason.

Even the Greeks with their god of medicine did not build hospitals or offer free care for the sick.

A correct understanding of history will show that those who came into the temple of Aesculapia (askulepia), the Greek god of healing, came not for medical treatment, but to sleep for the night in the temple or shrine hoping that the god would appear to them in their dreams and reveal to them the treatment which they ought to follow.<sup>vi</sup>

It wasn’t a hospital for the people.

Both the Romans and the Greeks had some type of hospital or infirmary for their soldiers, but they offered nothing to the general population.<sup>vii</sup>

What we know as charity hospitals – which became the forerunner for the hospitals we know today – which no longer run off charity – they were the creation of the Christian community.

They grew out of the gospel and became a method of delivering the gospel.

One historian noted, “There is simply no evidence of any medical institution supported by voluntary contributions until we come to Christianity . . . Christian hospitals revolutionized the treatment of the poor, the sick and the dying.”<sup>viii</sup>

The Greeks and the Romans built their statues and their temples and their coliseums – their arenas and aqueducts and highways – but they never built a hospital.

Why? Because the norm of Paul day, summed up by historian Philip Schaff, was simply this, “The old Roman world was a world without charity.”<sup>ix</sup>

No concern for the sick and dying – especially if they weren't related to you. And you would never volunteer to take care of some sick person you didn't even know – and you certainly wouldn't invite some needy person into your home.

That's just the way it was. That was the norm.

Paul says, "Titus, it's time to find men who will lead the church into a new normal."

And who are these men? They will be men who show genuine concern for those who can't pay them back.

An elder must model personal care.

## **2. Secondly, an elder must model personal conviction.**

Paul writes next, an elder is, *loving what is good*.

Again, Paul uses a compound word that begins with the word – philos for love or strong affection and agathos for that which is good.

An elder loves strangers and he loves what is good.

One ancient manuscript used this same word for a man who loved virtue.<sup>x</sup>

He just loved what was intrinsically good.

Which means you love anything that reminds you of God, right?

Because, as Jesus told that rich young ruler who came to visit him, "There is no one good, but God." In other words, no one is intrinsically good, but God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

So if you want to know if someone is truly walking after God – does he love things that God would love.

The Greek form here could be rendered "lover of good things."

It doesn't mean he's sequestered himself away from all that's bad, but it does mean he doesn't love what's bad. He has personal convictions based on what he truly loves – and what he loves are those things intrinsically pleasing to God.

Paul put it this way to the Philippians, "*Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, think on these things* – in other words, meditate – dwell with – accompany – walk with – ruminate on – spend your time on – these things. (Philippians 4:8).

Warren Wiersbe wrote, this would include good books, good people, good music, good causes, etc. that are excellent – that are pure – that will not in

any way violate or offend the intrinsic glory and goodness of God.<sup>xi</sup>

Now why is that so hard to find? Because the world is filled with so many people who actually love what is bad.<sup>xii</sup>

What does the world love? Bad stuff. Bad activities . . . bad causes . . . bad music . . . bad people . . . bad thinking . . . bad language . . . bad habits.

Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 *Timothy 3:3* that as society continued to grow more and more corrupt, one of the signs would be that they would be *haters of good*.

Same word here.

They're actually gonna hate what is good and love what is sinful. They're gonna love what's bad.

*Proverbs 2:14 says that the world delights in doing evil and rejoices in the perversity of evil.*

Further in *Proverbs 10:23, they revel in doing wickedness as if it were a sport.*

Sin is just another indoor sport. It's just another thing. In other words, they're gonna lose the ability to distinguish what's bad from what's good as they spiral away from the intrinsic goodness of God whom they reject.

The world is more and more openly in love with bad things and bad activities and bad music and bad people and bad language but then it takes another step and turns around and says, "This isn't really bad at all . . . you guys are just too uptight . . . this isn't bad . . . it's good."

*They'll not only do sinful things, they will give hearty approval to those who practice them – Romans 1:32.*

Paul effectively says here, "Titus, go find some men in these churches to serve as elders who will straighten out the definitions. Men who will form their personal convictions after the intrinsic nature of God's goodness and then be able to turn around to the Flock they lead and say, "This is actually what is good and this is what is bad."

And you'll be able to spot a leader as the guy who not only tells people what's good, he actually loves it.

You see, what an elder loves is revealing. What he wants to linger around and talk about and read and listen to and look forward to and want to be in the company of.

Paul effectively asks, "Are they good things?"

Here's the challenge for us all: can you write over the books and magazines you read, the word "good" – that is, not offensive to or in violation of the intrinsic nature of God.

Can you right over what you listen to or watch or participate in, with that little word, "good." Can you write over the head of your boyfriend or close friends or favorite activities or favorite songs the word, "good".

Now that doesn't mean you define "good" as those things you do in church and if you can't do them or enjoy them in church, then they're not really good.

I'm going to go home and this afternoon I'm gonna take a nap. And when I get up, I might even say to Marsha, "That was a good nap."

I enjoyed it. It wasn't a spiritual discipline. It isn't something I do in church – some of *you* do. You're skilled at sleeping upright . . . takes practice.

No, what I mean is that that nap or that novel or that walk in the park or that painting or that drive or that game doesn't violate the intrinsic nature of God's goodness – it isn't offensive to His character.

And there are a million things you can do just like that.

So the question is you developing personal convictions and a love for those things that do not offend His nature. That's the point here.

Are you as a Christian under the influence of, modeling after, surrounding yourself by that which is good.

Whether you are or not, an elder must. He is to be a lover of what is good . . . he's developing personal convictions and lifestyle choices around those things that reflect the intrinsic goodness of God.

So an elder not only personally cares; he not only has personal convictions;

### **3. Thirdly, he models personal common sense.**

The word Paul uses in *verse 8 is translated sensible*. Yet again, this is another compound Greek word which helps us understand it a little better. It's a combination of *sophos* – for the name *Sophia* – for wise, along with the added word *phroneo* which means to set the mind.

The combined idea means that you have a wise mindset. And keep in mind that wisdom has a

practical sense of putting into action the things you know.

One Bible scholar wrote that this word meant, "to think soundly; to use common sense."<sup>xiii</sup>

And I can't help but immediately think of what someone once said, "The problem with common sense is that it isn't so common anymore."

The word Paul uses has the nuance of practical sensibility . . . you could paraphrase this word to refer to literally "keeping one's head about him."

What Paul is saying here, one author wrote, is that an elder must not be a man given to wild and foolish ideas. Yes, he must be a man who believes that God is the God of the impossible. But he must mix such a faith with a good dose of common sense. For God who gave us our hearts is the same God who gave us our heads."<sup>xiv</sup>

The church needs leaders then who use both their hearts and their heads.

Which is an essential ingredient isn't it? Elders need to have this kind of thinking ability simply because they're gonna be involved with people and problems and conundrums and decisions and there will be a great need for both faith and practical discernment and a good deal of practical wisdom too.<sup>xv</sup>

And let me add one more thing before we move on. There is in this idea of common sense the a nuance of courage to think differently . . . to think unlike anyone else.

Maybe this is why Paul, later on in this letter, will encourage the rest of the church to model this same attribute. They're gonna need to rethink everything if they expect to create a brand new culture – a new normal.

In other words, you're gonna have to think for yourself.

And thinking for yourself is going to require new courage because you're going to be different.

You're thinking will no longer be influenced by the crowd – but by Christ. Your opinions will not change according to the latest polls which came to mind as I've watched presidential debates and candidates vie for the lead in this election season.

And we're constantly hearing about how many people polled think this or that – agree with that opinion or another.

One former president of the United States years ago, obviously under the pressure of the most recent polls, wrote, "I can't help but wonder what Jesus Christ would have preached if he'd taken a poll in

Israel. I wonder how far Moses would have gone if he'd taken a poll in Egypt? Where would the Reformation have been if Martin Luther had taken a poll in Germany? It isn't the polls or public opinion of the moment that counts. It is what's right and what's wrong. That is what makes good leadership – men with courage, honesty, and a belief in what's right – that's what makes epochs in the history of the world.”

I would not only agree but add – that's exactly what makes for godly leadership in the church.

An elder models personal care; personal convictions and personal common sense.

Now another quality surfaces here on the pages of Paul's letter to Titus . . . *verse 8, an elder is just.*

#### **4. Fourthly, an elder models personal consistency.**

You could translate this word, “*upright.*”

In fact, these last three characteristics – just, devout and self controlled all have to do with a right relationship.

**Just** – refers to an elder's right relationship with people.

**Devout** – refers to an elder's right relationship with God

And **self-controlled** – refers to an elder's right relationship with oneself – that is, his own appetites and attitudes.<sup>xvi</sup>

The word, **just**, carries the idea of fair play and a handshake that matters.

That's how you have just relationships with others. You show up and follow through.

The Greeks defined a just man as someone who gave to men whatever was they were due.<sup>xvii</sup>

This word **just** is a word relating to a man's efforts to walk the talk. To practice what he preaches. To make sure his walk is consistent with his words.

And that's important because a shepherd's life is to be patterned to reflect the character of the Chief Shepherd he represents.

People are watching. Are they ever!

Like our children watch us. More than we know.

In fact, more than we can imagine. So much so that they end up walking like us and talking like us – accent and all. Frightening isn't it? May that fear drive us to our knees more often and claim the grace of God over our lives and theirs.

I can remember as a youth pastor many years ago working with a teenager who just continually lied – it was nearly impossible to get out of him a straight answer. I never knew when he was telling me the truth. I would discover later that his father had been found out to be lying to his company and lost his job.

Now, don't misunderstand – I'm not implying that every dishonest child has a dishonest parent – I know – because I was a dishonest child and I had honest parents.

The trouble comes when the parent refuses or abandons the model.

The child hears Mom or Dad call in sick and knows they're going golfing or fishing or shopping; he gets it when he answers the phone and his parents tell him to tell Uncle Henry or the boss that they're out in the yard and can't take the call – or not home at all.

That becomes their normal.

I read some time ago about a California mother who was observed going through the grocery store tapping various items. Behind her came her two little children who would pocket the items she tapped.

They'll one day steal from her.

The Boston Globe carried a humorous article several years ago where they covered the annual convention of the American Heart Association's convention in Atlanta that year. Hundreds of thousands of doctors and nurses and researchers are members. The recent convention focused on the fast food industry and the perils of all that stuff – cheeseburgers, fries, quarter pounders – all that Sunday dinner stuff. When one cardiologist was interviewed about where he'd just come from eating his lunch – he had been seen getting a fast food hamburger by the reporter – when he was asked whether or not he was inconsistent – you know, setting a bad example, he actually replied, “No, I don't think so; I made sure I took off my name tag before I went in.”<sup>xviii</sup>

Well that fixes everything!

In a way, Paul is telling the elders that you never get to take off your name tag . . . and that goes for every Christian.

Your name tag stays on . . . that's the new normal.

The word Paul uses here, translated “just” is that you are a man or woman of your word, and you live with the sense that your name tag – Christian – is

visible for everyone to see. And if you're an elder, you provide the pattern for that kind of sensitivity.

And the stakes are even higher if you're not only a Christian, but you are a Christian elder/shepherd/leader.

Your name tag is everywhere.

I remember golfing several years ago and was alone. So they put me with a group of three guys – I didn't want to really be with anybody. Not the way I play.

I was put into this threesome . . . swearing like sailors . . . telling jokes . . . I hung back . . . finally on the 5<sup>th</sup> tee, one of them looked at me and said, "Hey, we're sorry we've been leaving you out . . . what do you do for a living?" I said, "I'm a pastor." They turned pale . . . they began to apologize for their French . . . it wasn't French. They even started calling me Father. The problem was I had to now watch my response and attitude; hit a ball that slices into the words and I have to stand there and smile and wave. Now had a nametag on . . . and there was no way it was coming off for the rest of that round.

Actually, the accountability was a good thing.

We're not going to get to the next three characteristics today, so let me close with a positive illustration of being just – or upright – from a golfer who actually knows how to play the game.

He provided a rare example of integrity that literally surprised everyone – and became part of the living legend of Tom Watson, a professional golfer who has won many world championships and a sense of international respect.

In the first state tournament he ever entered as a young man, he was actually making a run for the trophy. The pressure was incredible and the attention on this newcomer was relentless. He wanted to win so badly – he had dreamed of this moment throughout his boyhood years.

On one of the greens, as he moved up to get ready to putt the ball, he put his putter down behind his ball and to his dismay, the ball moved ever so slightly. No one saw it move. No one was watching carefully enough and the other players were busy with their own game at the moment. No one saw his ball move – but he did. He walked over to an official and said, "My ball moved." Everything just sort of froze . . . Tom Watson, without anyone seeing it happen, just admitted what might cost him more than a stroke – it could cost him the match of his young career. But he told the truth . . . that

action cost him a stroke and he lost the hole; although he came back to win the match.<sup>xix</sup>

But to this day, his decision to be just – to tell the truth when it might have cost him match – I guarantee you means more to him than that a 40 year old plastic trophy that has probably by now just about fallen apart.

What really matters in life – especially for the believer?

And even more especially to an elder who has to not only be the one to say what's right but live it.

What matters most is demonstrating in his life and all of our lives:

- a personal care for those in need;
- a personal conviction for everything that's good;
- a personal common sense for making wise decisions;
- a personal consistency of uprightness and integrity.

Charles Wesley wanted such a sensitive conscience to do the right things and please his Lord and Master.

He wrote many hymn texts and one that never quite made it to the top 50, is worthy of mention; it was published in 1749 and it goes like this:

I want a principle within,  
Of watchful, godly fear;  
A sensibility of sin,  
A pain to feel it near.  
Help me the first approach to feel  
Of pride or wrong desire;  
To catch the wandering of my will,  
And quench the kindling fire.

From Thee that I no more may part  
No more Thy goodness grieve,  
The family awe, the fleshly heart,  
The tender conscience give.  
Quick as the apple of an eye,  
O God, my conscience make;  
Awake my soul when sin is nigh,  
And keep it still awake.

Almighty God of truth and love,  
To me Thy power impart;  
The mountain from my soul remove,  
The hardness from my heart;  
Oh, may the least omission pain

My reawakened soul,  
And drive me to that blood again,  
Which makes the wounded whole.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 3/12/2012 by Stephen Davey.

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<sup>i</sup> John MacArthur, [1 Timothy](#) (Moody Press, 1995), p. 107

<sup>ii</sup> John A. Kitchen, [The Pastoral Epistles for Pastors](#) (Kress Christian Publications, 2009), p. 496

<sup>iii</sup> John MacArthur, [Titus](#) (Moody Press, 1996), p. 40

<sup>iv</sup> MacArthur, [1 Timothy](#), p. 107

<sup>v</sup> William Barclay, [The Letters to Timothy, Titus and Philemon](#) (Westminster, 1975), p. 81

<sup>vi</sup> Alvin J. Schmidt, [How Christianity Changed the World](#) (Zondervan, 2004), p. 154, quoting A.C. Merriam, "The Treatment of Patients in the Temple of Aesculapius," Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, 26 March 1885, 305

<sup>vii</sup> Schmidt, p. 159

<sup>viii</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157

<sup>ix</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153

<sup>x</sup> George W. Knight III, [The New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Pastoral Epistles](#) (Eerdmans, 1992), p. 292

<sup>xi</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, [Be Faithful](#) (Victor Books, 1984), p. 101

<sup>xii</sup> David Campbell, [Opening up Titus](#) (Day One Publications, 2007), p. 30

<sup>xiii</sup> Charles Ray, [Twenty-First Century Biblical Commentary Series: First & Second Timothy, Titus and Philemon](#) (AMG, 2007), p. 153

<sup>xiv</sup> John Benton, [Straightening out the Self-Centered Church](#) (Evangelical Press, 1997), p. 51

<sup>xv</sup> Adapted from Alexander Strauch, [Biblical Eldership](#) (Lewis and Roth, 1995), p. 193

<sup>xvi</sup> Benton, p. 51

<sup>xvii</sup> Barclay, p. 239

<sup>xviii</sup> Boston Globe, November 10p, 1993

<sup>xix</sup> Ted W. Engstrom, [Integrity](#) (Word Books, 1987), p. 76