

The Church, part 5

(1 Timothy 3:8-13)

(preached Pine Grove 7/16/17; Sunday PM)

Introduction

Apple University is the name of the training facility for employees of Apple, Inc. one of the largest electronics companies in the world...

At Apple University, employees are trained in how to be great Apple employees...

They learn facts about the company, how the company is structured, what are the departments within the company, and most importantly, they learn about their role within the company...

According to experts, it is easier to become a professor at Harvard than an employee for Apple...

Now, the interesting part about Apple University is that it is highly secretive...

In fact, very little is known about what happens at the university, since employees are prohibited from talking about the experience..

Former employees who have left Apple have simply said that the training at Apple University is intense and employees are expected to be well-versed in the university's courses before they graduate from its programs...

That is high value that companies like Apple put on the training the members of their organization...

And according to most business experts, Apple's training is not the most intense...

Now compare that training to the training that churches require of their members...

In fact, the church is probably the only organization in the world where learning about the company is not required of its members...

In fact, you can be a member of the church for years and never know how the church is organized and structured...

You can even be part of some churches and never understand what the church's mission is in the world...

Imagine that in the business world...

To be a part of a company and have no idea what their mission is...

Yet, that is a reality for many people in the church...

Who faithfully show up each week but leave and never know anything about the structure or mission of the church...

Well, I certainly don't want anyone who comes here to not be trained about what the church is about...

And so for the past few weeks, we have started to take a closer look at the church, the organization that we are apart of as believers in Jesus Christ..

We have begun to look at all the parts of an effective church...

In a way, to be trained to think about the church from a biblical perspective...

And so we began our training with a look at the pulpit of the church looking at the need of an effective church to be led by biblical preaching...

From there, we moved to the necessity of the church to have qualified leadership...

So, we spent the last two weeks looking at biblical qualifications of overseers or elders of the church..

We went through those 15 or so qualifications one by one to get an understating of the type of men who are qualified to serve the church in a leadership role...

And we compared this to the business world where there are educational and experience standards for certain jobs...

In the same way, church overseers and elders must be educated in the Scriptures well enough to be able to teach them to others...

They must have some level of Christian maturity in order to be qualified to serve...

Now from there, we need to briefly look at another leadership role in the church and this is the role of deacons....

For us Baptists, we have tended to complete matters here unnecessarily by confusing the offices of deacon and elder or overseer...

And in most Baptist churches, their overseers are called deacons...

So for the most part we have confusion in the church over the difference between elders and deacons...

Let me give you the traditional view of this in most Baptist churches and then explain why I see some problems with it...

Most Southern Baptist churches see their pastor as the elder/overseer and then have deacons who serve as overseers in the church....

In most Baptist churches the deacons job is either,...

- a) help the pastor/elder do ministry
- b) manage or supervise the pastor/elder
- c) both

Now, there are a couple issues here that aren't helpful...

One, deacons are not supervisors of the pastor but servants of the church...

Two, having only one elder/overseer as a pastor can be a dangerous thing...

To put all the spiritual oversight/church management in the hands of one person is dangerous, regardless of how mature that person is...

Yet, that has been the setup in most Southern Baptist Churches for decades...

And what you end up with are disputes between deacons and pastors and that results in churches that become gossip for the unbelieving community...

But let me remind you of this...

The office of elder/overseer and the office of deacon are leadership positions in the church that work together to make sure the work of the church moves along...

So, let's take a few minutes to look at the office of deacon in the church...

We have seen the qualifications for an elder/overseer, so now let's take a look at the qualifications for the deacon in the church...

This begins in 1 Timothy 3:8...

8 Deacons likewise must be men of dignity...

Now, a couple things to notice with regard to church leadership...

We see that there is a separate office for those in the church who are called deacons...

Now the word deacon in the Greek simply means servant...

It does not carry the idea of management or oversight like the word elder or overseer does....

Deacons are simply those who serve rather than manage the church..

Now, another note here...

Everyone who is a part of the church should serve the church...

We are all called to serve the Lord's church...

The church is not made up of elders, deacons, and pew sitters...

Everyone is called to service and you should and can serve the church in some way...

Now, this doesn't mean everyone is called a deacon who serves...

This title is reserved for those who serve in a more official way...

They are called deacons also because they are examples of service to others in the church...

They are deacons because they help the elders/overseers carry out the work of ministry that must be done...

Now the qualifications for these servants of the church are very similar to the elders and overseers of the church...

And most of them are qualification we have already talked about in regards to elders/overseers, so this will be brief...

The first one we see in verse 8 is that deacons must be men of dignity...

This is the idea of serious minded men...

They are not childish and silly all the time, but they are men who take their service to the Lord's church seriously...

Qualification #2 is that they can't have a double tongue...

In other words, they aren't liars or deceitful....

They also don't say what people want to hear...

In other words, they speak consistently to everyone...

Some men try to win people but distorting the truth, so they will one thing to him but another thing to the next person...

That can't be true of men who serve the church...

They must speak the truth clearly and consistently to all...

Qualifications 3 and 4 are nearly identical to what we saw for elders and overseers...

Deacons cannot be drunkards or even have the reputation as a drinker and they cannot be possessed by a love of money....

Qualification #5 is similar to something we saw in the qualifications for elders but worded differently here...

Deacons must hold to the mystery of faith with a clear conscience...

You see, the NT is a mystery in the sense of it wasn't revealed until the death of Christ...

The church is a mystery that wasn't known to people of the OT...

So, deacons in the church must have a understanding of the church and the gospel and they must live with a clear conscience in regard to their obedience to the NT...

In other words, deacons must understand the Christian faith and be living in obedience to Christ that their consciences are clear...

An additional qualification for deacons is found in verse 10...

They must have a proven track record of Christian service...

This qualification prevents us the church from putting a new convert into the office of deacon...

Deacons need to be men who have demonstrated commitment to serve the church in other areas before they are able to serve the church in an official role...

You then see a repeat of the idea of above reproach to end verse 10...

Deacons must be blameless men, not sinless...

But deacons must be free from someone bringing a charge against them...

They cannot be living in a pattern of ongoing sin or unforgiveness or bitterness...

Their lives must be a pattern of obedience to the Lord..

Then we get to verse 11 and we find controversy...

Paul was simply inspired to write, Women likewise...

Now your translation may say wives, but what you need to understand is this...

The Greek language had no word for wives...

So the word here is simply women...

Now, here is where a lot of churches have gotten into error and trouble and found division and split...

Women can be deacons as long as a church recognizes that deacon is not an office of oversight or management or authority...

If a church simply sees a deacon as a position of service and nothing more, women can and often do serve the church...

Caring for widows, cooking meals for funerals, counseling, visitation...

Now to be clear, the way that we currently view deacons here at Pine Grove prevents a woman from serving in the office since we view deacon as a position of authority...

And the Bible clearly prohibits a woman from exercising authority over a man, which is found in 1 Tim 2:12...

But in churches that see deacons as simply people who served the church, women can be considered deacons..

And in those churches, women who serve as deacons must be qualified by first of all being serious minded, which is described as being dignified in verse 11...

They also cannot be malicious gossips, which goes right along with the idea of being able to tame the tongue..

To not being double tongued...

To being able to listen before speaking...

And then we see a repeat of some thing that we have already mentioned in connection with elders...

They must be temperate, which means clear thinker..

The idea of being sober-minded, and then we see the qualification of faithfulness which suggests that there is a track record of service before a woman can serve in an official capacity...

Verse 12 moves back to male deacons by repeating the qualifications we saw for elders as deacons also must be a one woman man with eyes only for his wife..

And the be a good manager of his children and household as well...

So, those are the qualifications for deacons, which would include men and women who simply serve the church in an official capacity...

Again, to be clear, deacons were never responsible for spiritual oversight or exercising authority within the church...

They were simply servants who led by their example of working diligently for the Lord...

Now, let me take a timeout and talk to you about a few things in relation to what we have here...

I recognize that most Baptist churches are led by men who are called deacons...

And they are responsible for the oversight and management of the church...

They hold some spiritual authority within the church as well to make decisions and take action...

That is really the system that we have in place here..

In that management and supervisory role, I simply serve as a 9th deacon...

I simply lend my voice not to conversation not in authority over the deacons role but as a voice that comes alongside those men...

When I left seminary, I knew I wanted to be in a Baptist church and I knew that most Baptists have deacons, even though that deacons here serve as overseers and elders...

And when I came here, I told the 6 men at the time that I viewed them as equals not as people below me...

And that we would make decisions together for the good of the church...

I think that has been the case in nearly every decision we have made in regards to Pine Grove...

You see, I am not hung up on terms like elders and deacons...

Though I think that the best church structure are elders and deacons, I haven't lost sleep over what we have here...

So I say all that to say, the structure here at Pine Grove is fine as long as we recognize that the men who serve here

perform more of an overseer/elder role than deacon/
service role..

That does not mean they dont serve the church, I assure
you that they do in ways you probably don't even
notice...

But it simply means that they are my equals more than
men who are under my authority...

It is a fine setup as long as the men who serve as deacons
are biblically qualified...

Problems come not because of what they are called but
by what they do...

So qualifications are always more important than
names...

Now, let me share some other things about what we have
here at Pine Grove...

I have provided you all a copy of what this church has
established as bylaws regarding church leadership
here...

Now, the first thing to notice is that there is no section on
elders or overseers...

There is a section on the pastor who was probably considered the only elder when the bylaws were written and then there is a section on the deacons...

What I want to do is just read over this in our time remaining and let us think about it in terms of what we have learned about church leadership from 1 Timothy over the past 3 weeks..

I don't know if we will get through everything, but I want us to start because I think there is confusion about what we have and what we need and where we stand...

So, let's just begin by reading about the pastor in relation to 1 Timothy 3 and I will make some comments as we go...

Section 1. Spiritual Leadership. The Pastor is the spiritual leader of the church body and is responsible for leading the church as a New Testament body. He shall lead the congregation, organizations, and church staff in designing, maintaining, and completing their assigned tasks or ministries. As the leader of ministries of the church, the Pastor is to teach, preach, direct, and train whenever needed or required in order for the church to carry out its assigned scriptural mandate and mission.

Ok, here are a couple things to consider here...

First, the pastor is the spiritual leader of the church body but he leads along with other men..

In our case, he leads along with the deacons, and I think that needs to be spelled out here..

If for nothing else that allowing one man to have too much power..

Church leadership in the NT seems to function best when you have more than one person in charge...

Leadership is to be shared among the most spiritually qualified men in a church...

So that is one tweak I would suggest here in regards to pastor job description...

Section 2 of our bylaws outlines the duties of the pastor..

Section 2. Duties. The Pastor's duties shall include proclamation of the gospel, leading the church body to engage in worship, witnessing, education, ministry, fellowship, and leadership. The Pastor may be the ex-officio member of all committees, departments, and groups.

Clearly, a pastor carries a special role of preaching and teaching...

This may separate him from other elders, but it doesn't make him more important...

It simply is a description of him fulfilling his calling..

Some churches call the pastor simply the preaching and teaching elder..

Section is fine and biblical...

I would have a little different wording...

But it is a fine section to include in the bylaws..

Section 3 deals with the selection of a pastor...

Section 3. Election. The Pastor shall be chosen and called by the church whenever a vacancy exists. The election of a Pastor shall be made by the church body and shall be made in a meeting called for that purpose (a two week notice should be given to the church prior to such a meeting).

In the Baptist tradition, pastors are elected by the church body by vote of the membership...

Some denominations appoint their pastors but Baptists generally elect them by popular vote...

Now, there are difficulties here...

The main one being that any member can vote on a candidate for pastor...

Even members that no longer attend can show up and vote...

It is also possible that there may be unsaved people voting...

Because not all church members may be saved or they could be living in a sinful lifestyle...

Yet, they could also show up and vote...

So popular vote among the congregation has its problems but Baptists have generally agreed that is the best way to do it..

And those are the the bylaws that the church has adopted here...

Now section 4 moves to qualifications for a pastor, which should come from 1 Timothy 3:1-7, which deal with elders and overseers and pastors are just that...

They are elders and overseers of the flock...

So, section 4 of our bylaws deals with that...

Section 4. Qualifications. The Pastor must meet the qualifications as stated in 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 2 Timothy 2:15, 16; Titus 2:1-10, and other relevant scriptures.

Specifically:

Above reproach- of excellent moral and ethical character

If married, the husband of one wife.

Serious minded regarding the gospel and responsibilities of Pastor

Self-controlled- morally and spiritually

Hospitable- able to get along with others- accepting others

A Teacher of the Word and not personal agenda or thought

Not drinking of strong drink- alcoholic beverages

Not violent but temperate- having an even temperament

Not greedy or covetous of money

One who is prepared by study of the Scriptures (2 Tim 2:15, 16)

Manage his own household and family as a respected leader

Not a novice- first tried and proven in ministry and study

Have a good reputation of those who know and deal with him

The list here is fine...

It is simply an interoperation of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and the other verses listed here...

Seems fairly well interpreted and definitely needs to be a part of bylaws that deal with a pastors job description...

In fact, section 4 is the section of a pastor's job description...

If he is disqualified here or becomes disqualified according to these verses, his ministry is over and he must leave the pulpit....

Let's look at one more section here for tonight and we will continue this next week...

Section 5 details more of how a pastor is selected...

Section 5. Recommendations. A Pastor Selection Committee shall be nominated and elected by the church whose purpose is to seek a suitable Pastor, and its recommendation shall constitute a nomination. An affirmative vote of 75% of those present shall be necessary for election of a Pastor.

Pastor search committees are a way of life in most Baptist churches...

I have served on 2 and been interviewed by 3, so I have been on both sides of them..

They serve a good purpose of locating a pastor...

But they have limitations..

One limitation is that people chosen for them might not be the most spiritually mature believer but simply be someone who is popular within the church...

Ill give you an example...

I was on a committee with someone who had a successful business but he had no clue of what to look for in a pastor...

He was simply nominated and elected because he was admired for his business skills..

That has happened 1000s of times in Baptist history...

The primary quality I would look for in a search committee member is that they understand the role of a pastor in a church and they know what how to identify biblical preaching...

Some many men have been called to churches who had the look but couldn't find a biblical sermon with a flashlight...

Then some men have been called who were powerful in the pulpit but had a mess of a personal life...

Yet, search committees often overlook the value of a man's home and family..

Though search committees may be the best alternative, they need to be composed of spiritually mature people...

I once a member of a committee that called a youth pastor who was a disaster...

And the reason we called him is that we were amazed by his ability to speak but overlooked his personal life...

So though a church may need a search committee, it is a heavy responsibility....

Pastoral leadership can bless a church or curse one for years, so the selection of a pastor is a crucial event in the life and future of a church...

And then our bylaws give the percentage necessary to call a pastor, which is 75% at Pine Grove..

And really this note needs to be a part of section 3 and not part of this section...

We need to stop right there, but we will continue our look at this next week...

When we will finish our look at the bylaws for pastors and then look at Pine Grove deacons next...

Let me simply pray for us tonight..