

INTRODUCTION 引言

There is a profession where people are expected to play multiple roles. They serve as a phone directory, job consultant and match-maker. They give referrals for an auto mechanic, dentist and handyman. They are expected to answer phone calls 24/7. What kind of occupation am I talking about? I will give you a B if your response is “mom.” But the answer I have in mind is pastor. If you think a pastor only works on Sunday and takes care of spiritual matters, then you only know part of the story. After being in the ministries for thirteen years, no request will trigger a heart attack on me. The first funeral I officiated was for a still-born baby. It was sad. People gave me compliments after I presided the first wedding ceremony. Of course, I did not tell them I was shaking the whole time. Experience and input from seasoned pastors surely help me do a better job. Above all, God’s grace is always sufficient. People are always forgiving even when I make silly mistakes. Today, we will look at some advice the apostle Paul gave to a young pastor named Titus. He was a Greek by birth who served on the island of Crete. It is part of the modern-day Greece. It was possible that Paul led Titus to Christ. He followed Paul in his mission journeys to learn about church ministries. Paul later entrusted the ministries at Crete to Titus. In our study, Paul told Titus to appoint church elders. In the New Testament, elders and bishops are interchangeable titles for pastors. Therefore, whenever I mention an “elder” in today’s message, I also mean a “pastor.” Paul lists some qualifications for choosing elders. When I come across a passage like this, I cannot help but ask myself if I live up to God’s standard. Our church is going through a transition now. It is a good time for us to reexamine our expectations on pastors. To God, He cares more about the character than the skills of pastors.

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. Testimony at Home 家中的見證

First and foremost, Paul mentions about the testimony of an elder at home. Paul says in verse 6 that the man must be blameless. By “blameless” it does not mean perfect. Rather, it means the person does not have any obvious flaw in his character or conduct that can draw criticism. The setting here is about one’s family. Paul states that an elder must be the husband of one wife. Therefore, he cannot be polygamous. But of course, an elder can remarry after his wife passed away. But does that disqualify the single men? Not necessarily. Paul himself never married! He traveled long distance and he often faced dangerous situations. It would be inconvenient and even risky to bring along his family. Having said that, a pastor can serve more effectively in some circumstances if he is married. For example, I can bring my wife along when I visit a single woman. When I counsel a couple having marital conflict, it is helpful to have someone who sees things from a wife’s perspective. Besides a wife, naturally there are also children in the family. Paul’s focus is most likely the kids still living at home. Following the logic above, an elder who does not have any child

will not exclude him from ministries. But the dads among us should agree that we can understand God's love at a deeper level when we became parents. Paul's requirements for an elder's kids are three-fold. First, they must believe. The Chinese Union Bible renders the word "believe" to mean faith in Christ. It makes sense that an elder should lead his immediate family members to Christ first. Parents: we are fighting against the fallen world to save our kids. Bringing them to the church is just the first step. Read Bible stories to them and tell them about Jesus even before they can walk and talk! I still cherish the moments when my two boys urged me to pray for them before bedtime. By God's grace, both of them admitted that they were sinners and they received Jesus before 10 years old. Receiving Christ is only the beginning. Paul continues to say that an elder's kids must conduct their lives in ways that no one can accuse them as wild and disobedient. The fallen culture encourages us to lead a wild life in our thoughts, speech and behaviors. Instead of being wild, we should be mild. A child should exercise self-restraint according to God's Word. That is where the obedience part comes in. When a dad gives instructions based on the Bible, a child should behave accordingly. God's Word gives us the absolute standard for living: love God and people, do not sin and glorify God in what we do. Apart from those basic principles, God gives us freedom to make decisions. For example, what time kids should go to bed or what college major they choose. Paul puts an elder's testimony at home as the first criterion because people can tell a lot about you by looking at your family. Paul says in **1 Timothy 3:5** that: If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church? An elder can delegate ministries to other coworkers. I can find a guest speaker to preach when I am on vacation. But no one can replace my roles as a dad. Let me say a word of encouragement to fellow dads: only a godly dad will produce godly kids. Pray for them, especially if your children are not believers or they have wandered away from the faith. God can change their hearts just like He changed ours.

2. Personality in Life 為人的舉止

After bringing up the testimony an elder should have at home, Paul moves on to the elder's personality in life. Paul calls an elder and an overseer in verse 7. In the footnote of my Bible, an overseer is also called a bishop. The title "overseer" highlights his responsibility to supervise over church ministries. However, he is not the boss. Paul specifies that an elder is just a steward and a servant accountable to God. Therefore, he should reflect God's virtues. Paul lists five defects an elder should avoid. In the second half of verse 7, Paul says an elder must not be "overbearing." The word describes someone who is self-centered and arrogant. He insists on his own ways and fails to listen to others. Next, an elder must not be "quick-tempered." An elder has to be patient when dealing with people. It takes time for people to surrender their will to God. It also takes humility to embrace others' opinions. The third item Paul brings up is "drunkenness." This is the one area I can brag about myself. A can of beer is all I can take, then I will turn into a well-done lobster. My understanding of the Bible is that we can drink alcohol as long as we do not get drunk. Therefore, you do not have to hide your whisky or Mao-Tai when I visit your home. The next quality is "not violent." The image describes someone ready to fight with others. It shows a lack of control over one's emotion, words and even actions. The last element on Paul's inventory is "not pursuing

dishonest gain.” Greed for money can easily become a stumbling block in any profession. We can think of some pastors of mega-churches who lead a flashy lifestyle. Worse still, they advocate that wealth is the one promise God gladly grants to all His children. I made a pledge to God that I would never negotiate about money with a church. Whatever the leaders offer, I will receive it with joy and gratitude. Coworkers of our church are generous and respectful. To this day I am still enjoying my never-ending honeymoon. After spelling out some negative qualities an elder should watch out for, Paul mentions six positive attributes an elder should aspire after in verse 8. The first trait on the list is “hospitable.” The Greek word literally means lovers of strangers. In the New Testament world, missionaries like Paul relied on Christians for lodging and financial support. Next, there is “loves what is good.” Of course, Paul is not talking about preferences on food or sports. An elder must love what God sees as good. Paul gives us some examples in [Philippians 4:8](#) – Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. An elder must practice what God sees as good. Therefore, this virtue of “loves what is good” goes hand-in-hand with “upright” and “holy” on Paul’s list. The word “upright” is a legal term that can mean righteous or obeying God’s commands. “Holy” has the connotation of setting apart for God’s purpose. A person of holiness should not indulge in sins. The last two qualities Paul mentions – “self-controlled” and “disciplined” – have similar meanings. The former virtue has to do with having a sound mind to enable a person to take rational actions. The latter virtue is the inner strength to curb one’s appetites and passions. Those are the qualities every elder should pursue.

3. Competency with Word 真理的善用

An elder must have good testimony at home and a noble personality in life. Thirdly, Paul says an elder should also show competency with God’s Word. Paul states in verse 9 that an elder “must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught.” The phrase “hold firmly” makes me think of grabbing a lifesaver when a boat capsizes. Since I cannot swim much, I will hold firmly onto anything that keeps me floating. Similarly, an elder has to hold onto God’s Word firmly because it is the only truth that can save people. He must crave after it, understand it, meditate on it and believe in it wholeheartedly. Whenever he stands on the podium or leads a class, he is deriving from God’s authority in His Word. That puts the burden on me and all the small group leaders. We must be competent with God’s Word. You do not want an auto mechanic to be your surgeon. I will not ask a lawn-mowing guy to cut my hair either, even though there is not much he can mess up with! As a Bible teacher, I present to you the findings based on my study. I always welcome any input if you have additional insight. Our knowledge of God’s Word should continue to grow. I have been a Christian for thirty some years now. The more I read the Bible, the more I realize that there are many things I do not know. I encourage everyone to bear the heart of a curious kid every time you come here on Sunday or attend a small group study. Paul states that an elder can do two things when he holds firmly onto God’s truth. First, “he can encourage others by sound doctrine.” From the Greek word for “sound” we get the word “hygiene.” Therefore, it is something that is beneficial to build people up. We all need some encouragement every day.

There are just too many troubles and uncertainties in our world. I urge everyone to read the Bible every morning before you start your day. God loves you, cares for you, protects you and provides for your needs. He is in full control no matter what situation you are in. He wants you to trust Him and walk with Him. Paul says that besides using God's Word to encourage others, an elder should also use the Bible to "refute those who oppose it." The word "refute" means to expose one's falsehood to reprove the person. The idea is not for an elder to stand at a street-corner and yell: "believe in Jesus or you will go down!" We need to explain the truth to sincere seekers but stay away from sinful slanderers. Paul warned Titus about the latter group of people in the church. For example, in 1:16 of the book, Paul says: They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good. Those descriptions may seem harsh. We do not judge people, but we use God's truth to evaluate people's actions. Paul also advises us in 3:10 – Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. Paul highlights the motive behind those who oppose God's truth. Their mentality is "I'm right and you're wrong." Their intent is to draw followers to themselves and divide a church. Therefore, it is critical for an elder to defend the truth. There are certain core doctrines that every Bible-believing church will embrace. For example, the trinity of God, Jesus died on the cross for the sin of mankind and He rose again on the third day, salvation by God's grace through our faith, Jesus will come back to judge the world and usher His believers into heaven, etc. Those are some of the truths an elder should hold firmly onto.

CONCLUSION 結論

God cares more about the character than the skills of pastors. Paul reminds us that elders are but servants of God. Churches of various traditions give them different titles. Personally, I do not prefer "reverend" because it depicts someone with a halo. "Bishop" sounds somewhat like the Catholics. "Elder" may make people feel that I am an old man. To me, "minister" is the most appropriate designation. Pastors serve God by ministering to people's needs. Soon after I came to this church, I realized that I cannot be a leader if I am not a servant. And I cannot be your pastor if I do not see myself as a family member. Thank you for your love and patience toward me. I know I have many flaws. You can ask my family members in case you are not aware of them. I sincerely ask all of you to do a few things. First, pray for me and my family on a regular basis. Second, please do not hesitate to tell me how I can serve you better. Third, let us grow together in our relationship with each other and with the Lord. Last but not least, I invite you join me and other coworkers to make this a better and stronger church.

INTRODUCTION 引言

有一種行業的專業人士需要扮演多種角色。他們充當電話簿、工作介紹人和媒人。他們推薦汽車修理工、牙醫和裝修師傅。他們需要隨時準備接聽電話。我所說的是什麼職業？如果你的回答是媽媽，我會給你一個乙。但是我想到的答案是牧師。如果你認為牧師只在星期日工作，並處理屬靈事務，那麼你只知道一部分的真相。服事主十三年之後，大概沒有任何要求會引起我的心髒病發作。我主持的第一個葬禮是為一個夭折的嬰兒舉行的。真是令人傷心。在我主持了第一次婚禮後，人們給我一些鼓勵。當然，我沒有告訴他們我一直在發抖。經驗和前輩的指點自然會幫助我改進。最重要的是，神的恩典總是夠用的。即使我犯了愚蠢的錯誤，人們也樂意寬恕我。今天，我們會看使徒保羅給一位年輕的牧師提多的建議。他是個希臘人，在克里特島服事。它是今天希臘的一部分。有可能保羅是帶領提多信主的人。在保羅的宣教旅程中，提多跟隨保羅學習教會的服事。保羅後來把克里特的事奉交給提多。在我們的學習中，保羅告訴提多設立教會的長老。在新約中，長老、監督和牧師是可以互換的頭銜。因此，在今天的信息中，每當我提到長老時，我也是指牧師。保羅列出了一些選擇長老的資格。每當我讀到類似的經文時，我不禁要問自己，我是否達到神的要求。我們的教會正在經歷一段過渡時期。現在是我們重新檢視對牧師的期望的好時機。對神而言，祂更看重的是牧師的品格而不是他們的技能。

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. Testimony at Home 家中的見證

首先，保羅提到長老在家中的見證。保羅在第 6 節說，長老必須是無可指責的。「無可指責」並不等於完美。它的意思是指一個人的品格或行為沒有明顯的缺陷可以引起批評。這裡的背景是關於一個人的家庭的。保羅指出，長老必須是一個婦人的丈夫。因此，他不能一夫多妻。但是，當然，長老可以在妻子去世後再婚。但這是否說單身的男士便喪失資格？當然不是。保羅本人也從未結婚！他長途跋涉，經常遇到困難的狀況。他帶著家人便會不方便，甚至危險。話雖如此，已婚的牧師在某些情況下可以更有效地服事。例如，當我拜訪單身女性時，我可以帶著我的太太。當我為一對夫妻作婚姻輔導時，我也可以從妻子的角度去看事情。家裡除了太太之外，很自然也會有孩子。保羅的重點很可能是仍然住在家裡的孩子。按照上述同樣的道理，沒有孩子的長老並不會

使他們失去服事的資格。但是我們中間的父親應該同意，當我們成為家長時，我們可以更深入地了解神的愛。保羅對長老的孩子有三方面的要求。首先，他們必須相信。中文和合本聖經將「相信」翻譯為信主。長老應該先帶領家人信主，這是合理的。親愛的家長們：我們正在與墮落的世界宣戰，以拯救我們的孩子。將他們帶到教會只是第一步。甚至在他們會走路和說話之前，和他們閱讀聖經故事，向他們傳講耶穌！我很懷念我的兩個男孩小時候催促我睡前為他們禱告的時刻。靠著神的恩典，他們後來都清楚自己是罪人，並且在十歲之前就接受了耶穌。信主只是一個開始。保羅繼續說，長老的孩子生活不應該是放蕩不服約束的。墮落的文化鼓勵我們在思想、言語和行為上我行我素。我們的舉止應該是溫和的，而不是放縱的。一個孩子必須按照神的話語克制自己。這是順服的體現。當一個父親根據聖經給予指示時，孩子就應該聽從。神的話語為我們提供了絕對的生活原則：愛神和愛人，在做事時不要犯罪並榮耀神。除了這些基本原則外，神給了我們做決定的自由。例如，孩子應該什麼時候上床睡覺或者他們選擇什麼大學專業。保羅把長老家中的見證列為第一個要求，因為人們可以通過看你的家來了解很多關於你的事情。保羅在提摩太前書 3:5 中說：**人若不知道管理自己的家，焉能照管神的教會呢？**長老可以把事奉分配給其他同工。我可以在渡假時邀請外請講員來講道。但是沒有人可以取代我作為父親的角色。我願意和父親們互相勉勵：只有敬虔的父親才能養育出敬虔的孩子。為他們禱告，特別是如果你的孩子不是信徒，或者他們已經偏離了真道。唯有神能夠改變他們的心，就像祂改變了我們的心一樣。

2. Personality in Life 為人的舉止

保羅提出長老在家中應有的見證之後，他繼續談到長老的為人舉止。保羅在第 7 節中稱長老為監督。在我的聖經的附註中，監督也稱為主教。「監督」這個稱呼強調他管理教會各樣事工的責任。但是，他不是老闆。保羅指出，長老只是對神負責的管家和僕人。因此，他必須反映出神的美德。保羅列出長老應避免的五個缺陷。在第 7 節的後半部分，保羅說長老不可以「任性」。這個用詞描述一個自我中心和自大的人。他堅持自己的看法，不聽別人的意見。其次，長老不能「暴躁」。長老在與人打交道時必須要有耐心。人們需要時間才會願意降服於神。接受別人的意見也需要謙卑。保羅提出的第三項要求是不可「因酒滋事」。這是我可以吹噓自己的地方。我每次只能喝一罐啤酒，然後我就會變成煮熟的龍蝦那樣。我對聖經的理解是，我們可以喝酒，只要我們不醉酒。因此，當我拜訪你家時，你不必把你的威士忌和茅台藏起來。下一項品格是「不打人」。那幅圖像描述一個人準備跟人打架。表示這個人無法控制自己的情緒、言語甚至行為。保羅的清單中的最後一個項目是「不貪不義之財」。對金錢的貪欲很容易成為任何職業的絆腳石。我們可以想像一些大教會牧師的壞

榜樣，他們過著奢華的生活。更糟糕的是，他們教導說財富是神樂意賜給祂所有兒女的應許。我向神承諾，從來不會和教堂談金錢的事。無論領袖們同意給多少，我都以喜悅和感恩的心接受。我們教會的同工很慷慨和尊重牧師。直到今天，我仍然享受著我永無止境的蜜月。在闡明了長老應該提防的一些缺點後，保羅在第 8 節中提出長老應該追求的六個正面的特質。清單上的第一個品格是「接待遠人」。希臘文字面的意思是對陌生人的愛心。在新約世界中，像保羅這樣的宣教士需要依靠信徒提供住宿和經濟援助。接下來的一項是「好善」。當然，保羅不是在談論對食物或體育的喜好。長老必須愛神所看為美善的東西。保羅在腓立比書 4:8 中給我們一些例子：**弟兄們，我還有未盡的話：凡是真實的、可敬的、公義的、清潔的、可愛的、有美名的，若有什麼德行，若有什麼稱讚，這些事你們都要思念。**長老必須實踐神看為美好的事物。因此，「好善」的美德與保羅提到的「公平」和「聖潔」緊緊相連。「公平」是一個法律的術語，可以表示公義或服從神的命令。「聖潔」的含義是分別出來為神所用。一個聖潔的人不應沉淪在罪中。保羅提到的最後兩個特質「莊重」和「自持」的意思相近。前者是指一個人有清醒的頭腦採取理性的行動。後者是控制欲望和激情的內在力量。這些都是每位長老應該追求的素質。

3. Competency with Word 真理的善用

長老必須在家中有美好的見證，並在生活中具有高尚的品格。第三，保羅說，長老也應該善用神的真理。保羅在第 9 節中說，一位長老必須「堅守所教真實的道理」。「堅守」一詞使我想到了當船翻沉時要抓住救生圈。因為我不太會游泳，所以我會緊緊抓住任何使我浮起來的東西。同樣，長老必須堅守神的聖言，因為它是唯一可以救人的真理。長老必須渴慕它、明白它、默想它，並完全相信它。每當長老站在講台上或在課堂中，他都是運用從神話語而來的權柄。這給我和所有小組領導者一個重要的責任。我們必須善用神的真理。你不希望修車的人成為你的外科醫生。我也不會要求割草的人剪我的頭髮，即使他沒有多少可以出錯的餘地！作為聖經老師，我是與你分享我的學習結果。如果你有其他見解，我隨時歡迎你來與我交流。我們對聖經的理解應該是持續增長的。我信主已經有三十多年了。我越明白聖經，我便越會發現有更多不明白的地方。我鼓勵大家每次參加主日崇拜或小組學習時，都懷著一顆孩子般的好奇心。保羅說，當長老堅守神的真理時，他便能夠做兩件事。首先，他可以「將純正的教訓勸化人」。英文「衛生」這個字是從希臘文「純正」一詞演變過來的。因此，這是有益處，能夠建立別人的事情。任何人每天都需要一些激勵。我們的世界充滿了太多的問題和未知。我敦促大家每天早晨在開始新的一天之前先閱讀聖經。神愛你、關心你、保護你、供應你的需要。無論你處於什麼情況，神仍然掌管一切。祂希望你信靠祂並與祂同行。保羅說，長老除了使用神

的話來鼓勵別人之外，他還應該使用聖經來「把爭辯的人駁倒」。「駁倒」一詞的意思是揭露虛假的事情以責備別人。其中的意思不是要長老站在街頭大聲喊：「相信耶穌，否則你會下地獄！」我們需要向真誠的尋道者解釋真理，但要遠離惡意誹謗的人。保羅警告提多注意教會中的後一群人。例如，在書中的 1:16，保羅說：他們說是認識神，行事卻和他相背，本是可憎惡的，是悖逆的，在各樣善事上是可廢棄的。這樣的言辭看起來很嚴厲。我們不應該批評別人，但我們使用神的真理來評估人的行為。保羅在 3:10 中也建議：分門結黨的人，警戒過一兩次，就要棄絕他。保羅強調那些反對真理的人的動機。他們的心態是「我是對的，你是錯的。」他們的目的是吸引追隨者並分裂教會。因此，對於長老來說，捍衛真理至關重要。每一所相信聖經的教會都會接受一些核心教義。例如，神的三位一體、耶穌因人類的罪而死在十字架上、耶穌在死後第三天復活、我們以信心回應神的恩典而得救、耶穌會再來審判世界並將祂的信徒帶入天堂。這些都是長老應該牢牢抓住的一些真理。

CONCLUSION 結論

神看重的是牧師的品格而不是他們的技能。保羅提醒我們，長老不過是神的僕人。不同的教會傳統給予傳道人不同的稱呼。就個人而言，我不喜歡「尊敬的神職人員」，因為聽起來好像頭上有光環的人。「主教」有點像天主教會。

「長老」可能會讓人覺得我很老。對我來說，「僕人」是最合適的稱呼。牧師通過服事人來事奉神。來到這間教會後不久，我意識到如果我不是個僕人，我就不能成為領袖。如果我不把自己視為這個大家庭的成員，我就不能成為你的牧師。謝謝你對我的愛與耐心。我知道我有很多缺點。如果你沒有察覺的話，你可以問我的家人。我誠懇地請大家做幾件事。首先，請為我和我的家人禱告。第二，如何有任何地方能更好地為你服務，請你告訴我。第三，讓我們彼此之間的關係以及與主的關係一同成長。最後但並非最不重要的一點，我邀請你加入我和其他同工，一同建造一所更美好、更堅固的教會。