

Pastor Ordination: What is a Pastor?

Passage.

1 Timothy 3:1-7

Intro

Good morning everyone! My name is Jeff and I'm one of the pastors here in our church family. I primarily oversee our groups & discipleship as well as our finances. Because of what I do, I'm typically not on stage on Sundays. And earlier this year, my wife and I were in the process of adopting our son, he was taken away from us after 3 days he was born because the birth parents changed their mind. So I took a huge step back in leading our church so both Callie and I can have time to mourn and process everything has happened. But, I'm really happy to share the good news that after 2 months, our son is back in our home and the adoption process is continuing on smoothly and we would love for you to pray for that to continue. That being said, here's a stupid cute picture of Luke.

But one thing I would like to highlight was this: Because of the way our church family operates leadership-wise, I was given the lifeline to be able to step away from leading when I personally was crushed spiritually and emotionally. This was able to happen because on one level, our LifeGroup and a lot of you guys rallied around Callie and I and were church family to us when we needed it desperately. And on another level, the way we have structured our pastoral leadership, I was able to step away and everything and everyone was fine and that's a lot of what we're going to get into today.

Why this matters

The reason I am bringing all this up is because today we are going to take some time and ask the question: What is a Pastor? What does the bible say a pastor does? What are the qualifications to be a pastor? After we answer those questions, we are actually going to ordain Marcus Williamson as the third pastor in our church family.

Here is why I think it matters for all of us to care about what is a pastor. In Hebrews 13:17 it says:

“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you”

If you consider yourself a follower of Jesus and a part of City Church, here is what you're called to in regards to the leaders and pastors of our church: (Heb. 13:17). So that begs the question, who and what are these leaders I am called to follow? Who are they called to be and what are they called to do? That's what we want to discuss this morning.

Now when I read obey and submit to your leaders, the first question that pops up in my head is: “Um, what if they are garbage? What if they are poor leaders? I can't just submit to a bad leader! Silly bible.” And I think it's a fair concern to have because some of us here today, have only seen poor authority over us. **From people who do not know how to lead in a position of authority to people who abuse the power of authority. As we dive into scriptures today, we will see the bible condemns those types of authority. But, the bible does not condemn authority all together. The bible actually affirms good authority and condemns the bad authority. So in answer to what is a pastor, we will see how scripture lays out what is a good authority is supposed to look like and how it is designed for the flourishing for everyone in the church.**

How we do things

So here at City Church, we have multiple pastors here, not just one. We do not have a lead pastor here at City Church. In church world, sometimes this is called a “plurality” of pastors. And the reason we do it that way is because that seems to be the pattern in the bible. Let's look at just a few of them. *Quick point, the passages we will be going through today sometimes use the word “overseer,” and sometimes use the word “elder.”

Now depending on your church tradition, you may have heard those terms used as different things, or used as interchangeably—I don't plan on getting into all that today. For our purposes today, all I want you to see is that when we talk about a "pastor" of our church family, we want them to meet the qualifications of an "elder" or "overseer"

1 Peter 5:1a - So I exhort the *elders* among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ

Titus 1:5 - The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint *elders* in every town, as I directed you.

Acts 14:23 - And when they had appointed *elders* for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

We see over and over again in the early church, the pattern for a local church in the bible is to have a group of elders or pastors that oversees the church together. Now here is why this is good for the church: **It guards against a domineering or tyrannical leader. This is especially important because in the recent years, we have seen a rise of pastors who use their power to control and manipulate things. They use their position of influence to cover up sins that are going on in the church. But when there is a group of pastors leading together, each pastor is called like all followers of Jesus are called to "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." in Ephesians 5:21. So no pastor here at City Church gets to say "we will do what I want because I said so."**

Another reason why this is good for the church family: it is better to have multiple leaders who are gifted differently serving and leading you. No one leader is gifted perfectly and completely except Jesus, so it is better to have multiple leaders serving and leading out together. For example: Kent's

been gone for the last 4 weeks, and you know why the last 4 weeks it wasn't just me teaching here on Sundays but instead we had different pastors coming in to serve our family? Because I'm not super gifted in teaching the way Kent is, so having me teach consecutively that many weeks, I probably would have said something dumb and got fired.

And that brings us to having multiple pastors is not only good for you guys, it's also good for us, the pastors. The first thing is not all the weight is on one person. The same way I was able to step back earlier this year when we lost our son, Kent is able to step away the last few weeks as he and Ana welcome Norah into this world. **None of us are carrying the pressure of trying to do it all and do it perfectly. We can remind each other that this is Jesus' church and he is leading us. Another reason why this is good for us as pastors is we can help one another in our weaknesses and support each other by encouraging one another or pray for one another. Because believe it not you guys, Kent and I are far far far from perfect. And that's putting it mildly. There are moments where one of us is impatient, lacking in grace, afraid to speak the truth, and so on. The ability to have another pastor there with you to encourage you and call those things out is so incredibly helpful and allows us to shepherd you guys better.**

So those are the benefits we see from having multiple pastors leading a church but we want to do one step more. All of our pastors and pastors in training in our church family are a part of a LifeGroup. Every single leader, we want to make sure they are known by other people, confessing what is going on in their life, and constantly being reminded of the same grace and hope that every follower of Jesus needs. That is a rhythm of life we see scriptures laid out for all followers of Jesus and **we believe that also applies to all of our leaders. We refuse to see our pastoral team as people who are larger than life but instead as a follower of Jesus that needs the gospel. This is also why you won't hear Kent or me ask y'all refer to us as "Pastor Kent or Pastor Jeff." We didn't change our first name to "pastor" when we became pastors.**

Qualifications

So those are some of the things we do here at City Church but what should a pastor be like? What type of person should become a pastor? What should their character consist of. Turn with me to 1 Tim 3:1

Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task.

So the first thing is they *aspire* to the office of a pastor. They want this, they desire it. Now in hearing that, it's easy to think, who doesn't want power, authority, or approval of others? But that's not the calling of a pastor. If you have been following after Jesus for a while, you'll notice the pattern that the bible lays out for how life is supposed to work is usually quite the opposite than what we think it ought to be. And this applies to leadership. Look at Matthew 20:25-28 with me,

"But Jesus called them to him and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.'" Listen to verse 26. "It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

The calling to become a pastor is not a calling centered around authority or power. It has nothing to do with even having the approval of others. It is a call to sacrifice, servanthood, slavery, and death. Why? Because the bible is looking for people who have experienced the hope, grace, mercy of God found in the gospel that they are saying "I'll die for these people! I'll sacrifice for these people! I'll give myself to these people! I'll lay down my preferences for these people! Because that is how Jesus has loved me."

Now I know there are some of us in this room, this is not your experience with pastors. If anything it is quite the exact opposite. **For some of you, you've seen pastors do exactly what that passage says **not** to do: lord authority over people in a domineering or manipulative way. I want to say I am really sorry for the hurt and pain that has caused. I am sorry for the distrust that is now in you because of the abuse of power and authority. But I want to plead with you to see the bible speaks against that very type of leadership. It outright condemns it while affirming the good types of leadership.**

The bible says the call to become a pastor is a noble one. It is a good one, it is a difficult one, it is a weighty one. It is a call to come and serve the people of God, the church. The very church that Jesus calls his bride. The bride that he died for. It is a weighty call. In that passage we read earlier from Hebrews 13, it says one day we as your pastors will have to stand before Jesus and give an account of how we have led and served you. Jesus cares so deeply about who is leading the people he gave up his life for, he's going to ask every single one of us on how we have loved and served his church, the bride.

Let's keep going. 1 Tim 3:2

Now the overseer is to be above reproach,

This means there are no glaring sins or unrepentance. No one pastor is perfect but there should not be a pattern of unrepentant sin in their life. It should never be we present someone to become a pastor to you guys and your response is "umm do they know about _____?" Because they are above reproach. People should be excited about this person leading them. They should trust him and believe in him and have no problem giving them the benefit of the doubt. That happens when someone is above reproach.

Verse 3.

faithful to his wife

Another way to say this is they are a one-woman man. Now to be clear, this does not mean a pastor has to be married. It's talking about his character. It means they are faithful to one person. He is not marked by flirtation or inappropriate relationships with people he's not married to. He is not marked by fantasies of others. He is not marked by flirtation.

Next is temperate, self-controlled. This means they have enough discipline that they're not controlled by things. They are not ruled by their desires or feelings. They are ruled by their love for Jesus. This means they may enjoy cheering on the Vols but not lose their mind and temper when the Vols lose (which happens a lot). They may enjoy food but they are not a glutton. They may enjoy working out but they don't build their whole life around it.

Next is respectable. Some translations use the word "sensible" here. It means he has good judgement. There is not a massive gap between how he sees himself and how he actually is. **So how many of you have watched the first three episodes of American Idol? Inevitably, there are people on the first three episodes of American Idol that 100% do not see themselves accurately. There are people who think they sound one way when they sing, and absolutely do not sound that way. Or anywhere close, really. I bring that up to say that that should never be the case with a pastor. A pastor should not have areas of his life that he thinks are amazing and are 100% not amazing." A pastor has to see himself well, he has to understand where he's weak, he has to understand where he's strong, he has to be dialed in to how God has made him. He sees himself well and is worthy of respect. So it's not that a pastor doesn't have weaknesses. It's that they are **aware of** their weaknesses, seeking to grow in them, and **are open to** people pointing out their weaknesses.**

Next is hospitable. It means he loves people. He loves to care for people. He loves those who are completely different from him. He has a genuine concern for people's lives and wellbeing. It means they want you to come to

their house for dinner so they can know what is going on in your heart. It has nothing to do with how well they have decorated their house but a posture they have towards people and loving them.

Next is able to teach. This means a pastor needs to be able to take truths from the Scriptures and unpack them for you in a way that makes sense to you and helps you apply them. This doesn't necessarily mean he has to be an excellent public speaker, it does mean he needs to have an understanding of the bible where he can explain it clearly.

Next is he is not violent but gentle. He is not quarrelsome. This means your pastor does not defend his every opinion with the same degree of intensity. A pastor needs to be able to see nuances and understand what are primary issues versus secondary and tertiary issues. It means a pastor should be quick to listen and slow to speak. It means your pastor shouldn't be constantly looking for conflict. He is not trying to show how smart he is, how right he is. He is not waiting to pounce on people for not being perfect in real life or on Twitter or Facebook.

Next is he not a lover of money. This does not mean he doesn't *make* money. It does not mean he doesn't have money. It means he is not controlled by money. He sees money for what it is, a tool to be used to love others and serve others. Translation: None of our pastors in our church family should be rocking \$2000 sneakers. (This is not a made up example unfortunately)

Next is he must manage his own family well. Another translation says manage his own household well. This doesn't mean in order to be a pastor, you have to have children. This does mean that your home is a proving ground for ministry. So if you are single and have roommates, are you loving your roommates well, are you cleaning up your house after yourself or your roommates. Are you paying the bills on time. Are the relationships around you flourishing? Do people feel they can confess the things they

struggle to you? Do people come to you for encouragement and being reminded of the gospel? Do people love Jesus more because you are in their life? If you are married and don't have kids, does your spouse feel like you are constantly pushing them to love Jesus. Do you make sure each week you have quality time with them. If you have kids, it means your pastor should see themselves parenting their kids and not babysitting them. It means he is living out the gospel in front of his kids, thanking Jesus for the wins and admitting the failures. This part simply states: a person can't be a pastor if their life is characterized by chaos and disorder. It can't be that someone is good at being a pastor but bad at life.

Next is he must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. The role of a pastor is not for someone who is a new follower of Jesus. Because God doesn't want him to get puffed up with pride. Your pastor needs to know he's weak, and that if he is strong, he acknowledges that strength is not in and of himself. There is no swagger about him. He understands the weightiness of this calling, that he will have to give an account before Jesus one day on how he has loved and served his bride the church.

The last one is **he must also have a good reputation with outsiders.** Basically this is just saying your pastor should not be a hypocrite. How he is at home, around church family, and around those who don't know Jesus is all the same. He can't be a super nice guy to people in his LifeGroup and an absolute jerk to his waiter. He can't be someone that asks how he's cashier is doing each week and not check in on his wife each day on how her day was. He is exactly the same in all arenas of life.

Biblical Process

So 1 Timothy 3 lists a lot of things out. But I want to help you see something: all of them maybe except for able to teach, all of them are *character* traits. Did you notice that? They are not giftings or talents, it's all character of the person. **So for us here at City Church, our pastor in training**

process is a long process. It is not an application form we toss on Craig's List and see who is interested. It is a long process because it takes time to observe someone's character. It takes time to see how they respond to the highs and lows and stress that life brings. It takes time to see how they respond to their own sin and when blind spots in their lives are brought up to their attention. It takes time to observe a person's character. So Marcus has been a pastor in training for 3 years. And that's not because he was secretly a serial murderer—it's because we wanted time to observe his character. Because character matters.

Now the **problem** is that a lot of churches get that exactly backwards. There are people serving as leaders of churches that are there because they're amazing communicators, or because they're very talented musically, or because they're very good at what they do, but they're not qualified at all from a character standpoint. And churches won't remove them because they're so talented. And that's where it goes really bad.

Disqualification

So here in our church family, we use the qualifications in the bible to see if the people we are training up fall into the qualifications laid out for a pastor. And, this is also how we see if our current pastors are living in accordance to what they are called into. So this means we won't ordain people that we don't see are qualified, and if one of our existing pastors no longer exhibit the character of what a pastor should be, that the pattern in their life is in conflict with 1 Tim 3, he will be asked to step down from leading. These qualifications are good for the church family and for the pastor himself. Because if he no longer is qualified, we want to take the time to help him and see what is going on in his life that lead him to this point and remind him of the gospel that every single one of us so desperately need.

What is a Pastor?

So what is a pastor then? Pastor is not just a teacher. It's not just someone who shows up once or twice a week and says something profound. They

are not someone who is here to entertain you. A pastor is not a CEO of the church. They are not called to come up with strategies to grow a big church, to draw a big crowd. **Your pastors are called to love you, to help you grow in maturity in Jesus. You can't measure love with numbers. Eph. 4:12 says pastors are called to equip the church for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ. Our job is to help you grow in maturity and send you out as missionaries to love others and not doing them for you instead.**

So a pastor is a shepherd for the flock of God. Now the idea of shepherds is a foreign one for most of us. Don't think we have many farmers here in our church family. So the idea of tending a sheep is not one we are familiar with. Chickens yes, I know chickens are making a comeback, but not sheeps yet. A shepherd's job is to feed and guard the sheep. A shepherd's job is to keep an eye out for the wolves that would attack the flock. A shepherd's job is to chase down the wandering sheep and bring it back to the flock. All this means the shepherd is amongst the sheep. He should smell like the sheep. This means your pastors should be sharing life with you. It means to be there with you through the highs of life: graduation, getting that new job, birthdays, engagements, babies being born. It also means sharing life with you through the lowest of the lows of life: pain and suffering, loss, miscarriage, divorce, death. It means late night phone calls, it means rushing to the hospital, it means tearful conversations in living rooms.

A pastor is the lead servant of the church. He is called to be faithful (not perfect, there's a big difference) follower of Jesus, for others to follow. **1 Peter 5:1-3**

So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: 2 shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God

would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; **3** not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

We are called to live our lives for you to see what it looks like to thank Jesus for the good gifts, the strength we do have. We are called to live our lives for you to see what it looks like to repent, confess, and ask for Jesus to help in our failures and sin. We are called to point you to Jesus who is perfect, always ready to offer hope, forgiveness, mercy, and grace. And it's a privilege that we get to do this. Because you guys are truly a joy for us to lead and serve.

So hopefully this has given you some context for what a pastor is and what a pastor does. But that being said, most of you in the room aren't pastors. Statistically, the majority of you in the room won't ever *be* pastors. So it begs the question, what should you, as simply a member of our church family, do in response to all of this? I think there are primarily three takeaways for us:

1. **Pray for your pastors.** The simple truth is that the calling of a pastor is far too demanding to do on our own power. For us to become the type of church we are called to be in the Scriptures, it's going to take way more than just us being smart or savvy or good leaders. It's going to take the Holy Spirit at work through us to lead and serve you guys, and equip you to be the Church we're called to be. So if I could humbly request to be added to your personal prayer list periodically, I would love to make that request. As you think about it, we would absolutely love if you could be praying for us as the shepherds of this church family. Pray for our hearts, that we wouldn't be deceived by sin. Pray for our minds, that we would be filled with knowledge and wisdom as to what's best for our church. Pray for our families, that we wouldn't neglect them in the name of ministry. We would love to ask for your persistent prayer for us as we serve you.

2. **Communicate with your pastors.** I mean this *two* ways. First, come and tell us if you have concerns or feedback about how we are leading or about our church and the direction it's heading. Our doors and our calendars are always open, and we'd love to hear from you. One of the things that is so heartbreaking is when we have to hear about something that someone was frustrated by second or third or fourth hand, or after they already left the church. So we'd love for you to communicate with us anything, whether it's good or bad. But then secondly, we'd also ask that you *listen* to us. If we bring a concern *to you* about something, if we engage you on something or try to shepherd you *through* something, would you lend us your ear? I can promise you, there is nothing about our job that gets *easier* as a result of having hard conversations. So would you trust that if we bring something to your attention about you, that we're doing it with your best interest in mind?
3. **Ask your pastors how they're doing.** Let me say first, that you guys do a tremendous job at this. You guys really do see us as your brothers and not as super humans, and that's evident in how you check in with us and ask us how we're doing. I don't know what it is, but in general, people tend to go "oh I'm sure they're doing good—they are a *pastor* after all." It's like people assume we only ever have incredible relationships with Jesus because we have a direct line to God or something. That's not true. Can't tell you how many times I've been in a hard season and had one of you go to dinner with me and just ask, genuinely, "how are you doing?" There are times where you just asking that question brings happy tears to my eyes. So please, continue doing exactly that.

That being said, like I mentioned earlier, this is all working up to us ordaining a new third pastor of our church family, Marcus Williamson...

Ordination

So today, we are going to ordain Marcus. Marcus has been in the pastor in training process since 2016. In observing his life, we see his life is consistent to the qualifications laid out in 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1, and 1 Peter 5. We have seen him struggle, we have seen him repent, we have seen him love and serve his wife Melanie and his LifeGroup. We can affirm Jesus' calling for him to become a pastor. Since then, we have asked members of our church family multiple times to bring any concerns they have with Marcus becoming a pastor in our church family. And we had none. I'm going to ask Marcus to come up to the front. Families and Marcus' LifeGroup, you guys can come on up to the front as well. We're going to pray together as a church family that Jesus will continue to grow Marcus, as he step into this position in our church family. Today we are going to ordain Marcus to become a pastor of our church family. Let us pray.