Skills for Pastoral Ministry
Scripture: Titus 1
Code: BQ71410

“For the overseer must be above reproach as God’s steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.” (Titus 1:7–9)

Because preaching and teaching of Scripture are spiritual gifts, bestowed sovereignly on servants of God through the Holy Spirit (Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:28), and because pastors must be “able to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 2:24), it clearly follows that every elder is so gifted in some way and so commissioned by the Holy Spirit. The sine qua non of ministry is preaching and teaching. Giftedness in this area varies, of course, just as the other spiritual gifts vary in degree from believer to believer. But Scripture is unambiguous that *every* true elder is divinely equipped to preach and teach God’s Word.

The foundation for effective teaching of the Word is the pastor’s own understanding of and obedience to God’s revelation. He must be unwaveringly loyal to Scripture.

Antecho (**holding fast**) means “to strongly cling or adhere to something or someone.” Speaking of spiritual allegiance, Jesus said, “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to [*antecho*] one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon” (Luke 16:13; cf. Matt. 6:24). God’s preachers and teachers are to cling to **the faithful word** with fervent devotion and unflagging diligence.

Word translates *logos*, which refers to the expression of a concept, thought, or truth. It is frequently used of the revealed truth and will of God. Speaking of the enemies of God, Jesus said, “They have done this in order that the word may be fulfilled that is written in their Law, ‘They hated Me without a cause’ ” (John 15:25). Paul spoke of God’s “word of promise” to Abraham: “At this time I will come, and Sarah shall have a son” (Rom. 9:9) and of His judgment: “The Lord will execute His word upon the earth, thoroughly and quickly” (v. 28).

Logos is often used as a synonym for Scripture, the written Word of God. Jesus accused the Pharisees of “invalidating the word of God by [their] tradition which [they had] handed down” (Mark 7:13). To unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem, our Lord clearly identified the Word of God with Scripture,

saying, “Has it not been written in your *Law*, ‘I said, you are gods’? If he called them gods, to whom the *word of God* came (and the *Scripture* cannot be broken), do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?” (John 10:34–36, emphasis added).

Paul spoke of Scripture as “the treasure which [had] been entrusted to” Timothy (2 Tim. 1:14) and as “the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God,” he continues, “and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:15–17). Paul commended the Ephesian elders to “the word of [God’s] grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified” (Acts 20:32). Peter called Scripture “the pure milk of the word,” by which believers “grow in respect to salvation” (1 Pet. 2:2).

Pastors are to love **the faithful word** of God, respect it, study it, believe it, and obey it. It is their spiritual nourishment. They are to be “constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine” (1 Tim. 4:6). That involves more than mere commitment to the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, essential as that is. It is commitment to the authority and sufficiency of God’s Word as the only source of moral and spiritual truth.

An elder’s spiritual leadership in the church is not built on his natural abilities, his education, his common sense, or his human wisdom. It is built on his knowledge and understanding of Scripture, his **holding fast the faithful word**, and on his submission to the Holy Spirit’s applying the truths of that **word** in his heart and life. A man who is not himself **holding fast** to God’s **faithful word** and committed to live it is not prepared to preach it or teach it. The truth of the Word must be woven into the very fabric of his thinking and living. Like the apostles in the early church, spiritually effective pastors must devote themselves “to prayer, and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4).

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