



Christ's Covenant Church Publication Series

WHO CAN BE A PASTOR AT CHRIST'S COVENANT CHURCH?

by Pastor Larry E. McCall

INTRODUCTION

Christ has shown His kindness in giving pastors to our church (Ephesians 4:11). We need pastors. Pastors serve our church in a variety of crucially important ways: teaching us the Word of God, leading us in fulfilling our mission, equipping us for carrying out our ministries, protecting us from heresy, division and immorality, as well as providing Christ-reflecting examples in living the Christian life.

Every so often, we sense the need for more pastors in our church. The Lord may call one of our pastors to another part of His harvest field or even call one of our pastors "home" to glory. Although no man can truly fill another man's shoes, the Lord in His grace usually raises up new pastors to carry on the ministries begun by those pastors He has moved on. In addition, as our church grows in size, we sense the need for more shepherds to care for a growing number of sheep.

But, how do we correctly ascertain just who these "gifts" are that the Lord is giving our church to serve in the ministry of pastoring His flock at CCC? This little publication has been written to guide us in the process of answering the question "Who Can be a Pastor at Christ's Covenant Church?" Read through it prayerfully asking the Lord to guide our current elders and the whole church membership in being faithful and discerning to His calling of the right men to serve our church. And, by the way, the terms "elder," "overseer," and "pastor" are used interchangeably in this publication. All three titles are used of the same ministry in the New Testament.

PASTORAL CANDIDATES NEED TO BE EVALUATED BY THE CURRENT LEADERS AND MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH

Why is Evaluation so Important?

The Bible teaches that it is Jesus Christ, the Head of the church, who gives pastors and teachers to the church (Eph. 4:11). Paul said that it was the Holy Spirit who made men overseers (Acts 20:28). Often, the Lord places a "desire" for pastoral ministry within the man He is giving to the church as a pastor (1 Tim. 3:1). That inward sense of "calling" can be an encouragement to the pastoral candidate to persevere through an evaluation process.

This "call to the ministry," however, is subjective and should be objectively confirmed by the church that best knows the candidate. A man's readiness to assume the crucial ministry of shepherding the flock of God should not be left to his own feelings alone.

God has not left the church directionless in this important matter of testing a man's readiness to assume pastoral ministry. He has expressly given in His Word necessary standards for those who would become elders in the local church. The primary area of mandatory qualification regards the candidate's character of life. In addition to evaluating the candidate's character of life, the church needs to evaluate his spiritual giftedness and his doctrinal competency. Churches in our era need to carefully heed Paul's directive to Timothy, "Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands" (1 Tim. 5:22).

Who should be Involved in the Evaluation Process?

The Lord Himself is involved. In searching the Scriptures for the answer to this question, we can see that God Himself is involved. As has been previously noted, it is *Christ* who gave "some to be pastors and teachers" (Eph. 4:11), and it is the *Holy Spirit* who makes men "overseers" (Acts 20:28). Certainly, recognition must be given to God's involvement in this process by carefully heeding His Word on the subject. His wise guidance must also be sought. David Larsen

reminds us, “*Nominating committees... should ponder and pray over 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 on their knees if we are to avert total disaster through unqualified leaders*” (Larsen 1991, 41).

The current church leaders also are involved. In the early church it was sometimes the apostle Paul and his co-workers who appointed elders (Acts 14:23). Timothy and Titus were given the responsibility to make sure proper attention was given to the evaluation of pastoral candidates. In our church, the current elders have the responsibility to be intimately involved in the evaluation process of additional leaders. Lord willing, it is those in leadership who have the most maturity in making wise recommendations regarding a man’s fitness for the eldership (Hull 1990, 116). At Christ’s Covenant Church, the existing elders who direct the evaluation process of elder candidates do the bulk of the intensive evaluation.

The church members are involved. The church body as a unit should not be left out of the process. We can find in Acts 6:1-6, 13:1-3, 15:22, and 2 Cor. 8:18-19 examples of whole churches being involved in the process of choosing men for ministries of leadership in the local body. Even if the eldership team does the major work of evaluating pastoral candidates, much weight must be given to the prayerful judgment of the whole church body. “*The congregation among whom a man has lived his Christian life knows best his qualifications, and those whom he will lead must indicate their willingness to follow, or his ministry will be ineffectual*” (Ferguson 1975, 148).

The pastoral candidate himself should take an active role. He should be consulted as to his desire (or lack thereof) for the ministry of overseer (1 Tim. 3:1). There may be certain issues or questions that others have regarding the man that he alone can appropriately address.

In summary, those involved in the process of evaluating and selecting elders are 1) God Himself, 2) the existing leadership of the church, 3) the local body as a whole, and 4) the man being evaluated.

How does the Evaluation Process Work?

Having prayed for the guidance and wisdom of the Lord, and having narrowed the field to those men who indicate both a desire for the eldership and the maturity necessary for such a task, the work of detailed evaluation can begin. The current elders of the church constitute the evaluation group. The elders should consider each candidate individually, with loving and open discussion of the man’s character, spiritual gifts, and doctrinal integrity in comparison with the requirements mentioned in the Scriptures. It is often helpful to have each elder do his own personal evaluation of the candidate using written evaluation forms such as the one attached to this booklet. The members of the evaluation group, having written down their own thoughtful discernment regarding the man’s character in each of the areas listed, may then get together to share their observations with one another. With the candidate’s permission, the group can then openly discuss together the candidate’s readiness for pastoral ministry. As members of the evaluation group share their observations, the picture of the man’s readiness becomes clearer. It may be necessary to ask the candidate’s permission to ask for the evaluation of others who know him best, such as his wife and those in his Life Group or some other accountability group. People who know the candidate in business relationships or neighborhood relationships may be asked to give their observations regarding the qualification of “having a good reputation with outsiders.” Having garnered the input of all the members of the evaluation group as well as selected others, the candidate himself may be asked to do a *self*-evaluation regarding his character of life.

Let me point out that the evaluation group is being entrusted with a very precious commodity – a man’s reputation. Those involved in detailed evaluation should handle their observations with humility, grace, and confidentiality. Harsh and bigoted talk or gossip should be reason enough to ask a member of the evaluation group to step down from this task. Indeed, truth needs to be spoken on this critical issue of discerning those qualified to lead Christ’s sheep, but the truth always must be spoken in love (Eph. 4:15).

Having come to a consensus among the evaluation group, the candidate who has met the biblical qualifications may be recommended to the church body as a whole.

Simply passing the evaluation of some of the members of the church does not yet make a man an elder. His nomination still needs the confirmation of the congregation. At a duly called meeting of the members of the church, the elders who have served as the evaluation group should make their recommendation of the elder candidate. In

receiving the elders' recommendation, the church body in turn needs to go before the Lord in prayer, asking for corporate direction and wisdom. With God's help, the church body should then vote to recognize or reject the recommendation of the evaluation group. If the candidate receives the required votes (at Christ's Covenant Church, 75% of the members voting) he may then be received into the eldership.

WHAT GUIDELINES ARE USED IN EVALUATING A PASTORAL CANDIDATE?

Thankfully, the Holy Spirit has not left us without direction in looking for an answer to this important question. We are not left with the need to come up with our own subjective list of preferences in a pastoral candidate. In fact, we must not. The Holy Spirit has already given us His guidelines for evaluating men for pastoral ministry. His standards are already delineated in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. We should not require less than what the Scriptures have laid out. Neither should we go beyond the Scriptures requiring an unrealistic perfectionism in our pastoral candidates.

In depending on the standards of 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, those evaluating a candidate will notice two key truths about these lists. First, the qualities listed are necessary if a man is to be set aside for the eldership. While neither of these lists should be considered exhaustive (otherwise they would be identical lists), they each provide a mandatory standard that cannot be ignored. Second, the lists are "ordinary" rather than "extraordinary." What I mean by that is this: With the possible exceptions of "able to teach" and "not a recent convert," all the character traits that *must* be true of an elder *should* be true of *all* believers. These character traits are there to show that the pastor is, above all, to be an *example* to the flock. The lists given in the Pastoral Epistles do not set up a separate, "higher" standard for elders, but rather indicate that the elder is to be *exemplary* in "the normal Christian life." "*As far as morals are concerned, the New Testament has only one standard for both clergy and laity and not two*" (Lenski 1961, 579). Why? Pastor John MacArthur has said it concisely: "*Whatever the leaders are, the people become*" (MacArthur 1986, 186).

EVALUATING THE CANDIDATES' CHARACTER

The following is a description of each of the character traits found in the Pastoral Epistles. These qualities are arranged in categories for ease of use in the evaluation process.

General Reputation

- Above Reproach

Paul begins the list of character traits necessary for a man to be an elder with that of being "above reproach" (1 Tim 3:2). The Greek here is a compound word that means "not to be laid hold of." It is translated "above reproach" by the NIV and the ESV. It could also be translated "*irreprehensible*" or "*unassailable*." The concept is that "*no handle is given to anyone by which to injure his reputation*" (Kent 1956, 169). The point is not that this man is expected to live a life of sinless perfection. But, in the normal pattern of his life, is there a long pattern of consistency in living a godly life? Enemies may bring accusations against an elder, but when these critical accusations are investigated fairly, they should be proven groundless.

- Blameless

In Titus 1:6 Paul uses a similar word to describe the necessary general reputation of the pastoral candidate. He must be "*blameless*." Again a compound word is used in Greek. It means "*not to call in (for the purpose of accusing)*." Another good translation would be "*unaccused*" (Malle 1947, 39). "Blameless" is nearly synonymous with "above reproach" in this context. In order to know what to consider in evaluating this *general* character trait of being "above reproach" or "blameless," we need to proceed down the lists given in the 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. The general qualification is worked out and illustrated by the other necessary traits that are given. So, gaining an understanding of the rest of the needed qualifications will explain this opening requirement.

Reputation in the Home

- A “One Woman Man”

This qualification is translated “*the husband of but one wife*” in the NIV. The ESV has “*the husband of one wife*.” The meaning of this trait has been highly debated over the centuries. Some have thought that it is a prohibition against polygamy. This is a highly questionable interpretation, however, in that polygamy was forbidden in the Roman Empire at the time of the writing of the Pastoral Epistles (Kent 1956, 176). Others have thought that this qualification is given as a prohibition of a remarried widower entering the eldership of a local church. This interpretation is also very weak when one considers that in this same letter Paul counsels young widows to remarry (1 Tim. 5:14). The apostle was hardly opposed to remarriage after the death of the first spouse. Is this qualification a prohibition against previously divorced and remarried men from entering pastoral ministry? While this proposed explanation deserves serious consideration, it seems to miss the heart of the matter.

Two factors that aid in clearing away the clouds of confusion on this issue are 1) the grammar and 2) the context. In the Greek, there is no article with this qualification. That means that the emphasis is “qualitative.” Paul was interested in the *character* or *quality* of the man (Malles 1947, 41). This fits the context as well. Remember that the apostle is emphasizing that elders must lead lives that are exemplary to the other believers in the church. Pastors are required to be exemplary husbands (marriage is assumed but not mandatory), each faithful to his wife. “*An overseer or elder must be a man of unquestioned morality, one who is entirely true and faithful to his one and only wife*” (Hendriksen 1957, 121).

This quality is especially critical in a society in which marital unfaithfulness is common. In the Roman Empire “*the happy marriage was the astonishing exception*” (Barclay 1975, 78). Demosthenes is quoted as writing, “*Mistresses we keep for the sake of pleasure, concubines for the daily care of the body, but wives to bear us legitimate children*” (Fee 1988, 84 note). This being the situation, one can readily see why Paul would require Timothy and Titus to look for men who would be examples of marital faithfulness to the other men in the churches.

Today’s society also is known for the increasing breakdown of the family. So many marriages are wrecked by the unfaithfulness of one or both spouses. How important for our church to take seriously the mandatory requirement that elders be known as men faithful to their wives. We need leaders who will *show* by their own examples what it means to have godly marriages. In looking for elders, we must limit our search to men who provide models for the kind of marriages that every married couple in the church should have.

- A Good Manager of His Own Family

The apostle Paul states another necessary quality for becoming an elder as “he must manage his own family well” (1 Tim. 3:4). It is critically important that churches deal honestly with this qualification for pastoral ministry when evaluating candidates. Does this candidate care for his family in way that would reflect and represent Christ? Barclay appropriately asserts,

Christianity begins at home. It is no virtue for any man to be so engaged in public work that he neglects his own home. All the church service in the world will not atone for neglect of a man’s own family.
(Barclay 1975, 234)

This is the only qualification given in Paul’s letter to Timothy that is expanded with a question. The apostle asks in rhetorical fashion, “*If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?*” (1 Tim. 3:5). There seem to be two reasons for this being a necessary character trait for the eldership. First, there is the issue of example. The elder must be a man who can demonstrate by his own example what it means to be a godly husband and father. The other men in the church will be watching the elder and his family to better understand how to live the Christian life in

family relationships. Will they see a biblical example of godly leadership? Our culture has so few role models of godly family life. It's vitally important that the pastor provide this example to the other husbands and dads in the church.

Second, there is the issue of the elder candidate "proving" his abilities in caring leadership. The rhetorical question Paul asks is an argument from the lesser to the greater. When wondering if a particular man is capable of managing church affairs, those evaluating him should ask, "*How does he manage his own family?*" That ought to show whether he can take upon himself the care over the affairs of the church (Hendriksen 1957, 120). He must be able to manage the "little flock" of his own family before he can manage the "larger flock" of the church. Evaluating a man's handling of his home will reveal much of his capacity to provide the loving leadership needed in Christ's church. Homer Kent pointedly states, "*deficiency in these matters at home disqualifies a man from serving in a ruling capacity in the church*" (Kent 1956, 181).

- Having Obedient Children

In evaluating a man's leadership and reputation in the home, consideration must also be given to how he is rearing his children. Do the candidate's children "*obey him with proper respect*" (1 Tim. 3:4)? Are his children known for their submission to their father's loving leadership and discipline? Paul states in Titus 1:6 that the elder's children must not be "*open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.*" If a man's own children do not respect their father and do not submit to his leadership, then we would be unwise to place that man in a position of church leadership, naively assuming that the members of the church will respect him and submit to his leadership. Not only is having wild and disobedient children a negative comment about a man's character in the home, but it is also a great hindrance to ministering to others. Ward writes, "*Every time he offered a rebuke or made an appeal he would be open to the charge, 'What about your own children?'*" (Ward 1974, 239).

In Titus 1:6 the NIV reads, "*whose children believe.*" There needs to be some clarification on this biblical requirement for eldership. This word may be translated not only "*believe*" but also "*faithful.*" See, for example, Hebrews 2:17, where Jesus is called a "*faithful*" high priest. Does the context in Titus 1:6 suggest that children be "*faithful*" (to their father) or that they be "*regenerate*" (Hillstrom 1980, 147)? The point that Paul seems to be making is that the men being considered for the eldership have children who are not known for being wild and insubmissive, but children who are known to be obedient and faithful to their father's leadership and discipline.

- Hospitable

In examining the home life of the elder candidate, we also need to consider how a man uses his home and possessions in regard to others. Is the man being evaluated known as a "hospitable" man (1 Tim. 3:2 and Titus 1:8)? The word Paul uses for this requirement literally means "*friend of strangers.*" The elder candidate must not be a recluse. He must be "approachable." Does his normal lifestyle show that this is a man with an open heart and an open home? Has the candidate proven that he is willing to share his own time and possessions out of a concern for others?

In the apostolic days, hospitality was important not only as a matter of social welfare, but also because of the needs of traveling ministers (3 John) and of Christians who were refugees due to persecution. If the elders of the church had closed hearts and closed homes to those in need, how then, could the members of the flock be expected to show Christlike love to those in need?

Although social conditions change from era to era and from place to place, elders today must also be godly examples of open hearts and open homes. The elders must model for the church that Christlike ministry of welcoming those in need. Is the pastoral candidate known for being "hospitable?"

Reputation Personally

In both 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 Paul gives qualifications that refer not so much to a man's relationship with others as to who he is as a person. Those responsible for evaluating candidates for pastoral ministry must also consider whether these candidates are "above reproach" in each of the necessary qualifications explained below.

- Temperate

In 1 Tim. 3:2 Paul states that the overseer must be "*temperate*." The Greek word originally meant "*abstaining from wine*" and later was broadened to include sobriety in judgment. It denotes being habitually wakeful or vigilant and opposed to all kinds of excess (Fairbairn 1956, 137). In his tastes and habits, the elder must not be self-indulgent, but moderate. He must be balanced physically, morally, mentally, and in all his life habits (Hendriksen 1957, 122). In considering the elder candidate, those evaluating should consider the "steadiness" of the man. Does he have his physical appetites under control? Is he balanced emotionally, not overreacting to stressful situations that arise? Is he the type of man who is balanced, not racing after every religious fad that comes along? Churches need men with character, men who keep a steady hand on the helm of their own lives and who will therefore be able to keep a steady hand on the helm of the church.

- Self-controlled

In 1 Tim. 3:2 and Titus 1:8 the apostle uses a word which is translated "*self-controlled*" (NIV and ESV), "*sober*" (KJV), "*sensible*" (NASB in Titus 1:8), and "*prudent*" (NASB in 1 Tim. 3:2). This necessary character trait carries the idea of "*not swayed by sudden impulses over which he exercises no mastery*" (Hendriksen 1957, 123). The pastoral candidate must have his inner life under control, being serious and discrete. Though an elder need not be long-faced, he must avoid having the reputation of being a clown. The people of the church may enjoy laughing at the funny elder, but they probably will hesitate to come to him when they have serious problems (Kent 1956, 177).

- Disciplined

The last quality mentioned in Titus 1:8 is related to the one above. In fact, the NASB and RSV translate the Greek word "egkrate" as "*self-controlled*." The NIV and ESV use the word "*disciplined*," and the KJV has "*temperate*." The word means, "*to hold (oneself) in*." The concept is that the elder candidate must be in control of his appetites, passions, his speech habits, and his eyes (Malles 1947, 48). Whereas the word in the preceding qualification seems to refer more to the man's inner life, this qualification seems to address the man's actions. Is the candidate a self-disciplined person in what he looks at, in what he says, in how he acts?

- Respectable

The Greek word κοσμιον [kosmion] found in 1 Tim. 3:2 is translated "*respectable*" in the NIV, ESV and NASB. The root meaning of this word has to do with "*order*" (Hendriksen 1957, 123). It is related to the word that means "*to arrange*." The elder must not be a disorderly or unorganized man. "*The ministry is no place for the man whose life is a continual confusion of unaccomplished plans and unorganized activity*" (Kent 1956, 178). Those evaluating a candidate for pastoral ministry should take the time to ask, "*Is this man a well organized person? How is he at managing his schedule and his finances? Is he organized in leading meetings, in delegating responsibility, in his method of teaching?*" Much frustration can be avoided by evaluating this area of reputation before a man is set aside for the eldership.

- Not Given to Much Wine

The pastor must be an example of godly living to the flock. This includes his usage of such things as wine [alcoholic drinks]. Paul literally says that an elder must not "*sit (long) beside wine*." In the ancient world, drunkenness was a vice of which the elder could not be guilty. In the modern era one can think of such

addictions as alcohol, drugs, pornography, tobacco, caffeine, television, food, and even work. Every elder candidate would be wise to consider the testimony of Paul himself who asserted, *“I will not be mastered by anything”* (1 Cor. 6:12). In a day in which a growing number of people are given over to addictions, the pastor must provide an example of a person who is free in Christ and not enslaved to any addicting habit.

- Not a Lover of Money

In 1 Tim. 3:3 Paul uses a word that means *“not a lover of silver.”* Even if a pastor is salaried by the church, his motivation for ministry cannot be the money he receives. The pastor must serve out of love for Christ and love for His dearly-bought people. Greed is a mark of a false teacher (1 Tim. 6:5-10), not a characteristic of a man of God. Peter writes that elders are to be *“not greedy for money, but eager to serve”* (1 Pet. 5:2). In our materialistic society, the elder must *“wage an unceasing battle to keep material things in their proper perspective. The love of money often leads to other sins”* (Kent 1956, 180).

In Titus 1:7 Paul states this qualification in slightly different terms. He says that the elder must not be *“pursuing dishonest gain”* (NIV) or *“greedy for gain”* (ESV). This compound word *“describes a man who does not care how he makes money, so long as he makes it”* (Barclay 1975, 237).

Questions to ask in evaluating the candidate may include the following: Is he stingy with his money? Does he complain about what he does not have? Does he treat with preference those in the church who are wealthy?

- One Who Loves What is Good

This character trait, found in Titus 1:8, is literally *“a lover of good.”* Here is a man who is virtuous, loving what is beneficial and helpful to others (Hendriksen 1957, 348). This quality can be contrasted to that of those people in the end times who will not be “lovers of good” (2 Tim. 3:3). With this quality in view, the evaluators should notice if the elder candidate is the type of person who appreciates what is good in the lives of others. Does he encourage and compliment others when he sees some good attribute or action in the person’s life? Does he enjoy doing good things for others? On the negative side, the elder candidate should not find evil things amusing. He should enjoy only what is wholesome and pure. Is this reflected in his speech and in his entertainment?

- Holy

Included in the list of necessary qualities in Titus 1:8 is that of *“holy”* (NIV, ESV, and KJV). The NASB translates the Greek word *“devout.”* The meaning is that the elder must be a man who is pure in his relationship to God. He is committed to God and is *“above reproach”* in that his life is not marked by the pollution of sin. He carries out his responsibilities out of loyalty to God and affection for God. Is the elder candidate known to be a man who loves God and who wants very much to please God in all of life? The elder must be an example to the rest of the flock of what it means to be dedicated to God, wanting to do *His will*.

- Not a Recent Convert

In 1 Tim. 3:6 Paul uses a phrase that means, *“not newly planted.”* The idea is that the pastoral candidate should not be new to the Christian life. Maturity in the faith is essential for the church leader. Why is this maturity required? The apostle explains, *“he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil.”* The concept is that if a novice is placed in a position of leadership, he may become *“swell-headed”* (Fee 1988, 83). He may become blinded, or *“wrapped up in smoke”* (Hendriksen 1957, 127), losing sight of reality in the pride of his sudden elevation to a position of leadership.

“Just as Satan fell through pride, so the novice, through pride, could fall from a place of effective

ministry” (Hillstrom 1980, 136).

There is no good reason to rush a new convert into a pastoral ministry. Such a move could be dangerous for the neophyte, and if he indeed does fall through pride, there could also be great damage done to the church as a whole. While it is acknowledged that in a recently planted church (such as Titus was dealing with in Crete) there might not be any men of great spiritual maturity, there should be given serious consideration to a man’s relative maturity in the faith. Has this man proven that he can provide the kind of model that others in the church should follow? It is wise for churches to heed the warning of 1 Tim. 5:22, “*Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of other.*” “*Better to be safe than sorry*” is a good maxim in the consideration of church leaders. Precious souls are at stake.

Reputation in Inter-Personal Relationships

The next group of necessary character traits to be considered has to do with how the elder candidate relates to other people. Those responsible for the evaluation process must give serious consideration to how the pastoral candidate relates to other people.

- Not Violent

In 1 Tim. 3:3 and in Titus 1:7 the apostle writes that the elder must not be “*violent*” (NIV and ESV). The ESV has not “*quick-tempered*” in Titus 1:7. The Greek word denotes “*a pugnacious, quick-tempered individual who strikes back with his fists when annoyed*” (Kent 1956, 179). It may be appropriate to require that an elder not only be guiltless of actually hitting people with his fists, but also that he be not guilty of verbally browbeating people. The pastor cannot treat stubborn or disobedient members of his family or the church with rough treatment physically or verbally. In 2 Tim. 2:24-25 Paul writes, “*And the Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct.*” Can this be said of the way the elder candidate treats other people, even people who give him a hard time? If a man is known to be violent, he cannot be an elder.

- But Gentle

Connected with the preceding quality is this one of being “*gentle*.” The word in Greek is the opposite of being “*violent*.” It connotes a man who is patient and forbearing. He is not domineering, but “*yielding*.” He is conciliatory, being “*satisfied with less than is due him*” (Hillstrom 1980, 133). The concept of being “*gentle*” is that the elder is not demanding his “*personal rights*,” but is willing to be flexible with his rights or preferences in order to get along with others. Christ is referred to as being “*gentle*” in 2 Cor. 10:1.

This character trait needs to be given serious evaluation. Two common areas of temptation for those in leadership position are 1) the love of money, and 2) the love of power. Concerning this latter temptation, it must be evident that the man being considered for pastoral ministry is not consumed with grabbing power. He must not be forcing his own plans, his own opinions, but must be willing to submit himself to the leadership of the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ. Though never compromising the truth, he must be willing to recognize that his own opinions and preferences might not be those of Christ. The pastor must be willing to yield his own ways out of submission to Christ and love for His people. Does the elder candidate demonstrate this quality in situations when he does not get his “*own way*?” How does he treat people who are standing in opposition to him? He must be above reproach in this area if he is to be included in the eldership of a local church.

- Not Quarrelsome

The elder must be someone who would rather promote peace than stir up an argument. Lenski comments that this word in Greek refers to a person who is “*not the fighting kind*” (Lenski 1961, 585). In his dealings with others the elder must be able to handle differences well, not wanting to hurt or mistreat others in a spirit of retaliation. He must be patient, even in situations of rejection, ridicule or scorn

(Hillstrom 1980, 135). If a pastoral candidate is known for being contentious or argumentative—loving to debate, the church must not select him as an elder.

- Not Overbearing

Titus 1:7 teaches that the man being evaluated for the ministry of an elder must not be “*overbearing*” (NIV). The ESV translates this qualification as “*arrogant*.” The NASB and KJV use “*not self-willed*.” It is actually a compound word that means to “*take pleasure in self*.” The man who is “*overbearing*” is “*self-assertive, arrogant, and unaccommodating to others*” (Malles 1947, 44). Is the candidate for the pastorate so concerned with pleasing himself and having his own way that he runs rough shod over the feelings and ideas of others? Then he is not yet ready to become a pastor of Christ’s people. The elder cannot be “*lording it*” over those under his care, but rather should be an example of Christlikeness (1 Pet. 5:3).

- Not Quick-tempered

In Titus 1:7 Paul adds the requirement of being “*not quick-tempered*.” The elder must have his anger under control. As Guthrie states, the elder cannot be “*hot-headed*” (Guthrie 1978, 185). This qualification is similar to some of the preceding and must also be taken into consideration when evaluating how the elder candidate relates to other people. Does he have his anger in control, or is he “*touchy*,” with a temper that easily flares up?

- Upright

Another mandatory character trait that Paul includes in Titus is that of being “*upright*” (NIV and ESV). The NASB and KJV translate the Greek word as “*just*.” The concept is that of being “*righteous*” or “*keeping the law*.” Hendriksen suggests “*fair – carrying out one’s duty to others*” (Hendriksen 1957, 348). Is the man being evaluated known for being fair in how he treats others? Are his relationships with others pure from personal or self-serving bias?

- A Good Reputation with Outsiders

In evaluating the inter-personal relationships of the pastoral candidate, consideration needs to be given not only to how the man relates to people *within* the church, but also how he relates to those *outside* the church. Paul writes in 1 Tim. 3:7, “*He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap.*” Although the pastoral candidate might not be considered “*popular*” among the unsaved in the community, he should still be respected by those with whom he has personal and business dealings. “*Those in the community should not be able to point a condemning finger at the elder candidate*” (Hillstrom 1980, 137). Those in the community who are acquainted with the man under consideration should not be able to laugh and accuse mockingly, “*Hah! They’re considering him for the pastorate?*” Satan could well use this poor testimony as a trap to hurt the man as well as to hurt the reputation and ministry of the church. It would be quite appropriate (with the candidate’s permission) to inquire of his reputation in his place of work, in the neighborhood in which he lives, and in his places of business dealings. Do people in the community respect him as an honest and reliable person? If not, why not?

EVALUATING THE CANDIDATE’S DOCTRINE

Evaluating Competency in Doctrine

A crucial qualification of the elder is that of being able to handle the Word of God. Titus 1:9 says, “*He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.*” The Apostle Paul gave this passionate charge to Timothy: “*watch your . . . doctrine closely*” (1 Tim. 4:16). Peter wrote, “*If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God*” (1 Pet. 4:11). With these

Scriptures in view, those evaluating a pastoral candidate should require that he have an exemplary understanding of the Bible both in its breadth and depth (Traill 1975, 242). His knowledge of God's Word should be readily useful in encouraging the saints as well as in refuting those who are contradicting God's truths (Titus 1:9). This will require not only a basic knowledge of the contents of the Bible, but also an ability to recall those contents in an organized fashion with appropriate applications.

In addition to this competency in Bible knowledge and usage, the candidate should be in large agreement with the doctrinal position of the church. Christ's Covenant Church is not a "*creedal*" church, but does hold to the London Confession of Faith of 1689 as "*a general statement of those truths we hold in common.*" A candidate must state in writing any differences he has with that written confession. These differences are taken into consideration in the evaluation process. If they are deemed to be minor differences, they may not impede his progress into the eldership. Major differences, however, may make it unwise (even dangerous) to add that candidate to the pastorate of Christ's Covenant Church.

The candidate's understanding of the Bible and his doctrinal competency can be evaluated by several means. Assuming that he is being "*raised up from within*" the local body, there should be various opportunities to ascertain his biblical and theological understanding. For example, over the course of time, there will be many private discussions of biblical truths between the candidate and various church leaders. Much can be ascertained about someone's biblical understanding and theological convictions by paying attention to what is said and emphasized in private conversations and in times of open discussion in various contexts (Life Education classes, small group Bible studies, etc.). In addition to these informal comments, there will be opportunities to evaluate the candidate's abilities in this area by carefully listening to his public teaching and preaching. At Christ's Covenant Church, candidates to pastoral ministry are given opportunities to use and test their teaching gifts by teaching in Bible studies, Life Education classes, children's and teen's Sunday School classes, and preaching from the pulpit. Those responsible for evaluating the candidate should be able to glean much by how the pastoral aspirant handles the Word of God in these situations. A third means of discerning the candidate's understanding of doctrine is the utilization of an "*ordination council.*" While we do not necessarily require this of all pastoral candidates, if there are questions that remain, a council can be called. The current pastors of the church form an "*ordination council,*" questioning the candidate with the members of the church in attendance. This time of testing usually comes late in the training process and is usually followed by a recommendation by the church leadership to the church body regarding the man's readiness for pastoral ministry.

EVALUATING THE CANDIDATE'S COMPETENCY

Evaluating Spiritual Gifts

Long ago, John Gill noted, that "*God never calls a man to any service but he gives him the abilities for it*" (Gill 1978, 579). If God has indeed prepared a man for the ministry of a pastor in His church, then that man will have the necessary gift of being "*able to teach*" (1 Tim. 3:2). As was previously discussed, the candidate must have a mature understanding of the contents and doctrines of the Bible. Now the question is, "*Can the candidate effectively communicate those truths?*" Many people have debated what it actually means to be "*able to teach.*" The ability to teach varies widely. Very few men can preach and teach like a Spurgeon or a Piper or a Mahaney or other well-known and effective preachers. While not wanting to require the pastoral candidate to have his gifts in full-blown measure, he should already have a proven ability to teach with some effectiveness. A simple question to ask is, "*Are people learning when this candidate teaches and preaches?*" Are the listeners able to repeat back some element of the truths they were taught by this man? Do they have a growing understanding of how the truths he was presenting affect their everyday lives?

To evaluate the aspirant's giftedness in teaching, he must be given opportunities to test that gift. It will be wise for church leaders to give the pastoral candidate ample time and opportunities to teach and preach in local church contexts. In many cases, at least a year or two of ministering in the local body would be recommended. "*Having viewed his performance for at least a year, they will probably be able to decide fairly objectively if they should ordain him at once, ask him to wait a while longer, or suggest to him that he is not suited for the ministry and should explore some other vocation*" (Anderson 1998, 59).

Other gifts to be tested may include leadership, administration, mercy, etc. Thought needs to be given as to what ministry the man is being called. Does he have the gifts necessary to carry out that ministry?

EVALUATING THE CANDIDATE'S COMPATIBILITY

While not necessarily a “*chapter and verse*” issue, it seems wise to evaluate whether or not this particular pastoral candidate fits in the setting of a particular church and its staff and other leaders. Every church that has been in existence for a period of time has already established certain values and philosophies of ministry. Unless a church has already determined that it wants to change in certain ways, it may be unwise to bring in a new pastor or pastoral staff member who has noticeably different values, philosophies of ministry, or methods. For example, if a church which is characteristically conservative in its style of worship would call a pastoral candidate who is clearly passionate about contemporary worship, both the church and its new pastor would experience frustration and potential conflict.

This evaluation of compatibility is largely done by asking the candidate key “open” questions regarding what ministries he particularly enjoys, how he likes to see things happen, how he will know that he is being “*successful*” were he to take this new ministry, etc.

Also, if some of the church’s key leaders have subjective reservations regarding the candidate, it would be prudent to slow down the decision making process until those reservations are satisfied.

Note: A list of sources cited in this document is available upon request from Pastor Larry.

[Attached you will find a chart, listing the various qualifications of an elder. Please feel free to use this as you participate as a member of this church in sharing in the evaluation of our elder candidates.]

ELEDER CANDIDATE EVALUATION SHEET

Person being Evaluated: _____ Date of Evaluation: _____

Evaluating the Pastoral Candidate according to 1 Timothy 3:1-7 & Titus 1:5-9

Weak

Average

Strong

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
General Qualifications										
Above Reproach										
Reputation in the Home										
A "One Woman Man"										
Good Family Manager										
Obedient Children										
Hospitable										
Reputation Personally										
Temperate										
Self-Controlled										
Disciplined										
Respectable										
Not Given to Much Wine										
Not a Lover of Money										
Loves What is Good										
Holy										
Not a Recent Convert										
Reputation in Interpersonal Relationships										
Not Violent										
But Gentle										
Not Quarrelsome										
Not Overbearing										
Not Quick-Tempered										
Upright										
Good Reputation w/Outsiders										
Reputation in Ministry										
Able to Teach										

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