

SG Q 1 Tim 3.1-9 1 Peter 5.1-5

1. What is your previous church background and experience as far as attendance or non-attendance of church? What types of churches did you attend, and their leadership structure? What was especially good? What was particularly difficult? How does that shape your approach to church now?
2. The sermon put service as Elder/Overseer first in terms of one potential area of overall “calling.” Why is “calling” a helpful category for evaluating our service and activities? How often do we see the issue of “calling” occur in scripture? What are some of the key “calling” passages in scripture?
 - a. Acts 16.6-10 is an interesting passage on calling (see below): what are several elements that it raises about calling? (Consider at least: our thoughts vs. God’s, prioritizing God’s “best” for us even while being interested in other things considered “good,” a plurality of people in consideration and decisions, and listening to God’s Spirit.) What are the things you are called to? How might the Spirit tell you that some “good” thing (e.g. your Bithynia), is not part of what he has planned for you?
 - i. Acts 16.6-10, ⁶ And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. ⁷ And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. ⁸ So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. ⁹ And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” ¹⁰ And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. (Acts 16.6-10)
 - b. On the other hand, the quote from Charles Wesley speaks to our personal happiness/contentment in the midst of callings. How does this quote call us to adjust our expectations of callings?
 - i. This taking of His yoke upon us means that we are heartily content that He appoint us our place and work, and that He alone be our reward. Christ has many services to be done: some are easy, others are difficult; some bring honour, others bring reproach; some are suitable to our natural inclinations and temporal interests, others are contrary to both. In some we may please Christ and please ourselves, in others we cannot please Christ except by denying ourselves. Yet the power to do all these things is assuredly given us in Christ, who strengtheneth us.¹
3. The sermon next put service as an Elder/Overseers in terms of character. Is this list, 1 Tim 3.1-7 what you would expect as qualifications for Elder? All the character traits

¹ Witherington, B., III. (1995). *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (216). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

in 1 Tim 3 also occur as calls elsewhere in scripture for all Christian.² What does this correspondence between the call to characteristics for church leaders and all Christians imply? Are these characteristics internal, external or both? How do we speak to ourselves, each other, and our kids about developing such characteristics from a Christ-centered approach or method? What are the regular practices that change or grow our character? *What characteristic has Christ recently been speaking to you about, and what growth and/or setbacks have you recently experienced?

4. Leaders in the church need to have firm convictions about spiritual truth (Deacons: 1 Tim 3.9) and be able to teach them (Elders/Overseers: 1 Tim 3.2). The phrase about deacons “They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience” is something we would want for all Christians despite giftings or callings. How do we grow in this? How do we help our kids grow in it? What is the difference between “convictions” and knowledge? How can you tell?
5. (Note: a more abstract set of questions, make sure you’ve covered questions of personal application, so you don’t spend all your time here.) The sermon argued that what Elders/Overseers need to be able to teach is contextually defined based on denominational connections--and we might add concerns of geography and even historical period. Does this make sense? Would you agree that a Nigerian Presbyterian church will have different needs in an elder’s convictions and teaching ability than a Californian Pentecostal church? Since not all things in scripture are equally clear, yet we are called to search and understand the scriptures, we have to do something with the different positions we come to, e.g. Baptism, etc. Although denominational differences can be seen to undermine Christian unity, do they also help bring out scripture’s fullness? Should these differences be set aside? If not, what role should they play in church life or (not membership) but elder qualifications? Given the practical situation of the church and a multiplicity of formal and informal positions and connections, how do we honor and promote both unity and scriptural convictions?
6. Pray for each other for your growth of callings, character and scriptural convictions.

² For all but one of the characteristics, the correspondence is with the exact word or another root form of that word. “Not violent,” does not have an exact lexical parallel but the Fruit of the Spirit is a call to its opposite.