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A HIGH BAR:
DEVELOPING A PROCESS FOR PASTORAL ORDINATION
AT HICKORY GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH IN
CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

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I dedicate this project to my wife, Holly—without whom this project would have been nothing more than a pipedream.

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PREFACE

The completion of this project would not have been possible without the assistance and support of many individuals. The first of which is my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Had it not been for his saving work in my life and lifelong call to gospel ministry, there would have been no desire to pursue pastoral ministry. I am truly grateful that he opened my blind eyes, granting me grace for faith.

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Finally, I would like to thank Hickory Grove Baptist Church, for the opportunity to be seated at the table among a team of pastors who genuinely love the gospel of grace. It is beyond comprehension that the sovereign plan of the Lord guided our family to this church, but we could not be more thankful. I praise God for their investment in our family.

Blake Maxwell

Charlotte, North Carolina

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

God has called pastors to be sound in both doctrine and character to shepherd his people. The qualifications for such a weighty role are clearly stated in the Bible and are specifically seen within the Pastoral Epistles. God has also prescribed the local church as the vehicle through which these men are ordained and set apart for ministry. Oftentimes, this freedom to observe and appoint qualified men results in rashly ordaining the unqualified. Hickory Grove Baptist Church desires to ordain men for the gospel ministry who love the church and whose character matches their ability to teach sound doctrine.

Context

Hickory Grove Baptist Church (HGBC) has served as a staple in the Southern Baptist Convention since its formation in the 1950s. From its formation, the church steadily grew, leading to the 1990s where the number of weekend worship attendees peaked over 6,000 with 4,500 Sunday school participants. With the increase in those attending, the necessity to find adequate worship space increased. This era of growth was met with the purchase of 172 acres of property and over 590,000 square feet of ministry space. Along with the acquisition of property, the church also started its second English-speaking campus, a Latin American campus, Brazilian campus, and Christian school.

As with many churches during this time, a problem was later revealed. While the push for numeric growth within the church was well-intended, right doctrine was lacking. The desire to fill a sanctuary with bodies overwhelmed the desire to genuinely reach people with the gospel. While the pews of the church were packed, nominal Christianity grew. More attention was placed upon filling buildings with people than

biblical theology. While numbers increased, evidence of the gospel taking root in the lives of the congregation was lacking.

As the long-tenured pastor of 25 years retired, the church looked to Clint Pressley, whom they called as Senior Pastor. Beneath the leadership of Pressley, the church has seen significant shifts toward doctrinal soundness. This is seen in consistent expositional preaching, intentional discipleship, gospel-centered worship, and heavy involvement in domestic and foreign missions. He guided the body to a biblical view of the gospel and created a space for right doctrine not only to be welcomed but prized. There was a slow redirection toward equipping the saints with rich and life-changing theology. Through the building up of the saints the goal of reaching greater Charlotte with the gospel would be accomplished. While the desire to reach many with the gospel is still intact, the method for doing so has rightly been aligned.

An integral part of the process of shifting the people of HGBC to a gospel-centered body is appointing qualified pastors who are responsible for shepherding and caring for the flock. These men serve the body with their ability to provide instruction from God's Word with a Christ-centered hermeneutic coupled with their lifestyle that meets the biblical expectation of pastors. With such a significant role in the church, the need for proper vetting of such men is necessary. While qualifications must be met and vetting must take place, there is a pressing need to refine the already established process for pastoral ordination. The result of such a process is that the standard would be raised, expectations would be clear, and the church would be strengthened.

Rationale

God has specifically chosen the office of pastor to lead and guide his people. Through this office the church is taught the Word of God, instructed in sound theology, guarded from false teaching, encouraged with the hope of the gospel, and cared for through hardship. In a sense, the office of pastor serves as a catalyst of sanctification and Christlikeness for the flock and is to be esteemed as such. The essential nature of this

position can be seen in the New Testament due to the emphasis placed upon the function. Three different terms are used throughout the New Testament that refer to those who provide oversight to the church: elder, overseer, and pastor. “Elder” and “overseer” are used interchangeably throughout the New Testament (Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5, 7; 1 Pet 5:1-2), while “pastor” is only mentioned once, in Ephesians 4:11. Despite the fact that there are varying terms given to those with oversight, the function of the office remains the same in all of these occasions. These individuals were given the task of leading, teaching, and shepherding the church.¹

Due to the weight and responsibility placed upon this position, Paul advises Timothy that the man who desires this ministry must demonstrate a life that is blameless (1 Tim 3:1-7). He lists several markers that would indicate what blamelessness looks like practically—the expectation is that the man who serves in the role of pastor meets the listed qualifications. In this list of prerequisites, almost all refer to the individual’s character and personal conduct and not necessarily to ability.² This list is reiterated in Paul’s charge to Titus, emboldening the principle (1:5-8). The explicit indicative is that the man who serves as pastor must be exemplary in character. The congregation to which he is entrusted is to look at his lifestyle and follow it in pursuit of Christlikeness.

Moreover, one chapter later Paul warns Timothy to keep a watch on both his life and his doctrine with the intent that he might lead himself and his congregants deeper into the gospel and away from false teaching (1 Tim 4:16). This call was dually stated

¹ Benjamin Merkle, *Why Elders? A Biblical Guide for Church Members* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009), 20-25.

² First Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 provide a similar list of qualifications for elders, and within the list, almost of all of the qualifications refer to the elder’s personal character. One exception as listed in 1 Tim 3:2 and Titus 1:9 refers to the elder’s ability to teach and handle the Scriptures. In Paul’s letter to Timothy, Paul refers to this as “able to teach,” while in Titus 1:9 he provides more specificity by stating, “He [the elder] must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.” Moreover, this ability to teach and handle the Word well is the distinguishing marker between elders and all other believers. The character standard that is set forth in Paul’s admonition to Timothy and Titus are expectations for all believers, yet are required of men who serve as elders.

and addressed the lifestyle of Timothy as well as his doctrinal integrity. The implication is that many might have seemed to be doctrinally sound but lacked a matching lifestyle. The expectation for the pastor was to illustrate a life transformed by the gospel to the degree that it affected every area of his life. This type of lifestyle is worthy of emulation and one that Timothy was both personally called to and responsible for ensuring was present in the men that served the local congregation.

As the Lord has called certain men to pastor the local church, he has also tasked the church to ordain such men by setting them apart for the work of ministry (Acts 13:1-3, Acts 14:23, 1 Tim 5:22). The concept of ordination often carries varying connotations dependent upon the context in which it is discussed. For instance, ordination within the Episcopal tradition suggests that the authority of the bishop's office is passed on by man through the means of a special grace transferred from the bishop to the appointee. The Bible does not indicate this but acknowledges that the authority of the office of pastor is given by God who calls and equips men for such a task.³ Baptists would then argue that ordination is the church acknowledging the individual's God-given call into the ministry and the recognition of the necessary and required giftings for the role. The church would then set the individual apart for the work of ministry.

This understanding of ordination can be traced throughout the epistles (1 Tim 5:22; Titus 1:5). The church carries the responsibility of acknowledging the gifting of individuals and affirming their call into pastoral ministry. As the church recognizes gifting and affirms the call, the local body will then proceed with the public laying on of hands, which serves as a commissioning of the individual in gospel ministry. However, in 1 Timothy 5:22, Paul warns not to lay hands on an individual in a hasty manner, implicating that some offer an appearance deeming themselves worthy of ordination, but over time show themselves unfit for the office. Though there is no set process for

³ Benjamin Merkle, "Should Elders Be Ordained?" 9Marks, February 26, 2010, <https://www.9marks.org/article/should-elders-be-ordained/>.

ordination stated by Paul, there is a strong warning for the church to exercise patience and discretion.

Currently in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), there is no set objective process for ordination. While the SBC serve the purposes of amplifying the church's mission of advancing the gospel, the SBC does not operate as a local church. Rather, it empowers local churches with the responsibility to ordain at their own volition, which seems to be the model Paul revealed in his writings (1 Tim 5:22). While it is ideal when churches adhere to the Pauline standards for those providing oversight to the church (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9), due to the lack of process within the SBC, there is no way to ensure that all churches are exercising the necessary caution. Even more, complication is amplified as the ordination of an individual at one church is oftentimes honored among other churches that may hold to a higher and more rigorous standard of ordination. Furthermore, it can be argued that many, though not all, failings and misappropriations in the pastoral ministry are the result of the local church failing to properly examine the character and competency of the men who are ordained and set aside for pastoral ministry. These concerns point to the necessity of local churches strengthening the process by which they appoint men to the work of the ministry.

In looking at the context of HGBC specifically, the establishment of a pastoral ordination process that examines both the life and doctrine of the ordination candidate is essential for blameless gospel advancement. First, with a desire to shift a congregation toward right theology and Christ-centered living, it is essential that pastors are aware of the biblical expectations and requirements for the office. While seminary is a prerequisite for ordination at HGBC, it must be acknowledged that seminary alone does not fully prepare men for ministry. The church is vital in preparing men to serve pastorally. The establishment of an objective process will attempt to set into focus the biblical responsibility and right expectations of the role.

Second, with deference toward Paul's warning in 1 Timothy 5:22, which addresses "laying hands" on a candidate in haste, an objective process for pastoral ordination will allow for a greater sense of confidence when affirming God's call on a candidate into pastoral ministry. While there is no set standard provided in Scripture concerning a specific process for pastoral ordination, there is ample wisdom to be tapped into from the words of Paul to Timothy. These words provide local autonomous congregations an opportunity to develop and implement a process that examines what the individual knows, but even more, provides a means of observing the intersection of what they know and how they live. Thorough examination of character and lifestyle do not happen quickly. Proper vetting takes time, and if churches are to adhere to the words of Paul, then a slow process of affirmation and installment must be employed.

Third, an objective process for pastoral ordination does not simply examine the life and doctrine of the candidate, but also serves as a means of preparation for ministry for the candidate. In examining the education experience of the pastors currently on staff, one will find that the pastors have varying levels. For instance, a few individuals are serving on staff who are pursuing seminary degrees. These men are not currently ordained, even though they are functioning in the office of pastor in every way. Conversely, there are also men on staff who are ordained and are serving in the office of pastor without seminary or even its pursuit, simply because of a previous ordination before coming on staff at HGBC. Regardless of educational experience, the church should be a ministry-equipping vehicle for men pursuing ordination. Through this process, the church intentionally equips the men it seeks to ordain.

Fourth, the establishment of the process will provide a greater sense of confidence to the congregation at HGBC when ordaining an individual into the pastoral ministry. With proper vetting and examination of character of each candidate, the church can be sure that those who are brought before the congregation for the purpose of ordination are men that have proven themselves to be blameless and above reproach in

every way. This confidence will lead the church to follow and emulate the examples set forth by the pastors to which they have been entrusted.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to establish an objective tool for pastoral ordination that examines both the character and doctrine of the candidate being considered while also preparing him for further ministry.

Goals

Three goals guided and measured the completion of this ministry project. These goals are based from the New Testament Pastoral Epistles and provide a means of examining the character and lifestyle of the candidate while also strengthening their competency regarding biblical expectations for the office of pastor.

1. The first goal was to establish a twelve-month pastoral ordination curriculum to prepare candidates for ordination.
2. The second goal was to develop a strategic plan to implement an objective ordination process churchwide.
3. The third goal was to pilot test the objective ordination process with one to two ordination candidates.

Research Methodology

The first goal was to establish a twelve-month pastoral ordination curriculum to guide and prepare the ordination candidates for pastoral ministry. The curriculum sought to prepare ordination candidates for long-term pastoral ministry by discussing in depth pastoral expectations, responsibilities, and qualifications. The course was led by a group of ordained pastors within the church with a desired two-fold end. First, that the individuals would see the high calling of pastoral ministry and recognize the personal pastoral expectations and qualifications. Second, that the life of the ordination candidates were clearly put on display throughout the course, thus observing the warning given in 1 Timothy 5:22 in which Paul challenges Timothy not to lay hands on an individual with

haste. This curriculum aimed to confidence to both the pastors and congregation that the candidates are aware of the necessary personal pastoral expectations.

The second goal was to develop a strategic plan to implement an objective ordination process churchwide. This goal was two-fold. First, there was a need to amend the current process for pastoral ordination at HGBC by highlighting the candidate's personal character.⁴ This amendment includes the addition of the Pastoral Ordination Questionnaire to be completed at the beginning of the process,⁵ Pastoral Ordination Training,⁶ an assessment and approval by a pastoral ordination council, affirmation by the church, and required accountability with an ordained pastor lasting six months following their ordination. This process allows for proper examination of both doctrine and character allowing the church to confidently affirm the individual for pastoral ministry. Second is the development of a strategic plan proposal in order to implement the pastoral ordination process at HGBC.

The third goal was to pilot test the objective ordination process with one to two ordination candidates. The candidates included in the pilot test were those pursuing or had graduated recently with a ministry degree and were employed at HGBC. The candidates within the pilot test took part in the Pastoral Ordination Questionnaire and the Pastoral Ordination Training with success being measured by their feedback and response following the training.⁷ This goal provided an opportunity to make necessary adjustments before seeking to implement the process churchwide at HGBC.⁸

⁴ See appendix 3 for a detailed explanation of the prior pastoral ordination process and the amendments.

⁵ The Pastoral Ordination Questionnaire is a thorough survey providing a thorough theological assessment as well as a baseline character examination. See appendix 1.

⁶ See appendix 2

⁷ See appendices 4 and for feedback from the candidates regarding the pastoral ordination curriculum.

⁸ All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the

Definitions of Relevant Terms and Limitations

Some key terms are used throughout this project. Clarity for these terms can be found in this section.

Ordination. *Ordination* is the public recognition and appointment of a man to a particular office. Specifically, for *pastoral ordination*, the man has been examined thoroughly both in doctrine and in character and has shown himself to be a man above reproach. The church acknowledges that God has called this man into this office and installs him for further ministry.⁹

Pastors. *Pastors* are men who have been specifically called and affirmed to provide oversight to a local body of believers, with their primary responsibility the overall spiritual growth of the body. The term *pastor* is one that is and will be used synonymously with other terms, such as *elder* and *overseer*.¹⁰ Throughout the course of this project, the term *elder* will mostly be used, but when considering the current leadership structure of HGBC the term *pastor* will be used, considering HGBC has a leadership structure consisting of only pastors and deacons.¹¹

This project also had one delimitation in view. Those that will be participating in the program are HGBC candidates currently serving in an area of ministry and actively employed at HGBC. This program is also established to be employed at HGBC to fit its current megachurch context.

Conclusion

Scripture is clear that the role of the pastor is vital in the health and growth of the body of Christ. Therefore, as a church body, a well-intentioned and objective process

ministry project.

⁹ Merkle, “Should Elders Be Ordained?”

¹⁰ Merkle, *Why Elders?*, 19.

¹¹ Michael Steven Powers, “Developing a Shepherd Care Approach for the Pastoral Leadership of Hickory Grove Baptist Church in Charlotte, North Carolina” (DMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018), 8.

should be in place for the ordination of such men. First Timothy 5:22 presents a warning to Timothy not to lay hands on a man too soon, but he also suggests that if caution is not properly given, then the church becomes responsible. There was a need to pay careful attention to this warning by Paul, as HGBC considered the process of ordination. The process for appointing men to ministry should not focus attention upon the knowledge of Scripture and right doctrine alone, but should also examine the character and lifestyle of the one seeking ordination. This objective process is particularly important at HGBC considering the context of a large-scale revitalization where clear biblical leadership is essential. This process should not be limited to the candidate's knowledge of scriptural precepts but should also include his knowledge of Christian ministry and a thorough examination of his life and character, revealing genuine application of what is professed.

CHAPTER 2

GOD APPOINTS THE CHURCH TO AFFIRM MEN WHO WILL LEAD BY EXAMPLE

God has shown himself providential in all of his ways in that he provides for that which he creates. An example of this is seen in the way he has provided the necessary shepherding that his people need.¹ To this point, Thabiti Anywabwile states, “God gives leaders to his churches for the maturity, unity, and soundness of each local congregation. Without godly, faithful, replicating leadership, churches suffer deeply.”² Because of God’s intention to mature his people, he establishes order within the church as a means to this end. God’s providence can especially be seen in the way God graciously provides the local church with pastors that are responsible for shepherding and leading the congregation toward Christlikeness. HGBC desires to use its God-given authority and autonomy for the glory of God and the good of its people. Even more specifically, HGBC desires to ordain men to the office of pastor who will shepherd and lead its people into greater Christlikeness. For this to be fulfilled in a way that is honoring to the Lord, consideration must be given to select passages that illustrate the responsibility of the church in ordination and the qualifications that should be displayed in those that are appointed. For a thorough understanding of the church’s role and responsibility in ordination, Acts 14:23 will be examined, while 1 Peter 5:1-4 and 1 Timothy 3:1-7 will provide the necessary qualifications for pastoral ministry.

¹ In Eph 4:11-13, the apostle Paul discusses God’s intentionality in giving the church leaders who would guide believers into greater Christlikeness. Paul specifies by stating, “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for the building the body of Christ.”

² Thabiti Anywabwile, *Finding Faithful Elders and Deacons* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 11.

God Has Designated the Church with the Task of Appointing Elders: Acts 14:23

An example of this intended autonomy can be seen in Acts 14, as Paul is working his way back through Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch with the intent to strengthen the local churches and encourage their hearts in the midst of hardship (v. 23). Before leaving these cities, Paul works to establish leadership among the churches, as was his pattern for ministry during his missionary journeys. As Paul established the church through spreading the gospel and intentional discipleship, his desire was that he would instruct the church to set men in leadership that would be capable of leading and shepherding. The men who held the responsibility for leading and guiding the church were elected as elders of the church. This was nothing new for Paul, as his custom had been to establish elders within the church, but this passage provides greater detail to the process by which they were appointed or ordained (Acts 11:30, 13:3; Titus 1:5). To fully understand the intent behind the apostle in Acts 14, a right view of ordination must first be affirmed.

Elders Are Appointed and Ordained

A few things are noteworthy and controversial about the baptistic view of ordination. The main source of contention arises from the fact that the word “ordination” cannot be found in Scripture, resulting in contention among denominations regarding its intent and scope. For instance, the Episcopalian tradition suggests that at the ordination and appointment of an elder, a special grace is bestowed upon the individual. That is, because of the act of ordination, separating grace is given to the individual that thereby distinguishes him from the laity. Further, within the realm of Protestantism, there is conversation of a sacramental and clerical view of the appointment of elders. Despite the fact that many lay congregants would consider themselves saved by faith in the perfect life and substitutionary death of Jesus, many would still, by default, sway toward a position in which ordained men are held at a higher tier of the faith. This is evidenced in the congregants’ functional belief that preaching, baptizing, and administering the Lord’s

Supper are only reserved for those of the clerical cloth.³ This evidenced contention raises the question of whether ordination has become something that the New Testament writers never intended it to be.

While many struggle over the New Testament's directive regarding the appointment of a plurality of elders, Luke's description in Acts 14:23 seem to be rather clear: "When they [the elders] had appointed elders for them in every church and prayed with fasting, they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed." Luke uses χειροτονέω for the act of selecting elders to lead the local congregation. The word can be translated to mean "to choose or elect" and many would then add "by the raising of the hand."⁴ Merkle notes of this word that while it originally had this meaning, because of Patristic Greek, would eventually come to mean "ordain with the laying on of hands."⁵ This word is also used by Paul later in 2 Corinthians 8:19 where Titus was appointed for ministry, as he served and traveled alongside Paul. Benjamin Merkle notes that these references cause some to look back on the New Testament and assume that Paul and Barnabas ordained men for the ministry through laying on of hands.⁶

While appointing men to ministry involved the laying on of hands, in other references this was not necessarily the case (Acts 8:14-25, 9:10-18, 19:1-7). However, in Acts 14:23 and 2 Corinthians 8:19, the emphasis lies primarily on the fact that they were set apart for the purpose of ministry. They were appointed for a specific task and installed into a role. There is nothing extraordinary about this process nor is power transferred onto the ordained. Men were simply elected among the congregation and set apart to lead

³ Andrew Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership* (Colorado Springs: Lewis and Roth, 1995), 112.

⁴ Robert L. Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries*, updated ed. (Anaheim, CA: Foundations Publications, 2001), s.v. "χειροτονέω."

⁵ Benjamin Merkle, "Should Elders Be Ordained," 9 Marks, February 26, 2010, <https://www.9marks.org/article/should-elders-be-ordained/>.

⁶ Merkle, "Should Elders Be Ordained."

because of their God-given giftedness. Similarly, Paul uses the word καθίστημι in Titus 1:5 as he states, “This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.” This word translated means “to set in order” and is also a common word used in reference to someone who is designated and appointed for a specific task.⁷

With the aforementioned passages, the question must then be raised as to whether the act of ordination within Protestant churches has become something that the New Testament writers never intended it to be. While χειροτονέω in Acts 14:23 would later be rendered as the technical term for church ordination today, in its original context and meaning, it carried no such weight.⁸ Further, Darrell Bock brings the course of church history into view by stating that if a formal view of ordination was present in the early church, then Ignatius would have mentioned it in his writings, but such is not the case.⁹ Throughout the progression of the early church, adaptations on the understanding of ordination ultimately caused this process to be viewed through sacramental lens. In fact, during the early postapostolic period, there was minimal protocol involved with the installation of men into office. This protocol was based from the words of Jesus that warned against the teachings of the Gentiles, who lord their positions and statuses over one another. Because of this, simple language is used to refer to the installation of men into office until the fourth century, where it would begin to carry sacramental value.¹⁰

What then is the purpose of ordination, especially considering that it is not mentioned in the Bible itself? Moreover, should the notion of ordination be thrown out altogether considering that some have the tendency to lean toward a sacramental view of

⁷ Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries*, s.v. “καθίστημι,”

⁸ Darrell Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 285.

⁹ Bock, *Acts*, 286.

¹⁰ Marjorie Warkentin, *Ordination: A Biblical-Historical View* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1982), 33.

the process? Not at all. Paul, in 1 Timothy 5:22, illustrates the necessity for caution regarding the appointment of elders and provides the church an alley for the process of appointment. Even though the appointment of elders was never to be viewed sacramentally, thoughtfulness was to be applied, ensuring that men were not appointed to the office prematurely or unnecessarily. While not specifically providing an explicit elder-appointment process, Paul provides an avenue of liberty intended to be traveled for the purpose of ensuring sound leadership.

Elders Are Appointed by the Church

In appointing elders to the local congregation, the congregation itself carries the responsibility. Merkle states that it is “the church’s duty to recognize those whom God has set apart for this important duty.”¹¹ Through looking at Acts 14:23, the church’s involvement in the appointment of men into the office of elder seems distant. However, its lack of reference should not constitute lack of involvement within the process. Referencing back to Acts 6 provides the framework through which this appointment of leadership can be viewed. Through this described process congregational involvement is made clear. Richard Mayhue argues that elders must undergo strict scrutiny before serving, employing the same principle that Paul applied to deacons in 1 Timothy 3:10. He states that observation “allows the church to validate the subjective impressions of the one seeking ordination by using God’s criteria as a basis for testing.”¹² The church was responsible for electing men that met the requirements mentioned by the apostles, and once selected, they were placed before the apostles, prayed over, and appointed to serve (Acts 6:1-6).

Though the elder might be examined by a few additional elders through council, he is affirmed by the congregation. As Paul provides Timothy instruction in not laying

¹¹ Merkle, “Should Elders Be Ordained.”

¹² Richard Mayhue, “Ordination to Pastoral Ministry,” in *Pastoral Ministry: How to Shepherd Biblically*, by John MacArthur and Master’s Seminary Faculty (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 111.

hands on someone too hastily, he draws a hard line of accountability to those who appoint. The idea that Paul is bringing into focus is that the men who are selected as elders should be those who have been thoroughly examined by the church. The church carries responsibility in permitting men into ministry, and in the case that they permit men into ministry who are unskilled and ill-fit, they share in the sin committed. When the church has affirmed the individual, he is prayed over and commissioned into gospel ministry. A right understanding of the words that both Luke and Paul chose to use in these passages illustrate that these men were selected out of the congregation by a few and then affirmed by all.

The Function of the Elder Is to Lead and Shepherd God's People: 1 Peter 5:1-4

Acts provides much insight into God's design for the structure and leadership of the local church, but when it came to the functions and responsibilities for this leadership, specifically elders, what was their responsibility? What was entrusted to their care and to what were they appointed? Peter speaks to this in his letter to a people who are dispersed and exiled in 1 Peter 5:1-4. The believers being addressed are spread abroad throughout what is modern day Turkey and are experiencing waves of persecution. Because of this suffering, Peter encourages the believers in at least two ways. First, by reminding the believers to keep their eyes fixed upon Christ, being reminded of his personal suffering for them (3:8-22, 4:12-19). Second, he encourages those suffering by bringing to mind the rapid return of Christ (1:5, 1:13, 2:12, 4:7). In light of the impending return of Jesus, Peter presents specific challenges to those that oversee God's flock by reminding them of their call as a shepherd to their congregations.

Elders Shepherd with Sympathy

As Peter sums up the importance of suffering well in the face of persecution, he quickly transitions as he begins to address the elders of the congregations. He states, "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 to be revealed” (1 Pet 5:1). As Peter begins this address to the leaders of the church, he first lays the groundwork of his admonition and implores them on the basis of his experience. The exhortation that would follow from the pen of Peter was not an empty exhortation but one that was full of understanding. His call is laid on the grounds of his personal witness of the sufferings of Christ. Even more, Peter had the opportunity to address his apostleship in this moment, considering that he walked the earth with Jesus, but here he is content referring to his eldership for the purpose of reminding his recipients that they were not alone in their battle of suffering.¹³ Peter is illustrating his eldership and leadership ability by coming alongside the elders and letting them know that they are not alone in the persecution they face. He understood and he knew the types of hurt through which they were walking. He was sympathizing.

In the same way, as those overseeing God’s flock, elders are called to shepherd and lead their people, but they are called to do so with a sense of understanding and sympathy. Oftentimes this cannot happen fully unless the elder experiences personal suffering himself. Suffering has the ability to shape, sharpen, and sanctify men like nothing else. Suffering often serves as a means of deepening shallow views of God to a strong theology of hope. In those moments the man is able to fully find a sense of personal desperation for Christ that proves to be catalytic in the way he leads and shepherds God’s people from that point forward. For Peter, this could have been referring to the persecution the church faced early on in its development, or could have simply referred to the suffering he endured in the face of his personal denial of Christ (Matt 26:69-75).

Elders Shepherd Locally

In light of the personal experience that Peter adds as a foundation to the exhortation presented to the elders, he states, “Shepherd the flock of God that is among

¹³ Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 240-41. Strauch states that Peter is attempting to grab the reader’s attention by creating a sense of “colleagueship and mutual regard” with the elders, as he himself was an elder when he wrote this letter.

you” (1 Pet 5:1). This command that Peter gives to the elders is not one that is altogether new. In fact, Peter personally heard it from the mouth of Jesus as he was commanded by Jesus to “feed my sheep” (John 21:15-19). In this dialogue with Jesus in John 21, a few things are discussed in particular. First, Peter is given the responsibility to care for God’s people. Three different times he is given the task to either “feed” or “tend” to God’s people. The words John uses for this means of care are βόσκω (21:15, 17) and ποιμαίνω (21:16). Βόσκω is literally translated to mean “feed,” and the implication is that the people were to be fed with the Word of God. There is the designation for Peter to lead God’s people in the Word. Additionally, ποιμαίνω is translated in most passages to mean “to shepherd” or to “tend.” Here, Jesus uses the analogy of a shepherd and sheep to describe the relationship of the elder to his people. As a shepherd cares for and tends the flock to which he has been entrusted, so the shepherd is to tend to and care for the flock to which he has been entrusted.

Similarly, in 1 Peter 5, Peter commands the elder to “shepherd the flock of God that is among you” (1 Pet 5:2). This phrase adds an interesting dynamic to the message Peter is attempting to deliver. He is charging the elders with at least two different statements. First, elders are spread in various cities, but Peter challenges the elders to care for those that were near them and entrusted to their care. A local group of people should have been the primary concern for the church leaders. While the gospel being advanced in other cities and other peoples was necessary, the primary focus of the elders was the local congregation to which they had been entrusted. Second, through this address, Peter was reminding the elders that though these specific people had been entrusted to them, the congregation did not belong to them. They were God’s people that he had graciously entrusted them. As the elders were to care for the congregation, this should have stimulated a greater awareness to shepherd with care as they understood that the congregation was God’s own possession and not their own.

In light of this, it must be noted that elders are appointed and called to a specific group of people in a local congregation. Specific men, women, and children are entrusted to the care of the elder and his primary responsibility is that he might lead them into greater Christlikeness. This end cannot be met if the elder does not know his people or their respective needs. To shepherd a local congregation is to walk with them through a life that is full of joys and hardships. Shepherds must know their people if this is to be the case. Additionally, the congregation to which the elder is entrusted in no way belongs to the elder as a means of possession. The flock is God's, it has simply been entrusted to the elder to be stewarded with care and grace.

Elders Shepherd Joyfully

Alexander Strauch writes, "God doesn't want reluctant unwilling shepherds to care for his people."¹⁴ Peter states that elders should not serve their flock out of a sense of compulsion. While Strauch acknowledges that there are times where this sense of compulsion to serve and minister are necessary for faithful ministry (1 Cor 9:16), he notes that the use of the word in this context refers to "compulsion" negatively, meaning "without a God-given motivation."¹⁵ Even more, he provides instructions for their attitude and frame of mind while providing oversight. He states to do this not out of "force or restraint, but to do this willingly and voluntarily."¹⁶ Peter is addressing the motivation for which elders minister. Out of great love for Christ and a desire to see people come to the saving faith in the gospel, the elder should then lead and serve not with obligation but willingly and joyfully.

Serving with joy seems to be counterintuitive. Service requires work, effort, and sacrifice, and oftentimes this seems to run against that which creates a sense of joy.

¹⁴ Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 245.

¹⁵ Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 245.

¹⁶ Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 245.

However, as the personal understanding of the gospel sinks into the hearts of God’s people, it radically changes what is natural. Even more, as a greater understanding of personal depravity is ingrained into the heart and mind of believers, the appreciation for and understanding of grace amplifies. This personal sense of desperation motivates God’s people to serve, and even more those called to be elders, to serve and minister to their flocks with joy unceasing. There is no greater joy, there is no greater delight, there is nothing that elders would rather do than to serve God by leading and shepherding his flock with which they have been graciously entrusted.

Elders Shepherd Selflessly

Peter continues this call to elders by stating that they are not to shepherd “for shameful gain, but eagerly” (1 Pet 5:3). The word Peter uses for “shameful gain” is αἰσχροκερδῶς, which can be translated to mean “from eagerness for base gain.”¹⁷ This desire for shameful gain of wealth is indicative of a heart consumed with self-absorption and greed. In Peter’s context, this describes false teachers seeking to increase their personal wealth at the expense of those to which they had been entrusted. As these false teachers would seek to increase materially, their people were neglected, left to their own vices, and subsequently led astray. Peter says that the elder does not need materialism to motivate him to service. Rather, he is to be ready and willing to serve his people zealously and enthusiastically.¹⁸

The heart of a true and genuine shepherd is eager and ready to serve his people. Even more, he is one that desires to lead his people in selflessness, as he places the needs of his people above his own. This does not mean that leading God’s people should ever be viewed as an easy task or one that only produces happiness, as this is clearly not the case. Paul’s address to the elders at Ephesus in Acts 20:24 provides an illustration of the

¹⁷ Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries*, s.v. “αἰσχροκερδῶς.”

¹⁸ Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 246.

type of selflessness expected from those leading congregations. In his address, he specifically states that he is on the journey to Jerusalem, being led by the Spirit of God, with the intent to “testify to the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24). This trip to Jerusalem would eventually land him in chains, but this evident and soon-coming restriction would not hinder him from obeying to the call God had placed in his life.

Congregations are full of people who are hurting and whole, broken and not as broken, and struggling in sin and maturing in Christ, and as elders lead in this context, challenges and difficulties will be at every turn. However, an elder is ready for use and finds no greater joy than being used as a selfless instrument of grace in the lives of his people. To follow in the example of Paul, elders find that there is greater joy in loving and leading his flock despite the personal sacrifices that the journey would bring. This type of servant-minded leadership is seen no better than in the life of Christ himself as he sought to serve his people through his perfect life and substitutionary death (Phil 2:5-8).

Elders Shepherd by Example

As Peter begins to bring this section to a close, he provides another means of encouragement and challenge to the elders by stating that they are to shepherd in a specific way: “Not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples for your flock” (1 Pet 5:3). The word Peter selects to use for “domineering” can be translated to mean “forcefully ruling over or subduing” and can also carry intense imagery of excessive uses of authority.¹⁹ This word carries with it a militaristic mindset in which a leader is able to subdue those within his charge through the improper use of heavy-handed leadership and authority. This description should never be given to elders. It should not be the standard to have an elder that uses God-given authority in a way that could be viewed as

¹⁹ Wayne Grudem, *1 Peter*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 17 (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1988), 189.

domineering and authoritarian, which Alexander Strauch would note as one of the strongest temptations for church leaders.²⁰

With responsibility and God-given authority to lead a local congregation, how then does an elder lead effectively without crossing into the boundary of dominance? Peter provides the answer by stating that the elder is to lead by example. In the same way that Paul states in 1 Corinthians 11:1, elders, though imperfect, should be able to state confidently and firmly, “Follow me as I follow Christ.” This concept weighs heavy as elders consider the call to lead and shepherd God’s people. While serving and leading God’s people requires a constant gaze toward the congregation, the elder cannot fail to consider the necessity for his own personal devotion to Christ and pursuit of spiritual disciplines. This exemplary lifestyle to which the elder is called is a consistent beckoning for the elder’s own personal pursuit of holiness.

Elders Shepherd Faithfully

As an elder, labor often seems profitless. Fruit oftentimes does not seem to come, and work seems vain. In moments and seasons where the evident fruit of tireless efforts seems lacking, Peter encourages with one last remark to elders. These leaders were not to set their hopes on wealth, success, fame, or anything temporary and tangible. This was not to be their motivation or their aim in ministry. Their focus was on something altogether different. Peter wraps up this section with a split voice of challenge and encouragement, pointing their attention toward something that was certain and secure. He states, “And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory” (1 Pet 5:4).

Peter’s first intention through this charge strengthens the metaphor mentioned in verse 2. He uses the word ἀρχιποίμην, recognizing Christ as the “Chief Shepherd.” This term is used in no other place throughout the New Testament and is intended to

²⁰ Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 246-47.

remind the elders that though they have been given authority to lead the congregation, their authority falls under the greater authority of Christ. While elders are given authority to lead and guide people into Christlikeness, there was accountability to the Shepherd of all shepherds. This was to ensure that what was done within the position served as a reflection of the Chief Shepherd. Eldership is responsibility, not privilege, and should be viewed as such.²¹

Second, Peter brings encouragement. As elders faithfully serve by shepherding God's flock, some moments may seem as if the fruit is minimal and the labor is extensive. As elders consistently place the needs of the congregation above their own, discouragement can settle in. Peter addresses this head on by stating that the reward in this shepherding ministry is not something that can be touched with human hands, but something entirely different. He points the eyes of the elder toward his ultimate reward: a crown of glory that never fades. He uses the reference of the Greco-Roman crown given to victors in competitive games. These specific crowns, compiled of garland and flowers, were given to mark a significant success and victory but they would eventually fade and wither. Peter strengthens this illustration by stating that the crown Christ would carry and give to shepherds would be eternal, indicating that this reward would not perish. On this they were to set their sights.²² In a methodical way, Peter delivers a blueprint of responsibility for shepherds. They were to faithfully shepherd God's people into greater Christlikeness with their eyes fixed on Christ.

Elders Are Called to Lead with Character: 1 Timothy 3:1-7

In the very essence of the word, leadership carries the necessary implication of followers. To lead, therefore, is to provide an example that others might observe and

²¹ Thomas Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary, vol. 37 (Nashville: B & H, 2003), 235-36.

²² Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 236-36.

emulate. This common term can be seen in both secular and Christian areas. While leadership carries the same general meaning in both of these arenas, the effectiveness of leadership only goes as far as the character of the one who leads. This is especially true as one looks at church leadership. While communication and abilities are important and should be sharpened consistently, they are not the most important biblical factors. Rather, biblical leadership concerns itself primarily with the character of the leader more than capabilities.

R. Kent Hughes states, “Christian ministry and leadership is without question a matter of character. One’s authentic spirituality and Christian character are everything in church leadership. It is a sober fact that as goes the leadership, so goes the church.”²³ This truth strikes a note of relevancy a little more today than it has before, considering the number of moral scandals and failures among pastors rising to the surface within the Southern Baptist Convention. The *Houston Chronicle* released an article in February 2019 reporting that since 1998, there have been over 700 documented victims of sexual abuse within Southern Baptist Convention churches. The abusers in this case were not men within the secular world; the abusers totaled over 380 Southern Baptist church leaders.²⁴ The reality of this information is unsettling. Pastors, ministers, and leaders were responsible for the sexual abuse of those that had been entrusted to them for spiritual growth and development. Moreover, the report revealed that out of these leaders, some were able to find employment within other churches after exhibiting patterns of sexual abuse.²⁵

²³ R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, *1-2 Timothy and Titus*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 78.

²⁴ Robert Downen, Lisa Olsen, and John Tedesco, “Abuse of Faith: 20 Years, 700 Victims: Southern Baptist Sexual Abuse Spreads as Leaders Resist Reforms,” *Houston Chronicle*, February 10, 2019, <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/investigations/article/Southern-Baptist-sexual-abuse-spreads-as-leaders-13588038.php>.

²⁵ Downen, Olsen, and Tedesco, “Abuse of Faith.”

What then is the response of the church? How does the church ensure minimizing the likelihood of further abuse? One of the first places to begin is by tightening the process by which men are ordained into the pastoral ministry. Albert Mohler stated in response to the *Houston Chronicle* report, “Churches rush to ordain an individual based on emotion or sentiment rather than a true affirmation of fitness for gospel ministry. Lackadaisical ordination will produce doctrinally dubious and morally corrupt pastors. This trend must end and churches must take responsibility for those men they ordain for ministry.”²⁶ The church should use its given autonomy in elder selection and ordination as a means of rightly vetting men to shepherd the congregation, not simply for the appointment of unchecked pulpiteers.

In 1 Timothy 3:1-7, the apostle Paul was writing to Timothy from prison. At this particular time, Timothy was stationed in Ephesus and was face to face with controversy that had the propensity to bring the church to destruction. As Paul writes about the dangers of false teaching, he addressed the importance of confronting this both boldly and lovingly (1 Tim 1:3). Outside of this undercurrent of false teaching that was on the rise, others in the church desired leadership responsibilities who were not worthy of the weight. He opens chapter 3 discussing the nobility of the task, but quickly shows that not all could fill this role.²⁷ Thus, he provides a list of qualifications for the pastoral ministry, illustrating that men who were to lead were to be qualified to do so. These were not suggestions for what a pastor could look like, but instead necessities to be seen in men to which the congregation would submit.²⁸ Even more specifically, Paul addresses

²⁶ Albert Mohler, “The Reality of Sexual Abuse Hits Home: What Happened What Do We Do Now?” February 11, 2011, <https://albertmohler.com/2019/02/11/reality-sexual-abuse-hits-home-happened-now>.

²⁷ Gene Getz, *Elders and Leaders: God’s Plan for Leading the Church* (Chicago: Moody, 2003), 96.

²⁸ Robert Thune, *Gospel Eldership: Equipping a New Generation of Servant Leaders* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2016), 23.

this issue as he provides the qualifications for elders.²⁹ Paul’s description points to four primary areas in which the elder is to be exemplary: with their conduct, within their home, in their maturity, and in the community.

As Paul writes to Timothy in his first letter to this young pastor, he desires to encourage him in his current ministry context. Hughes suggests that Timothy’s situation might have been worse than can be suspected. He indicates that Timothy had been handpicked by Paul himself and then dropped into the middle of the congregation that was overcome with false teaching. Based from this thought, it could only be inferred that false teaching had even made its way into the leadership of the church. Timothy finds himself in a position, as a pastor that is both young in ministry and in age, where he might have been face to face with much opposition.³⁰ To strengthen him in this difficult endeavor to which he had been called, Paul encourages him in a few specific areas that are summed up in 4:16: “Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.” This speaks to the necessity that Timothy, and any minister in that regard, guard both his life and his teaching. Hughes states that what Paul was aiming at through this statement was the importance of finding the balance between life and doctrine—what is believed about God ultimately affects the way that one lives.³¹ Schreiner comments, “Both [life and doctrine] are of prime importance, for right understanding of truth and application of truth to life are essential for ministry and the Christian life.”³² This warning for Timothy and all ministers is especially important considering the conditional phrase to follow. Paul continues, “Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers” (1 Tim 4:16). The

²⁹ Benjamin Merkle, *Why Elders? A Biblical and Practical Guide for Church Members* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009), 20-23.

³⁰ Hughes and Chapell, *1-2 Timothy and Titus*, 126.

³¹ Hughes and Chapell, *1-2 Timothy and Titus*, 126.

³² Thomas Schreiner, *Handbook on Acts and Paul’s Letters* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019), 388.

push for a life that is altered by the internalization of right doctrine has ramifications that extend beyond the minister. Paul makes it clear that a constant guard on life and doctrine will affect those to which Timothy is to minister. Perseverance for Timothy would lead to the perseverance of his congregation.

Oftentimes, much emphasis is placed upon right teaching and doctrine, while godly character is assumed. Essentially, Paul is saying that for fruitful pastoral leadership, right teaching must be tethered to right living. This same idea is presented through the text of 1 Timothy 3. It is hard to look at the challenge Paul laid out to Timothy in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 without asking why this is such a requirement. What is the purpose of having right living in conjunction with right teaching? Why does the lifestyle of the elder matter when his teaching is doctrinally sound? What ultimate effect does this have on the body of the local body of Christ? David Dickson states that the necessity of the elder's godly character, in a way, serves as a source of sustenance in the gospel ministry of reconciliation. This consistent godly character, which flows out of a deep and rich relationship with the Father, allows the minister to continuously engage in the ministry of reconciliation with joy and not with begrudgery. Godly character is the engine that keeps the boat running through the breakers of gospel ministry.³³ What then does godly character look like? When men are examined during their ordination process, what specifically should the church be mindful of? Paul laid this out in 1 Timothy 3:1-7.

Elders Have High Aspirations

As mentioned, Paul was writing to a young pastor submerged in false teaching that had most likely erupted from within the leadership of the church.³⁴ To address such an issue, there was an urgent push to install qualified leaders to help course correct the false teaching that was spreading. Paul begins chapter 3 by stating, "if any man aspires to

³³ David Dickson, *The Elder and His Work* (Philadelphia: P & R, 2004), 30.

³⁴ Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 181-86.

the office of overseer” (1 Tim 3:1). The word Paul uses for “aspire” is the ὀρέγω, which literally means to “stretch forth your hands.”³⁵ This word is used in two other places in the New Testament, and in each setting it refers to a strong sense of longing and desire that produces action.³⁶ In this passage, the craving Paul is referring to is the desire for the office of ἐπίσκοπή, or overseership.³⁷ This word represents the office and function of the overseer, ἐπίσκοπος, as will be mentioned in the following verses. In addition, Paul uses the words ἐπίσκοπος and πρεσβύτερος interchangeably throughout this letter and even throughout this list, illustrating that these terms refer to the same individuals.³⁸

Paul is not addressing simply the desire to fill the pulpit or to be a mouthpiece. Paul is not talking about a desire for power, prestige, or personal influence. His intentional choice of wording is all-encompassing and refers to the full duty of the office. Considering the weight of this role, for an individual to still desire the office implies that this desire is supernaturally given. Paul states in 1 Timothy 1:12, “I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service.” The word Paul used for “appointment” refers to God intentionally placing Paul within the service of ministry. This calling was not sought out, but chosen by God. To this note, Charles Bridges states,

No one can be an ambassador, expect he be charged expressly with instructions from his Sovereign (or else would he deliver the fruit of his own brain, not his Sovereign’s will and commands); nor can anyone legitimately come in the name of God to confirm the revelations of his will, except by his own express appointment. God will seal his own ordinance, but not man’s usurpation.³⁹

³⁵ Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries*, s.v. “ὀρέγω.”

³⁶ ὀρέγω is used in 1 Tim 6:10: “through this craving.” It is also used in Heb 11:16: “they desire.”

³⁷ Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 186.

³⁸ Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 187.

³⁹ Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry* (East Peoria: IL, Versa Press, 1830), 91.

Bridges states further concerning this supernatural call that “the internal call . . . is the voice and power of the Holy Ghost, directing the will and the judgment, and conveying personal qualifications.”⁴⁰ He points to the reality that genuine desire for the office of overseer is that which cannot be manufactured by man, but given graciously by God supernaturally.

John. L. Dagg likens this supernatural call to the ministry to the supernatural call to salvation that the people of God experience: “Members of the church are separated from the rest of the world by a divine call and it is suitable that the ministers of the church should be distinguished in the same manner; accordingly, their supernatural call to the office is ascribed to God.”⁴¹ Tucked away in this supernatural call is the sovereignty of the Lord working to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ (Eph 4:11).

To this desire Paul finishes this statement by concluding that if a man genuinely desires this office, then he desires that which is noble. Paul uses the phrase *καλός ἔργον*, which can be translated to mean a “beautiful work.”⁴² When a man reaches forth his hand for this office, aware of the challenges, oppositions, oftentimes seemingly fruitless labor, and inevitable hardship, Paul concludes that this is a beautiful work. The external aspiration of the office is evidence of an inward heart that is crucified to selfish desires and aspirations. What would seem to the secular world to be a life of empty pursuit and little exaltation is, in reality, the life that consists of the highest Christ-exalting aspirations.

⁴⁰ Bridges, *The Christian Ministry*, 91.

⁴¹ John. L. Dagg, *Manual of Church Order* (Charleston, SC: Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1859), 245.

⁴² Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries*, s.v., “καλός” and “ἔργον.”

Elders Are Blameless

In addition to aspiring to the office, 1 Timothy 3:2-3 discusses what the exemplary conduct of the elder should be. As is common for Paul, he starts with a strong and overarching descriptor that will serve as a guide to the rest of the characteristics he will list. He states first and foremost that the overseer must be ἀνεπίλημτος, which literally means to be “without reproach.”⁴³ To be above reproach, then, explicitly means to be “above criticism . . . without fault . . . blameless.”⁴⁴ This does not mean that the man that holds this office should be perceived as one who is perfect, as that would be an impossibility; rather, this man is to aspire for blamelessness as he sets his sights on Christ and his gospel and that as he inevitably falls, he is quick to practice genuine humility and repentance ensuring that his character leads his people to conform more to the image of Jesus.⁴⁵

In the total assessment of the life of the elder, the final analysis should result in a clean slate where there is no fault found in his life and that upon full and complete observation, nothing would be revealed that would have the ability to jeopardize the ministry or the perception of the gospel in any way. It also must be noted that this is not a one-time assessment taken to determine the state of blamelessness. This is to be a continual conclusory calculation. Blamelessness is proven over time and not quickly. It takes time to ensure that the reputation of a man is pure and that his character reflects that which the gospel can only bring. Quick glances cannot observe true blamelessness. Though Paul is shedding light on this overarching concept, he then lists various angles in which this man is to be above reproach.

⁴³ Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries*, s.v. “ἀνεπίλημτος.”

⁴⁴ Richard Blight, *Exegetical Summary of 1 Timothy* (Dallas: SIL International, 2009), 159.

⁴⁵ Thomas Oden, *First and Second Timothy and Titus*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox, 1989), 141.

Sexually Pure

Paul continues in this list by stating that the elder must be the “husband of one wife” (1 Tim 3:2). Immediately following the banner of the blamelessness required among elders, Paul addresses the necessity of the elder’s marital and sexual purity. This phrase is carries much debate. In fact, Ed Glasscock lists at least four different interpretations for how this phrase can be translated and applied. He concludes that this statement ultimately points to the character of the elder as one that can be identified as sexually pure.⁴⁶ John MacArthur would agree on this interpretation as he indicates that this phrase is to be translated as “a one-woman man. . . .The issue is his [the elder’s] moral, sexual behavior. . . . Many men married only once are not one-woman men. Many are unfaithful to that wife. . . . It is no indication or guarantee of moral purity.”⁴⁷ Dan Dumas suggests that this is listed as a primary requirement for eldership because the elder’s marriage can be used as a gauge for the man’s success in ministry. If he is an unfaithful husband, he will not be a faithful elder.⁴⁸ To this point, Alexander Strauch states, “The husband of one wife is meant to be a positive statement that expresses faithful, monogamous marriage.”⁴⁹ While questions arise regarding the need for the elder to be married, Paul addressed the heart of the elder as it pertains to his sexual purity. Regardless of whether the elder is married or single, the same faithfulness and purity are required.

⁴⁶ Ed Glasscock, “‘The Husband of One Wife’ Requirement in 1 Timothy 3:2,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 140, no. 559 (July-September 1983): 256-57. In this article, Glasscock indicates that there are at least four varying views regarding the intention of Paul’s charge to Timothy. First, the phrase for “the husband of one wife” could be interpreted to mean that marriage was a requirement for one to serve as an elder. A second interpretation would lean toward the elder only being married once in his lifetime, including that which could be pre-conversion. The third interpretation would be for the elder to never be divorced. In this setting, an elder could be a widower and be remarried. A final, and more probable explanation is the one-woman man approach that appeals more to the character of the elder as opposed to the specific marital status.

⁴⁷ John F. MacArthur, *1 Timothy, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 104.

⁴⁸ Dan Dumas, *A Guide to Expository Ministry* (Louisville: SBT Press, 2012), 39.

⁴⁹ Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 192-93.

In a sex-enthralled culture, shepherd leaders are to be trailblazers in this arena, modeling consistent and exemplary sexual purity that others notice and follow. Moreover, this means that elders are to be free from the external evidences of sexual infidelity and misappropriations. The aforementioned article in the *Houston Chronicle* provides a supreme example of the eventual public exposing of private sin. Despite that many of these mentioned failings were uncovered from previous years and decades, the point is still true: private sin will eventually be made public. The negative attention drawn to the pastoral ministry because of this article runs in direct opposition to what Paul is discussing here in 1 Timothy 3:2. Others should look upon the elder and find a life worth emulating, not one that is to be abandoned.

In addition, this passage suggests that elders are to be those who are free from the secret and clutching chains of pornography and have illustrated a habitual lifestyle of purity and accountability. In a recent report by the Barna Group, evidence revealed that approximately 21 percent of student pastors and 14 percent of pastors indicate that they currently struggle with pornography while 50-60 percent of pastors indicate that they have struggled with it at some point in the past.⁵⁰ While the struggle with pornography is a hard reality for many, so is the qualification for an elder to be sexually blameless, meaning that a qualified pastor is to be free from the bondage of immorality. It may seem harsh to suggest that a habitual struggle with pornography could serve as a means of disqualification, but it must not be overlooked that Paul was intending to show that not all who feel called into pastoral ministry are actually fit for pastoral ministry. The bar of blamelessness is high. Furthermore, the elder's blamelessness and sexual purity are not simply an end in themselves. This pursuit of purity in the life of the elder reveals that he has grappled with the genuine and true satisfaction that can only come through the gospel of Jesus, of which these elders are witnesses.

⁵⁰ Josh McDowell Ministry and the Barna Group, *The Porn Phenomenon* (Ventura, CA: Barna Group, 2016), 80.

Elders Illustrate Self-Mastery

As Paul continues in verse 2, he links the next three qualifiers together. He uses the words νηφάλιος, σώφρων, and κόσμιος in a way that John Stott refers to as “self-mastery.”⁵¹ He refers to the usage of “temperate, self-controlled, and respectable” as Paul’s way of indicating that the elder is to illustrate a sense of control over his mind and body and that he is no slave to either. Stott continues to make the point that if the man is unable to lead himself, how will he be able to lead God’s church?⁵² If the man in question consistently finds himself lacking self-control in various areas, then Paul is indicating that this man should not be in pastoral leadership.

In this passage, νηφάλιος could be also translated to mean “sober-minded,” which refers to the elder’s ability to be clear-minded and level-headed. Sober-mindedness is essential in the life of the elder for at least two reasons. First, the elder is to be sober as it relates to issues that arise within the church that require attention. While there will always be varying degrees of crises to which he must attend, this man does not allow that which is important to take precedent over that which is urgent. Paul is speaking about a man who keeps his head level, prioritizes, and leads in a manner that others are able to follow. Second, this sense of sober-mindedness is essential as it relates to the elder’s personal spiritual desperation and need for the gospel of Jesus. As the elder is mindful of his personal proclivity to sin, it produces a deep desperation and dependence upon Christ, and out of this he finds fuel for his ministry to the body of Christ.

Σώφρων literally means of “sound mind or self-controlled” and relates to the elder’s ability to “exercise good judgement, discretion, and common sense.”⁵³ Strauch takes this a little further to mean that in the midst of conflict, this sense of self-control

⁵¹ John Stott, *The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1996), 48.

⁵² Stott, *The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus*, 48.

⁵³ Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 193.

drives the elder to view the conflict from an objective perspective.⁵⁴ This leads to the last character quality mentioned in this section. Paul states that this man is to be κόσμιος, or “respectable.”⁵⁵ The inward self-control that is held by the elder is made evident outwardly, and the result of such behavior is that is able to gain the respect of those that are entrusted to his leadership.

Self-mastery can be seen as the great oak grown in a pasture. While it is glorious to gaze upon and consider, its position is not acquired within a short period of time. It takes ages for the tree to stand full and strong. Even more, what is seen on the surface compares nothing to the depth and magnitude of its roots. In the same way, self-mastery is rooted in a frequented and deep well of grace found only in the gospel of Jesus. In illustrating this quality to his people, the elder reveals with his life that there is hope for those struggling with sin and are attempting to walk obediently.

Elders Are Hospitable

Paul continues in his qualifications by stating that the elder is to be φιλόξενος, which literally means to be “hospitable” or “loving strangers.”⁵⁶ Stott links this with the previous description—that the elder is to be self-controlled. His argument is rooted in the reality that as an individual has illustrated a sense of self-mastery, it is then that he is able to give of himself to others. Hospitality is fundamentally rooted in a desire to serve others above oneself, despite the cost.⁵⁷ Even more, Strauch defines “hospitality” as the “concrete expression of Christian love.”⁵⁸ Both of these commentators would contend that this

⁵⁴ Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 193.

⁵⁵ John Stott, *Guard the Truth: The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1996), 94-95.

⁵⁶ Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries*, s.v. “φιλόξενος.”

⁵⁷ Stott, *Guard the Truth: The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus*, 95.

⁵⁸ Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 194.

quality is rooted in a desire to express the love of God found in the gospel, and the expression of this love only happens through continuous self-sacrifice.

Hughes takes this thought a step further by suggesting that the elder is not simply to be hospitable, but to be one who pursues hospitality.⁵⁹ He references Romans 12:13 in which Paul is prescribing a list of instructions for the Romans, and tucked away in this list is the command, “Be given to hospitality.” The word Paul uses for “given” is *διώκοντες*, which literally means “to pursue.”⁶⁰ Based from this similar passage, one can assume that Paul is suggesting that the elder is one who is actively pursuing hospitality toward those within and outside of the church. While it is essential for an elder to be steeped in the deep knowledge of God and able to communicate this clearly to his congregation, hospitality would lend itself to be one of the indicators that this deep doctrinal truth has taken up personal residence within the heart of the man. Hospitality is the love of God being carried outwardly to others through the channel of God’s people.

Elders Are Able to Teach

The next way that Paul chooses to describe the elder is by his ability to teach. This qualification falls into the middle of a conversation of moral character. In the midst of discussing how an elder is to live outwardly, he states that this man must also be able to teach. This is the only reference to ability found in this set of qualifications and it speaks to the ability to speak forth the truth of God’s Word while also being able to refute it from error (Titus 1:5-9). As can be seen in various contexts, teaching can apply both corporately as a man preaches the Word of God, in addition to the way he individually disciplines others. In both cases, God’s Word is spoken and rightly taught, and this is a right and necessary part of the shepherding ministry of the elder. Apart from the man holding this office and

⁵⁹ Hughes and Chapell, *1-2 Timothy and Titus*, 81.

⁶⁰ Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries*, s.v. “*διώκοντες*.”

faithfully teaching and preaching the Word of God, the church will not be equipped as God has intended.

This qualification is one of the only qualifications that separates the office of elder from that of any other believer, including deacons. All believers are called to live by the standard set forward in 1 Timothy 3, but pastors must illustrate these character qualities if they are to serve the flock. When assessing a man's ability to communicate the Word in an effective manner, it would be helpful to discern a few specific criteria to provide an accurate judgement of his ability. To this point, Anyabwile suggests asking a few questions to consider ability. He raises questions regarding the following areas as a rubric for determining ability: his capability, his pastoral sensibility, his commitment to exposition, the edification of those who are taught, his theological soundness, his defense of the faith, and even his teachability.⁶¹ This idea seems to be the intended when Paul wrote to Titus (Titus 1:9).

Paul's lists several requirements for eldership in his letter to Titus, most of which are duplicated in 1 Timothy 3. Specifically, one sees listed the ability to teach the Word of God. However, in Paul's address to Titus, he expands this qualification: "He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it" (1:9). Here, Paul states that this man must not only be able to teach the Word of God, but he must be able to defend it and rebuke those that are contradicting it. In addition to instruction, there is also the necessity to defend that which is believed. The reason that Paul seems to incorporate this qualification in the list of character qualities is related to the way the elder conducts himself in the midst of this type of opposition. Specifically, when confronted with opposition to truth proclaimed, how does the elder respond? Does he respond in a manner that is full of grace? Does he bend at the opposition of others, or does he respond with harsh rebuke? In a setting that was surrounded by false teaching, it was necessary that the man who was

⁶¹ Anyabwile, *Finding Faithful Elders and Deacons*, 81-82.

leading people through the teaching of the Word of God demonstrate a sense of teachability and humility as he handles and addresses those who are standing against the faith.

Elder Disqualifications

After listing qualities that must be present in the life of the elder, he transitions into a discussion of qualities that, if present, would disqualify the man from the ministry altogether.⁶² These are disqualifiers that, if present, have the potential to ruin the ministry of the individual as well as the local church's. First, Paul states in 1 Timothy 3:3 that the man "must not be a drunkard." This phrase, *μη πάροινον*, is not unique to Paul's epistles; in fact, it is mentioned just a few verses later in Paul's address regarding deacons and in his charge to Titus (1 Tim 3:8; Titus 1:7). Within the multiple mentions of this phrase, it can be inferred that there was a problem with drunkenness within Ephesus, even particularly within the church. As Paul makes this admonition to the young pastor, he is stating that the elders that are to serve the church are to look and act radically different than those outside of the church. Further, and more emphatically, Paul was contending that the elder was to be enslaved to nothing other than Christ and Christ alone.

John Calvin contends this notion of not being a "drunkard" or "being addicted to much wine" would even include the subsequent actions that would follow with this type of behavior.⁶³ In both this letter and his letter to Titus, Paul seems to link drunkenness with being quick-tempered and violent. It could be argued that when the door of drunkenness is open, soon flows additional disqualifiers. To then be violent is to be vengeful, self-seeking, and lacking self-control, all of which are harmful for the ministry and even point to a deep-seated anger and discontentedness either with themselves or with God. Both are harmful to the ministry and the name of the gospel.

⁶² Anyabwile, *Finding Faithful Elders and Deacon*, 84.

⁶³ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, Calvin *Commentaries*, trans. William Pringle (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 80.

Rather than being violent, elders should be what Paul refers to as ἐπιεικῆ, which literally means “gentle or considerate.”⁶⁴ Elders are to be known by their gentleness and consideration of others, not their harshness and self-conceit. The word used here is common in Paul’s vocabulary as he mentions it in various places throughout his letters, and in most of the settings in which it is used, it is listed as a descriptor that is indicative of the work of the Spirit and not necessarily for eldership alone (Phil 4:5; Titus 3:2; Jas 3:17; 1 Pet 2:1-8). This type of gentle spirit is not one that comes naturally; in fact, the flesh produces just the opposite. The flesh carries a sense of self-absorption that easily fights for itself, but gentleness is submissive and minded toward others. This type of mindset and demeanor is evidence of the supernatural work of the Spirit and emulates the mindset of Christ. The presence of gentleness and consideration in the life of the elder allows for a type of love that is present despite hardship, difficulty, and discouragement. Gentleness and consideration of others allow for the elder to consistently lay his own agenda on the altar as he consistently submits himself to the Lordship of Jesus to be used for his glory and the building up of the saints. This attitude is to be present in the life of the elder.

Linked in a similar thought is the next disqualifier in the list. He states that the elder must also be ἄμαχον, which can be translated to mean “not quarrelsome but peaceable.”⁶⁵ This term can describe something as minimal as serious bickering or as extreme as physical combat and carries with it the idea that this type of conflict is being pursued. Practically, Paul was warning against an attitude that sought conflict. For Timothy, who was surrounded by false teaching on every side, this challenge took on a different meaning. As an elder, he was responsible for refuting and standing against what was taught by the false teachers. Standing firm in truth was a necessity for which Timothy was responsible, but the way he did it was to reflect the attitude and love of Christ. Paul

⁶⁴ Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries*, s.v. “ἐπιεικῆ.”

⁶⁵ Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries*, s.v. “ἄμαχον.”

discusses this notion further in his warnings both to Timothy and Titus as he calls them to avoid meaningless controversies over the law and other frivolous matters (2 Tim 2:23; Titus 3:9).

The habitual intentional pursuit of quarrels is anchored in a heart that seeks the glory of self. As those who are called into the ministry, elders are to lay down their own lives in light of living for the kingdom of God. As self is surrendered, so is the desire to win empty battles. Rather than seeking to create and spread strife, elders are called to be peacemakers. Those who are worthy of the calling commit their lives to the pursuit of peace; namely, living that others might experience the peace found in Jesus. This peace-seeking lifestyle is central to the elder's mission and focus.

Paul brings this section of disqualifiers to a close with a strong warning that the elder is ἀφιλάργυρον, which literally means “not loving money.”⁶⁶ This concept is familiar to the New Testament, as it is mentioned in a few other specific places. Paul states in Titus 1:7 that the elder must not be “greedy for gain.” The word Paul uses for “greedy” is αἰσχροκερδῆ and refers to personally profiting from dishonest gain.⁶⁷ Not only were false teachers indoctrinating people with lies, but they were also seeking to make personal profits from those they were teaching. They had ill intentions and self-absorbed motives. Later, in discussing certain characteristics of false teachers, Paul gives this similar address: “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs” (1 Tim 6:9-10). Paul is bringing out a distinguishing marker between unqualified false teachers and genuine men

⁶⁶ Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries*, s.v. “ἀφιλάργυρον.”

⁶⁷ Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries*, s.v. “αἰσχροκερδῆ.”

who are qualified to lead. These men should not love money, for the love of money does nothing but bring destruction.

Elders Lead in Their Homes

In addition to exemplary conduct, the elder is also to have an exemplary home. While this may seem something that goes without saying, the reality is that many men in ministry, and even some who desire the ministry, place their responsibilities within the church above their own family. This is problematic and many would excuse their misaligned assessment in light of the gospel work being accomplished. In reality, as this is measured against the backdrop of the continued list of qualifications in 1 Timothy 3, Paul calls Timothy to ensure that elders are leading within their home.

He states specifically in 1 Timothy 3:4-5, “He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church.” Within these two verses, Paul compares the family of the elder to that of the church and illustrates that if the elder is not able to lead within his own home with his own family, then there is no way he is able to then lead within the church with God’s people. Essentially, Paul is making the argument that the family is the first priority of the elder and if he is not seeking to shepherd and lead his family, then he is not fit to care for the church of God. Stott draws on the analogy Paul uses between the pastor’s family and the church as he says Paul uses the word οἶκος to refer to both the personal household of the elder and the household of God. Shepherding the personal household is considered training ground for the other.⁶⁸

How can it be determined that the elder is rightly shepherding and leading his family? Paul makes this clear. The implication presented is that the elder is to προϊστάμενον or “manage” his household καλῶς or “excellently,” and that the children within the home are to respond to the authority and leadership of the father “with all

⁶⁸ Stott, *Guard the Truth: The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus*, 98.

σεμνότητος [dignity] keeping his children ὑποταγῆ [submissive]” (1 Tim 3:4). John MacArthur states of this passage that “an elder’s children must bring honor to their parents. The obvious implication is that his family is ordered, disciplined, and not rebellious.”⁶⁹ Paul’s list of qualifications given to Titus defines this a little more clearly: “And his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination” (Titus 1:6). This charge is the basis for MacArthur’s conclusion that the children within the home are not to be rebellious. MacArthur would then even add that the children must also be believing.⁷⁰ While it may be difficult to add to the rubric of qualifications the belief and evident faith of the elder’s children, Paul does make clear that the home of the elder will be the measuring stick of his ability to manage the church of God. By no means does this mean that the elder’s home is to be a place of pure perfection, as this is far from the truth and based in a false reality that elders are not sinners. This does mean, however, that elders are to carry their conduct into their home and use it for the glory of God, the good of their family, and as a template for the congregation to emulate.

Elders Lead with Spiritual Maturity

Paul listed the prescriptions for elders as they relate to character and even their conduct within the home, and then he shifts his attention to the matter of maturity: “He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil” (1 Tim 3:6). The word that Paul uses for “recent convert” is νεόφυτον, which literally can be translated to mean “recently planted.”⁷¹ The reference is to a type of tree that has recently been planted that has yet to take on strong roots. Trees

⁶⁹ MacArthur, *1 Timothy*, 116.

⁷⁰ While MacArthur would affirm that the children of the elder are to be believers, this is not a unanimous perspective. In comparing both 1 Tim 3:4 and Titus 1:6, Merkle states that the word used by Paul in Titus 1:6 for “believers” is actually translated “faithful.” This take on the interpretation would fall in line with Paul’s address to Timothy, suggesting that the children are to be submissive and obedient. Merkle, *Why Elders?*, 72.

⁷¹ Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries*, s.v. “νεόφυτον.”

without strong roots are weak, unsecure, and prone to fall. Paul's implication is that it is unsafe for a man to serve as an elder if he has recently professed faith in Christ. This man's faith must be tested by difficulty and proven to be genuine, which is a process that takes time. What length of time did Paul have in mind? While there could be a correlation between age and maturity, no specific amount of time is listed in this passage and no specific age requirement is given for eldership. Paul has in mind the idea of spiritual maturity and maturity takes time and experience. This principle is seen in 1 Peter 1:6-7. Faith is tested and strengthened as it is faced with the heat of the flame. Dumas states, "It takes time for trials to result in a faith tested with genuineness."⁷²

Paul continues in this verse by stating the potential dangers of what could happen if a newly converted man is placed within eldership: "He [the elder] may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil" (1 Tim 3:6). The word Paul uses for "puffed up with conceit" is *τῦφος*, which is translated well by the ESV to mean "to be conceited." William Mounce notes that because new converts oftentimes lack spiritual maturity, placing them in leadership positions will present to them the potential for pride because of their quick advancement. As a result, it is likely that they will fall into the same snare as the devil.⁷³ Furthermore, he also notes that this phrase "puffed up with conceit" is used two other times in Paul's letters to Timothy (1 Tim 6:4; 2 Tim 3:4) as he addresses the attitude of false teachers.⁷⁴ This repetition used by Paul is indicative of a potential problem of pride that might have been pervasive in the church in which Timothy was pastoring.

Though not explicitly stated here, Paul implies that the elder is one who is humble. Humility recognizes personal insufficiency. Humility recognizes that ministry is

⁷² Dumas, *A Guide to Expository Ministry*, 44.

⁷³ William Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 180.

⁷⁴ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 180.

a gift of pure grace. Humility approaches Scripture both personally and corporately with a sense of desperation and delight. Humility is conformity into the image of Jesus and this shaping and molding of the believer into the image of Jesus is a precious process that takes time. As this time progresses and this man is continuously soaked in Scripture, he is reminded of his sinfulness and the great grace of God. Apart from this deep soaking, maturity cannot happen, which is why Paul's warning is relevant. If a new believer assumes the leadership role within a congregation, then he is at risk for falling into the terrible sin of pride, which will ultimately be his demise. Therefore, his maturity should be exemplary, and this maturity takes time to develop.⁷⁵

Elders Lead in Community

Last, Paul states that this elder must be exemplary in the way he is thought of by those outside of the community of faith. Specifically, he is talking about the perception of the elder from those who are not within the church. He states in 1 Timothy 3:7, "Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil." A clear implication seen in this verse is found in Satan's desire to attack the church. As Peter writes, he is seeking to devour believers, and even more specifically, those who are faithfully serving the church. The snare that is referenced here is the type of trap that would bring disgrace and shame upon the church, specifically. For an elder to be thought of poorly outside the church eventually affects the way that people view the church itself. Therefore, it is imperative that those outside the church yet still within the local community think well of the man being considered for eldership.

The list of qualifications is bookended with this charge. The main idea behind what Paul is mentioning is that unbelievers are to look at the lifestyle of elders and realize that there is something starkly different about them. This type of attraction serves the purpose of leading the way into gospel conversations and not conversely, causing those

⁷⁵ Thune, *Gospel Eldership*, 34-37.

outside the faith to have a hindered perspective on the reality of gospel truth. Benjamin Merkle states, “If a church’s polity allows certain unqualified people to become leaders, their negative example will affect not only those in the church but also those outside the church, possibly causing some to despise the gospel.”⁷⁶

From the directives of Paul, the elder is to model to the congregation what it looks like to rightly walk into a community of people who are unbelievers. To have a right reputation with those outside of the church, there must be contact with those outside the church. It is a non-debatable issue that men who are seeking to lead the congregation as elders should consistently engage the lost culture by which they are surrounded. For an elder to desire the office that he might teach the congregation to live their lives on mission for the sake of the gospel, the elder himself must personally exemplify this quality. If the Great Commission and the heart of God for the lost are taken seriously, then there must be intentional conversation and relationships built with those who are unbelievers. This man that shows himself to be qualified to serve in the gospel ministry must illustrate and exemplify how this is to be done rightly and well.

Through Paul’s high standards, he illustrated that character mattered. Moreover, godly character was a necessity in the life of an overseer. Paul lays before Timothy the description of a man that walks blamelessly in personal conduct, within his home, in personal maturity, and within his community. Furthermore, Paul desired that this lifestyle of blamelessness be put on display consistently for thorough examination before an individual was able to serve as an elder. He makes this clear in his charge to Timothy in 1 Timothy 5:22.

Elders Are to Be Thoroughly Examined: 1 Timothy 5:22

With the absence of a specific ordination process mentioned in Scripture, there is the supposition that this concept is altogether pointless, resting firmly in God’s calling

⁷⁶ Merkle, *Why Elders?*, 14.

and affirmation of the individual alone.⁷⁷ J. L. Dagg raises an objection regarding the supernatural call of the minister and their ordination: “If ordination does not make a minister of Christ and does not prove a man to be a minister of Christ, it may be dispensed with as useless.”⁷⁸ To this objection, he brings the argument of believer’s baptism. While baptism does not necessarily bring the believer into right relationship with God, it has clearly been commanded, thus should be observed. Dagg continues, “As every converted man ought to profess Christ by baptism, so everyone who has been called of God to the ministry, ought to enter on the work by ordination. The proof of the obligation in the latter case is not so clear from the Holy Scriptures, as in the former, but it is sufficiently clear to guide our practice.”⁷⁹ Richard Mayhue states, while there is no specific fault mentioned in Scripture regarding a lack of formal examination and vetting, there is similar freedom for a specific process.⁸⁰ While there might be discrepancies in the specific practice of ordination from each autonomous church, Paul gives a charge for the slow process of observation, as he advises Timothy: “Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure” (1 Tim 5:22).

In verses 17-25, Paul discusses a few practical instructions for elders, including a warning concerning their ordination, as he cautioned against “laying on of hands” hastily. Rather than quickly appointing men to the office of elder, Paul was charging Timothy with the responsibility to be cautious and discerning in the process. J. N. D. Kelly states concerning this passage, “This interpretation fits the context admirably; the realization of the liability of elders to fall into misconduct and of the awful judgment which awaits them

⁷⁷ Mayhue, “Ordination to Pastoral Ministry,” 112.

⁷⁸ Dagg, *Manual of Church Order*, 253.

⁷⁹ Dagg, *Manual of Church Order*, 254.

⁸⁰ Mayhue, “Ordination to Pastoral Ministry,” 112.

if they do underline the importance of using extreme care and deliberation when appointing such officials.”⁸¹

The words of Paul do not land without reason. In verse 17, the conversation of elders is brought back into view, especially regarding the way the church should provide for teaching elders. As his thought continues, he then shifts to discussing the way sinful pastors are to be rebuked and disciplined. Stott makes mention that this is Paul’s way of opposing ministers who are serving well and are deserving of enumeration versus those who are walking in sin and in need of rebuke.⁸² He then proceeds to verse 22, where he begins the discussion on the ordination of elders. Looking at the logic of Paul, however, he is actually stating that the best way to ensure that pastors are rebuked correctly is to be sure that they are ready for the ministry before giving them the responsibility. His rationale for ordaining slowly is so that elders are not ordained when they are not ready. This is a reiteration of his words just a few chapters earlier as he warns Timothy that one of the qualifications for an elder is that he must not be a recent convert (1 Tim 3:6).

While no specifics are stated here regarding a process for ordaining men into the ministry, Paul does provide an avenue for the autonomous church to implement a process that ensures caution and discernment. Obviously, the amount of wisdom in selection and inspection is subjective, but it must be present, especially considering the warning he gives following this charge: “Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure.”⁸³ Kelly states, “He [the chief pastor] could fairly be held in some degree responsible if the man whom he had ordained with improper haste became an occasion for scandal.”⁸⁴ Therefore, local churches must take

⁸¹ J. N. D. Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles: Timothy 1 & 2, Titus*, Harper New Testament Commentaries (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 127.

⁸² Stott, *The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus*, 67.

⁸³ Stott, *The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus*, 67.

⁸⁴ Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 128.

care to ordain men that have been vetted and observed before providing them opportunity for responsibility and pastoral leadership.

Conclusion

Anyabwile states, “The nobility of the office demands a noble character.”⁸⁵ As has been seen throughout these passages (1 Tim 3:1-8, 1 Tim 5:22, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Pet 5:1-5), pastors lead their congregations primarily with their lives. The role does not consist of merely teaching, preaching, and leading from a stage explicitly. Rather, pastors and elders lead on and off the stage through an exemplary lifestyle. They set the example for the congregations through their conduct, within their homes, through spiritual maturity, and even within their community. When examining an elder during the ordination process, the listed qualifications are to be evidenced before being appointed to the position. The observation and acknowledgement of these qualities, however, takes time and cannot be rushed, thus making sense of Paul’s caution to Timothy not to lay hands on someone too quickly without proper vetting.

⁸⁵ Anyabwile, *Finding Faithful Elders and Deacons*, 57.

CHAPTER 3

STRENGTHENING THE ORDINATION PROCESS AT HGBC BY IMPLEMENTING A PROCESS THAT HIGHLIGHTS CHARACTER

The previously discussed passages provide insight into the responsibility placed upon the elder as he leads and shepherds God's flock. The desire for this responsibility is given by the Lord and should never be taken lightly. It should be looked at as a heavy-weighted privilege and never as an opportunity to seek personal gain or advantage. It is set aside for those who are desirous of the ministry and even further, those who have shown themselves qualified for this ministry, meeting the specific requirements prescribed in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. However, as has been seen, no specific method for ordination is stated in Scripture.

In light of Paul's call to Timothy in 1 Timothy 5:22, churches are then to take measures to ensure that they are not laying hands on an individual quickly, but no specific metrics are provided that define what might be too quickly. Local churches are intentionally given liberty and autonomy in order to put men in place that will serve their body well as overseers. With the church's ultimate purpose in view, namely the glory of God through the worship and edification of the saints, the practices and procedures employed by the church should be stewarded to this end. Specifically, this purpose applies to the examination and ordination of elders. In order to determine the most effective procedure for examining men for pastoral ministry at HGBC, it is essential to understand the progression of the practice of ordination itself.

The Progression of Ordination

The concept of ordination finds its roots early in the Old Testament. In Richard Mayhue's survey of the Old Testament, he references a few particular moments in which

the word “ordain” is used. One of the first occurrences can be seen in Exodus 29 as Moses is ordaining Aaron and his sons into the office of priesthood.¹ Mayhue states, “[Moses] symbolically represented God’s will for Aaron to serve as high priest by laying hands on him, thus authenticating or ordaining Aaron for priestly ministry.”² Leviticus 16:32 and Numbers 3:3 provide further insight into this transitional moment for Aaron, as well. In these passages, it seems as if ordination carries two primary points of emphasis. First, it involves the act of intentionally setting apart for ministry. Second, this act of laying hands upon Aaron was an earthly commendation of Aaron from Moses to the people of Israel, illustrating the divine calling to which Aaron and his sons had been called.

The concept of laying on of hands for the purpose of ministry continues through the New Testament, as mentioned earlier (Acts 8:14-25, 9:10-18, 14:23, 19:1-7, 2 Cor 8:19). As men were given gifts by God, they are commissioned to use those gifts for the building up of God’s people. William Loyd Allen states, “Over time, the Christian church developed the ordination service to acknowledge the continuation of God’s missions in Christ to the church and the world through the Spirit-called and Spirit-gifted ministers.”³ This development within the church purposed itself in the acknowledgement of God’s grace in gifting individuals with the ability to lead God’s people into greater Christlikeness.

As the church expanded throughout the Middle Ages, so did the significance of ordination. John Hammett suggests the primary reason for the increased importance placed

¹ Exodus 29 provides the instructions from God to Moses regarding the steps in the process of ordaining Aaron and his sons to the priesthood of Israel. The first section of the chapter (vv. 1-37) focuses on the specifics to which the priests were to be consecrated and set apart for the work to which they were called. Vv. 9, 29, and 35 make reference to the specific act of ordination.

² Richard Mayhue, “Ordination to Pastoral Ministry,” in *Pastoral Ministry: How to Shepherd Biblically*, by John MacArthur and Master’s Seminary Faculty (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 109.

³ William Loyd Allen, “The Meaning of Ordination,” Baptist Heritage in the 21st Century, accessed April, 2020, <http://www.baptisthistory.org/21stcentury/ordination.html>.

upon ordination was rooted in apostolic succession, resulting in apostolic authority granted by Jesus to the apostles.⁴ This sacramental view of ordination, held primarily by Roman Catholics, Orthodox, and some Anglicans, intentionally created a divide between the laity and the clergy.⁵ This divide was not just limited to the functions of these two groups of individuals, but to an essential difference between the laity and the clergy.⁶ Allen would add that by the sixteenth century, the Roman Catholic church had taken the original intention of ordination from the simple recognition of God's call and gifting upon the local leader of a congregation to the heights of an "indelible mark given by God . . . for the purpose of mediating grace to the laity."⁷ With the Roman Catholic perception of ordination, there is a clear separation of clergy and the laity, giving ordination sacramental status.

This shift eventually came to a head with the rise of the Protestant Reformation and the emphasis placed upon the priesthood of believers. With this added emphasis to such a crucial doctrine of Christianity, Luther embraced the finished work of Christ, providing all men that profess faith, regardless of elder or layman, access into the presence of God. This concept of the priesthood of believers attacked at its very core the Roman Catholic persuasion of holy ordination. However, though it might seem that these two terms are mutually exclusive, Luther recognized that the ministry of the Word was the highest ministry of the church and should be set apart through ordination.⁸ While it is necessary to state that ordination has no sacramental value, there is the responsibility of

⁴ John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 206.

⁵ E. Glenn Hinson, "Ordination in Christian History," *Review and Expositor* 78, no. 4 (1981): 485.

⁶ Hinson, "Ordination in Christian History," 485.

⁷ Allen, "The Meaning of Ordination."

⁸ Howard Batson, "Pastoral/Lay Concerns in Ordination," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 29 (2002): 137-54.

recognizing the ministry of the Word as primary within the church, allowing for ordination to be the means by which this is accomplished. During this shift in understanding a few key observations played a vital role in the development and understanding of Baptist ordination.

God's Sovereignty Acknowledged in Ordination

As observation is given toward this recalibrated shift on the understanding of ordination, a few specifics caused a refocusing on the solemnity of the responsibility that was given during ordination. For instance, the Charleston Association of 1774 in the Summary of Church Discipline, states,

The elders [ministers] being satisfied with regard to the gifts, graces, soundness of principles, and becoming life and conversation of the candidate; the church being met, and giving their suffrage for his ordination, a sermon is to be preached on the occasion, and he declaring his willingness and inward call to take upon him the sacred office, *1 Cor. 9:16*. A public confession of his faith will be required, then the ministers lay their hands on his head and by prayer set him apart to the great work of the ministry. This done, they give him the right hand of fellowship, *Gal. 2:9*, and then one of the ministers publicly gives him a charge or directory how to behave himself in the house of God, *2 Tim. 4:5*. The solemnity is concluded by prayer, singing, and a blessing on the whole congregation.⁹

Ordination carried weight, but what created this sense of somberness toward this act?

After all, men being ordained then were no different than men being ordained today, yet their approach to the act of ordination seems to be more reverential and significant.

Through the observation of these perspectives, it is clear that there was a firm belief in the sovereignty of God in granting men with gifts and character fitting for ministry. P. H. Mell states,

Ordination is not designed to authorize the subject to preach. God gives that authority, and not the Presbytery. Men are ordained, not that they might become preachers, but because they are preachers already. God calls them to be such, bestows upon them

⁹ Mark Dever, ed., "Charleston Association of 1774," in *Polity: Biblical Arguments on How to Conduct Church Life* (Washington, DC: Center for Church Reform, 2001), 120.

the gifts and qualifications, rolls upon their hearts the burden of souls, kindles a fire in their bones, and compels them to cry, “Wo is me if I preach not the gospel.”¹⁰

Moreover, Andrew Fuller, in his ordination sermon for William Carey, stated that ministers are “received for and are given to you by Christ . . . gifts of Christ . . . servants . . . a shepherd.” He states further in the same ordination sermon that these ministers are to be received as “the spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ.”¹¹

Jonathan Edwards held a similar disposition regarding the provision of Christ for his sheep by sending capable pastors to lead local flocks. In an ordination sermon for David White in 1736, Edwards preached Luke 10:17-18 and indicates that ministers are sent forth by Christ though an external call, being visible to others, but also though an inward call, being that which keeps them and holds them in the work.¹² Not only did Edwards hold fast to an unwavering view of God’s sovereignty in the calling of the minister, but he held it to the extent that it was God’s sovereignty that sustained him in that very office.

The writings of some of the early Baptists reflect what would seem to be a deep dependency upon the Sovereign to provide the church with men fit to lead and serve the local church. Conversely, apart from the gifting of these men by the Lord, the church would have been in need. It is never the responsibility of the pastor to think of himself as someone deserving of any grandeur or applause, there should, however, be the humble recognition that the men who are called to pastor and shepherd a local body have been specifically called and placed in that local congregation by God alone. A high regard for ordination should be grown in the fertile bed of gratitude.

¹⁰ P. H. Mell, “Corrective Church Discipline with a Development of the Scriptural Principles Upon Which It Is Based,” in Dever, *Polity*, 459.

¹¹ Andrew Fuller, “Importance of Christian Ministers Considered as the Gift of Christ: Ordination Sermon of William Carey,” August 1, 1787, accessed July 13, 2020, <https://dashhouse.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/fuller-ordination-sermons.pdf>.

¹² Jonathan Edwards, “The Minister before the Judgement Seat of Christ,” 1736, in *The Salvation of Souls*, ed. Richard Bailey and Gregory Wills (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), 76-77.

The Church's Role in Ordination

In addition to recognizing God's sovereignty in ordination, Samuel Jones states of the church's role in ordaining men into the office,

They must be called of the church, whose duty it is to look out for useful gifts; and when they have reason to hope that they discover some appearance thereof in any, they should move such to the trial of their gifts; or the person, whose mind is impressed, may offer himself, I Tim. iii. 1. . . . If, after any one has been on trial some time, the appearances are promising, the church ought to give him a letter of licence. . . . The essence of ordination consists in the call of the church, in their voting in his favour, and designating him by said vote to the ministerial work, which power it was necessary should be lodged somewhere, with a view to maintain order; that no person who deems himself called and qualified for the office, might enter upon it without the approbation of others, and this power was lodged in the church. But nevertheless, it is expedient and necessary, in order to give the designation weight and solemnity, that there should be a public and formal procedure, when we instate a person in the ministerial office, Luke x. 1. Acts xiv. 23. Mark iii. 14.¹³

According to Jones, it is fitting for the church to play a pivotal role in the setting apart of a man to ministry. Not only are these men to be called by God, but also called by the church as the church recognizes the giftings of the man. Moreover, Jones further claimed that the unless the church were to recognize the call and the gifting of the man, ordination would not be possible. He is explicit here—not simply is he referring to the elders of the church, but he is speaking of the church as a whole.¹⁴

John L. Dagg similarly states, “A hearty concurrence of the church his necessary in the ordination; and without it, a presbytery should never act. When a candidate has a threefold testimony, of his own conscience, of the presbytery, and the church, he may proceed to labor in the ministry with an assurance that he is sent forth by the holy ghost.”¹⁵ Therefore, when it was time to ordain, the formal procedure was a time of celebration over the faithfulness of God in providing a man ready for the ministry. This

¹³ Samuel Jones, “Treatise of Church Discipline,” in Dever, *Polity*, 143.

¹⁴ Jones, “Treatise of Church Discipline,” 143-44.

¹⁵ John L. Dagg, *Manual of Church Order* (Charleston, SC: Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1859), 251. By the use of the phrase “presbytery,” Dagg is referring to the group of ordained elders that are responsible for vetting both the doctrine and character of the candidate. This group of individuals would bring the individual before the local church for a vote of affirmation before ordination.

strikes a familiar note of semblance with the warning attached to Paul's charge to Timothy about laying hands too quickly on ordination candidates. The church carries a weight of responsibility in ordaining men and will subsequently carry the responsibility if someone is ordained prematurely.

Ordination and the Weighty Call to Pastor

While it was clear that pastors were not to be viewed in a more sacred light than any other believers, an evident holy responsibility was reserved for the position. Because of this holy weight and responsibility, ordination carried significance. To this point, Dagg states,

But the ministry appears, among the people of God, like the mountains on a continent, forming a part of it, and closely united with surrounding lands. Eminent spiritual gifts distinguish the ministers; but the same spirit that actuates them, pervades the whole body of Christ . . . but ministers are distinguished by their superior qualifications for service, from the ordinary mass of Christians, like mountains rising above the common undulations of the surrounding landscape.¹⁶

Further discussing the "superior qualifications for service," Dagg continues,

The special qualifications which the Holy Spirit bestows, bind him on whom they are bestowed to use them in the service of Christ. They are given to fit him for this service, and they constitute a divine call for him to engage in it. They are not given to confer a privilege merely, but they are a solemn call to duty—a call demanding the service of the whole life.¹⁷

Dagg is quick to state that there was nothing significant about the ministers being ordained, but he spoke highly of the office to which they would devote their lives. Therefore, it is essential that these men be observed, tested, and proved before being given partnership in the gospel ministry.

Ordination and Godly Character

Lastly, a sense of somberness came with the act of ordination because of the necessity of evident godly character that was to consistently be displayed in the lives of

¹⁶ Dagg, *Manual of Church Order*, 242.

¹⁷ Dagg, *Manual of Church Order*, 243.

ministers. In the observation of ordination sermons by Andrew Fuller, his thoughts on the requirement for godly character in ministers is convicting. In fact, in the ordination sermon for Robert Fawcner in 1787, he points the ordination candidate to imitate the character of Barnabas, as seen in Acts 11:24. In this text, Barnabas is described as a “good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.” Fuller suggests that description was an indication that Barnabas was a man filled with godly character. To this point, the minister lays the challenge before the young candidate to value this character “at home in the family . . . in your private affairs . . . in your public exercises . . . in the general tenor of your behavior . . . above worldly greatness . . . [and] above mental greatness.”¹⁸ This challenge was not given in isolation.

For instance, he states in an expository charge to a young minister in 1823 regarding 1 Timothy 4:15-16, “Take heed then to thyself. Look to your heart, to your motives, to the state of your soul before God. If all be right with God, it will not be difficult to persevere in your work. If all be right with God, it will not be difficult to persevere all right with your fellow creatures. This will follow of itself.”¹⁹ Within this sermon, he challenges the young minister to hold fast to Paul’s charge to Timothy to keep a close watch upon his own actions, motives, and conversations. His point rests in the reality that unless the minister is first concerned with his own walk with God, there would be no genuine desire to see a congregation follow in the same. To this point, he states, “It is but to little purpose to watch the souls of others if we neglect our own. There is but little ground to hope that our counsel will be of use to others, unless they are prefaced by example.”²⁰

¹⁸ Andrew Fuller, “The Qualifications and Encouragement of a Faithful Minister Illustrated by the Character and Success of Barnabas: Ordination Sermon for Robert Fawcner,” October 31, 1787, in *The Complete Works of Rev. Andrew Fuller* (Boston: Lincoln and Edmands and Co., 1833), 2:183-84.

¹⁹ Andrew Fuller, “Ordination Sermon by Mr. Fuller, 1823,” accessed July 13, 2020, <http://baptisthistoryhomepage.com/fuller.sermon.ordination.html>.

²⁰ Fuller, “Ordination Sermon by Mr. Fuller, 1823.”

To Fuller, character was a non-negotiable in the life of the minister and ordination provided a means by which these servants of God could be vetted and examined. To Fuller, it was more than a rubber stamp of approval, but it served the purpose of validating externally an internal call of God. Furthermore, character examination was the primary purpose in ordination in the eyes of Fuller, as he admits that he would have withheld from participating in ordination if it were not for vetting out men who were unsound or unworthy in character.²¹ This type of character that reflects a deep desperation for gospel sustenance was not just needed at the doorway of ministry, but was to be a pattern consistently displayed in ministers throughout their personal ministries. In another charge to a potential minister, he addresses the candidate through the lens of Ezra 7:10. Upon expounding the text, he addresses the necessity of any minister of the gospel preparing the heart to seek the Lord. This heart preparation is active and direct. On this preparation, he states, “Of this preparation we have to speak, and it consists in prayer, and self-examination, and mediation. He states even further that this preparation is “not only necessary for entrance into the pastoral office, but also for your continuance in it.”²²

Fuller was not the only individual that valued the primacy of character in the lives of ordained ministers. Samuel Davies, in the ordination service for Henry Patillo, states very similar sentiments:

A complete ministerial character is a constellation of all those graces and virtues which can adorn human nature; and the lack of any one of them leaves a hideous effect in it that breaks the symmetry and uniformity, and renders it less amiable and less useful. . . . The love of God, and the love of man, and all the various modifications of this sacred passion—ardent devotion and active zeal, charity, compassion, meekness, patience, and humility—the graces of the Christian, are necessary to finish this character, and make us able ministers of the New Testament.²³

²¹ Fuller, *The Complete Works of the Reverend Andrew Fuller*, 2:661.

²² Fuller, *The Complete Works of the Reverend Andrew Fuller*, 2:397.

²³ Samuel Davies, “The Love of Souls, a Necessary Qualification for the Ministerial Office: The Ordination of Henry Patillo, July 13, 1758,” accessed July 13, 2020, <http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/articles/index.php?view=article&aid=27310>.

In closing this sermon, he discusses the way in which the minister was to practically keep an eye on his character to ensure godliness: “We often preach to others, but let us once preach to ourselves . . . though I doubt not but I might address myself to all my fathers and friends, without offense, I must indulge myself in soliloquy and preach to the one that needs it most. I mean myself.”²⁴

It would seem to be the consensus that godly character did not simply enhance the ministry of an individual but was completely dependent upon its evidence. Ordination for these individuals provided a means in which this necessary ingredient could be observed and examined, knowing that apart from the presence of this type of character, the man would have never been given the rights to ministerial fellowship.

Ordination in the SBC

Though there are continued variations on the methodology and intent of ordination, ordination should serve as an act of worship on behalf of the congregation as they recognize the gift of God’s grace in equipping men to faithfully serve and lead their congregation. It carries no significance or special empowerment for the work of the ministry, but simply recognizes the Equipper of the church as God himself. The process of ordination, though varying from church to church, will generally consist of a time of doctrinal vetting through a council of elders or leaders followed by the service in which the man is prayed over and affirmed in his gifting and call.

Currently with the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), because of the autonomy of the local church, there is no set standard for ordination. The SBC allows for each local church to implement its own process with the assumption that all churches are providing a strong means of vetting potential elders. However, because of autonomy and lack of research regarding processes, there is no certainty that this is being done in a way that ensures that ordained elders are above reproach. In fact, much the opposite has been

²⁴ Davies, “The Love of Souls.”

seen recently in light of the SBC sexual abuse allegations that have been brought to the surface. These misappropriations illustrate a lack of blamelessness in men who are serving in pastoral and elder capacities within SBC churches.

Current Practices in the SBC

The question that must be raised is, what must the church do to ensure that these misappropriations do not happen again? More specifically, how can the church ensure that the men being ordained are truly above reproach, as called for in 1 Timothy 3? An immediate reply to this question quickly throws into question the current vetting process that churches are using as they seek to ordain someone to eldership. To this point, Thomas Rainer discusses four specific thoughts concerning ordination in the SBC: “Autonomy is not an excuse for irresponsibility, background checks should become the normative in the ordination process, we should not assume the ordination of a pastor or staff member from another church is sufficient for our church, and leaders should insist on vigorous examinations of candidates for ordination.”²⁵

In recent research regarding the process for ordination of several churches within the SBC, Jason Lowe illustrates that the consensus in many SBC churches is that the process for ordination is minimal and lacking. For instance, out of over 500 willing participants that agreed to take the survey, 29.4 percent answered that, during their ordination council, the topic of sexual purity was not addressed. Even more shocking is that less than 49.1 percent reported that ministry expectations were not addressed during their council. Additionally, 58 percent of men reported that their ordination service was planned on the same day as their ordination council and even 2 percent were ordained in

²⁵ Thomas Rainer, “A Few Thoughts about Ordination in the Southern Baptist Convention,” February 16, 2019, <https://thomrainer.com/2019/02/a-few-thoughts-about-ordination-in-the-southern-baptist-convention/>.

service before actually being questioned by a council.²⁶ An evident flaw can be seen in these ordination practices. While it is possible that many of the sexual misappropriations²⁷ that have come from the pastoral office are isolated events in the life of the pastor, most of these failures are the outward evidence of an ongoing internal sin struggle. If ordination practices were intentional about vetting and examining elders, there is the likelihood that these misappropriations could have been avoided.

In the same report, Lowe notes that 67 percent of men stated that their ordination process required no previous training before being ordained, with only 12.3 percent requiring seminary education. There were also questions regarding events following ordination. Participants were given the opportunity to openly express opinions about their ordination process and several mentioned that their examination should have been more thorough with others stating that it seemed as if their ordination was nothing more than a rubber stamp, considering that many had ordination services planned the same day as their examination. Lastly 94.8 percent mentioned that churches in the SBC need to do more regarding ordination. The evidence speaks loudly: churches need to reconsider how they approach the ordination of men into the ministry.²⁸

Weaknesses in the Process

This evidence points to the reality that there are evident weaknesses within the process of ordination, not just in one or two churches, but in many churches across the SBC. In observing this noted trend, a few things must be acknowledged regarding the weaknesses that are currently present. First, generally speaking, ordination practices do

²⁶ Jason Lowe, "A Study of Ordination Practices of Southern Baptist Churches," 2019, accessed January 2019, <https://jasonlowe.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/sbc-ordination-practices-report.pdf>, 16-22.

²⁷ Robert Downen, Lisa Olsen, and John Tedesco, "Abuse of Faith: 20 Years, 700 Victims: Southern Baptist Sexual Abuse Spreads as Leaders Resist Reforms," *Houston Chronicle*, February 10, 2019, <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/investigations/article/Southern-Baptist-sexual-abuse-spreads-as-leaders-13588038.php>.

²⁸ Lowe, "A Study of Ordination Practices," 29-39.

not provide a thorough examination of individual character and fitness for ministry. While ordination councils provide an opportunity to consider the doctrinal knowledge and understanding of the candidate, though necessary, it alone is not capable of examining someone enough to affirm their gifts and calling for the ministry. Examination of character is just as important and character examination takes time. Therefore, councils are insufficient by themselves. They must be supplemented with thorough character examination.

Moreover, over the last decade, numerous pastors have fallen within the ministry. Many have fallen with sexual misconduct, others have fallen in misappropriation of authority, and still others have taken their own lives. In a recent article, Scott Sauls provides insight into a few individuals who disqualified themselves altogether because of secret depression and anxiety.²⁹ Externally, these men had the appearance that they had it altogether, when in reality, these men were legitimately struggling. While some struggles do begin as men serve and lead, others are brought into ministry. Oftentimes when men fall in ministry it is merely the outward blossom of a seed that has been planted for years. While there is no way to ensure that a man will not fall into sin and bring shame upon the name of the gospel, a strengthened process for ordination can provide a potential safeguard. If churches, rather than just seeking to examine an individual doctrinally, spend time assessing the individual's lifestyle, character, and struggles, they can be more confident of the affirmation they provide in ensuring his call and fit for ministry.

Second, seminary degrees do not equate to qualification for ministry. Based on some of the findings in the report conducted by Lowe, it would seem that while theological knowledge may be vetted, character is often assumed. While strong theological prowess is essential in ministry, it does not automatically qualify someone for the ministry. Seminary is vital and serves as an asset for ministry effectiveness, but education alone is

²⁹ Scott Sauls, "Thoughts on the Rise and Falls of Pastors," accessed August 16, 2020, <https://scottsauls.com/blog/2019/05/23/pastors/>.

not sufficient to qualify an individual for the ministry. Kevin DeYoung, in his article about the necessity of seminary in ministry, states that the seminary has the opportunity to prepare men for the ministry in ways that the church cannot. For instance, “seminaries are better equipped to teach languages, systematic theology, church history, and biblical exegesis than the best church.”³⁰ Seminary, however, is only part of the equation. DeYoung goes on to suggest that in the same way that seminary is only able to provide certain aspects of preparation for ministry, the church also has the ability to provide in ways that seminaries cannot.³¹ When seminary is partnered with the qualities found in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, it has the ability to produce a long-tenured ministry. While it would seem ideal for blameless conduct to be the inevitable result of strong theology, this is not always the case and cannot be assumed as men are ordained for ministry. Seminary alone does not qualify men for pastoral ministry; therefore, ordination of men into ministry should not be hinged upon the completion of a degree alone.

Last, the church’s autonomy does not permit indifference when it comes to ordination practices. Rainer mentions, “Autonomy is not an excuse for irresponsibility.”³² The church’s autonomy is something clearly prescribed throughout the New Testament. With this autonomy, there has been limited instruction for how to install men to lead as elders. The opportunity for individuality and self-sufficiency should not lead churches to indifference or irresponsibility when it comes to selecting elders. This responsibility should be heightened in view of autonomy, knowing that the church will give an account for the men selected to lead. In fact, Paul speaks specifically to this in 1 Timothy 5:22 as he speaks in reference to laying hands on an elder too quickly: “Take no part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure.” He is referencing the reality that if the church selects men

³⁰ Kevin DeYoung, “Why the Church Still Needs the Seminary,” October 4, 2013, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/why-the-church-still-needs-the-seminary/>.

³¹ DeYoung, “Why the Church Still Needs the Seminary.”

³² Rainer, “A Few Thoughts about Ordination.”

to lead who are not qualified, then the church shares in the sins of the elder. Though ordination is not something to be viewed sacramentally within the church, it helps to ensure that the men placed in leadership positions are qualified both in doctrine and in character. The tendency to look down on ordination practices because of what it has become in the Roman Catholic sphere should not be a reason that Baptist churches push away altogether. An ordination process that offers thorough character vetting can protect the church's reputation, ensure the candidate's fitness for the ministry, and ultimately honor the Lord.

Ordination at HGBC

HGBC holds a high view of the pastoral office, and as such, places an emphasis upon installing men who are fit for pastoral ministry. While a current process is in place, there is room and the necessity for improvement as it relates to a careful vetting of character. The current process can be broken down into five different stages and is built upon theological understanding and preexisting relationships. The current ordination practice is recorded in the church's constitution and bylaws and states:

When an individual expresses a desire to this church to become a candidate for ordination to the ministry in Baptist churches within our denomination, the church shall, upon recommendation of the senior minister and deacons, proceed to examine the candidate. The candidate for ordination shall be examined either: (1) according to the current, customary procedure for the local association of which the church is a member or (2) by the church's own examination council selected by the executive pastor for this purpose as outlined in Section 1 "Licensing" above. The examining council must have three fourths (3/4) of its members in favor of ordaining the candidate to continue with the ordination proceedings. If the above conditions are met, the issue of ordaining the candidate shall be presented to the church for a vote. Prior to the vote, a notice of this upcoming ballot shall have been published in the church newsletter. The vote shall be taken by secret ballot at any church business meeting. A three-fourths (3/4) majority vote is required for the church to proceed with the ordination.

Based on the statement in the constitution and bylaws, there are four steps in the process of ordination at HGBC: Initial Interest, Personal Examination, Ordination Council, and Church Affirmation.

Initial Interest

First, as an individual begins to feel that he has been called into the ministry and therefore engages with a pastor showing interest in the ordination process, his name is brought before the Executive Staff Committee for review. The Executive Staff Committee is comprised of the Senior Pastor, Associate Senior Pastor, and two Campus Pastors, representing both campuses of HGBC. As the name is discussed, the pastors look with discernment at the lifestyle and reputation of the individual to determine if anything would immediately stand in the way of his pursuit of ordination. For instance, the individual's history of attendance and participation at the church, his family, and his conduct are all considered before the process officially begins. If nothing immediately disqualifies the individual from the process, then he passes into the second part of the ordination process, consisting of completing an Ordination Application and a Theological Questionnaire created and given by the Executive Staff.

Personal Examination

The Personal Examination portion of the ordination process begins as the candidate completes the Ordination Application (OA) and the Theological Questionnaire (TQ). The OA asks questions regarding the candidate's personal testimony, call to ministry, spiritual health, and personal lifestyle. The OA serves as a means of getting to know the details and intricacies of the candidate's life, while the TQ is designed to provide insight into the candidate's depth of theological knowledge. These documents are reviewed by the Executive Staff, a board of deacons, and pending approval by both of these committees, the candidate is given an opportunity to sit before a council of pastors for further examination.

Ordination Council

The third step in the process involves the candidate sitting before a chosen group of pastors and lay leaders that make up the Ordination Council (OC). According to the Constitution and Bylaws, the OC will be a group of five to seven ministers and deacons

that will examine the individual's call and fitness to the gospel ministry (bylaw 29). The Senior Pastor assembles this group of men intentionally to ensure that there is an unbiased perspective of the candidate. During this council, questions regarding theology, ministry practice, ministry experience, and personal spiritual disciplines are covered thoroughly, providing the council an opportunity to discern the ministry call as best as possible. Upon the completion of this council, and a three-fourths vote in favor of ordination, the candidate will proceed to the next step in the process, which is a vote among the church.

Affirmed by the Church

The fourth step in this process involves the congregation's vote in favor of ordination. The nature of this vote is secret ballot and it takes place at an appointed business meeting. The vote must be planned in advance and requires a three-fourths majority in favor of ordination to proceed with the process. The basis for the advance notice is dually founded. First, planning the date out allows for proper promotion and planning, but it also serves as a time for the church to bring issues and concerns to the Executive Staff regarding the individual's character or lifestyle. Once the vote has been approved with a three-fourths majority, an ordination service is scheduled for the candidate.

Ordination

Ordination services at HGBC are intended to be a somber and celebratory time for both the candidate and their family. The candidate plays a role in planning the ordination service and the Senior Pastor preaches a message specifically tailored for the candidate and his family. The goal behind the message is to lay the full weight of the pastoral office on the shoulders of the candidate, pointing him to the truth that the gospel of Jesus and supernatural power of the Holy Spirit are the only hope for effective ministry. With the message preached, the candidate is then brought before the church and hands

are laid on him, or he and his wife. While there may be questions regarding the act of ordination, especially within the circle of Baptists regarding who actually is laying hands on the one being ordained, this act of laying on of hands has a firm foundation in Scripture (Acts 6:6, 13:3, 14:23; 1 Tim 4:14; 1 Tim 5:22).³³ At HGBC, ordained pastors proceed to lay their hands on the candidate in a time of prayer over the individual and his commitment to the ministry.

Areas of Improvement with the Ordination Process at HGBC

The process for ordination at HGBC allows a multi-level vetting process, provides an opportunity for select leadership to peer behind the curtain into the life of the candidate, and places a weightiness upon the call to pastoral ministry. In its current form, the process serves its purpose well in ensuring that the men that are ordained into the ministry at HGBC are fit for the ministry, but while this process is adequate, it can be amplified and strengthened. In looking at this process, while it is effective, it can be improved for the sake of the body and the pastoral staff at HGBC in four areas: Personal Examination, Clarification on Education Requirements, and Intentionally Equipping Men for Ministry.

Personal Examination

First, in observing the ordination process at HGBC, an initial area of improvement can be made when it comes to the personal examination of the candidate. The process, as mentioned, provides an opportunity for a select group of individuals to look into the lives of those they ordain, but only through the means of the OA and TQ. Considering that HGBC typically only ordains those who are currently serving on staff or who have been around the church for a while, this approach is adequate. However, what is adequate is not always most effective. The OA and TQ are essential and should be part

³³ Batson, "Pastoral/Lay Concerns in Ordination," 144.

of the vetting process, but they cannot be relied upon alone to determine the candidate's fitness for ministry, especially when it comes to personal character. While theological understanding can be assessed through the means of a questionnaire and even a council, the test of personal character is proven over the course of time with intentional prodding. Within the current framework of the stated process, the only objective time that is dedicated to examination of the candidate happens within the confines of a completed document that is assumed truth. Where this process could be strengthened would be through the implementation of an extended character evaluation where the candidate's personal life and family are put on display for a prolonged period of time. This extended evaluation would ensure that what was professed with the mouth was made evident in the way the candidate lived. Chapter 4 will discuss in detail how this amendment will be unfolded.

Clarification on Educational Requirements

Second, while it is not necessarily stated in the Constitution and Bylaws, there is an unspoken rule that a Master of Divinity degree from a credible seminary is a prerequisite to ordination at HGBC. This is a contentious issue, considering that many men of the faith who have impacted thousands did not attend seminary. Moreover, it is God that calls men to lead and shepherd his flock, not seminaries. However, Paul is clear in his letter to Timothy that he was to study Scripture intently so as to handle it rightly (2 Tim 2:15). Regardless of personal opinion regarding the necessity for a pastor to attend and successfully complete seminary, it cannot be denied that the pastor is to consistently pursue a greater knowledge of scripture.

Albert Mohler speaks to the place of education in the life of the pastor as he discusses that one the greatest roles of the pastor is to be a theologian. In fact, he states specifically that the pastor's call is "inherently theological."³⁴ For a man to be called to

³⁴ Albert Mohler, *The Pastor as Theologian* (Louisville: The Southern Baptist Seminary

lead a local congregation into greater conformity to Jesus by holding fast to truth and defense against false teaching, it is implicit that the man leads with the Word of God with which he should be intimately familiar. If the man leading God's people is not steeped in theological understanding and given to theological thinking, then the man cannot adequately complete the task to which he has been called. While seminaries are not capable of making a man exemplary in character, they are effective at preparing men with a quiver of necessary resources to lead local congregations. The hope through seminary training is that men are able to walk away with a strong bend toward theological thinking, Christ-centered hermeneutics, understanding of original languages, and a deepened desire to study Scripture for the glory of God and the good of the church. While seminary alone is not enough, it does provide many an opportunity to better prepare themselves theologically and doctrinally to lead God's people, which is why HGBC has allotted to make this an unspoken practice for some time. While this is an unspoken expectation, it would be advantageous for the church to make this a clear objective for men pursuing ordination.

Equipping Ordination Candidates

Third, in conjunction with the church requiring a seminary education prior to ordination, it would be advantageous for the church to become an intentional equipping agent for men seeking ordination. While most men seeking ordination are currently serving on staff with HGBC and are gaining ministerial experience prior to ordination, it would be helpful to install an objective curriculum that focuses attention of ministerial education and preparation. Within the current framework of the ordination process, there are no guarantees that the men who are ordained are entering ministry with the right expectations toward the ministry they are entering or the required personal character qualities. The church, specifically HGBC, has a great opportunity to thoroughly train and equip its pastors to shepherd faithfully. This equipping should be intentional.

Publications, 2006), 5.

Conclusion

In an association of churches where ordination means many different things to many different individuals, HGBC has the opportunity to sharpen its process for the purpose of pipelining men who are as theological sharp as they are godly. Through identifying weaknesses and seeking to find appropriate resolutions, HGBC could carve the path for an effective and meaningful ordination process that delivers the weightiness and understanding that the call to the pastoral ministry beckons. Throughout chapter 4, resolutions to these current weaknesses will be suggested with the hope of instilling a new and more effective process.

CHAPTER 4

DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING THE PROCESS

Throughout the research and development of the process, I was made aware that there was a severe drought in the SBC regarding pastoral ordination. Most insufficiency, I believe, stems from the lack of a universal standard for ordination. While it may seem impossible for there to be a universal standard by which churches are to abide, this by no means affords churches the opportunity for careless ministerial appointment. Ideally, autonomous churches would take their given autonomy and leverage it to ensure that men appointed to the ministry are vetted and filtered as much as possible. Perfection cannot be expected, and grace should abound, but there should never be a question of doctrine or character when men are ordained. For the most part, the requirement of a master's level seminary degree, in addition to an already existing theologically-minded council, ensure that doctrine is sound, giving churches the opportunity to examine and equip the man with exemplary character and pastoral wisdom. In an attempt to modify the pastoral ordination process at HGBC, I created a Pastoral Ordination Questionnaire, developed a Pastoral Ordination Training Course that was pilot-tested on two individuals, and also developed a church-wide implementation process.

Proposed New Ordination Process

As stated, the proposal of the new process for examining pastors focuses on character examination and ministry equipping and in no way indicts on the previous process for being inferior. The previous process that has served the church for the last several years has proven to be quite effective. However, just because something has been the standard for a long period of time does not necessarily mean it is the most effective.

With that said, additions to the process serve as an extension of the already existing shell and provide a means of furthering its reach in examination.

Table 1 shows a comparison of the processes. The ultimate aim of the stated adjustments was to clarify the process, strengthen the current process’s weaknesses, and help establish a pattern of pastoral faithfulness and effectiveness. The noted difference within the process will be discussed in further detail throughout the following chapter.

Table. Amendments to the pastoral ordination process at HGBC

Current Process	Proposed Process
1. Initial Interest <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial review by Executive Staff 	1. Initial Interest <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial review by Executive Staff
2. Personal Examination: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ordination Application • Theological Questionnaire • Reviewed by Executive Staff and Deacon Board 	2. Personal Examination: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pastoral Ordination Questionnaire • Reviewed by Executive Staff and Deacon Board
3. Ordination Council <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made up of Executive Staff and other ordained ministers 	3. Pastoral Ordination Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12-month process of training and evaluation
4. Affirmed by the Church <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congregational vote requiring 75% majority for approval 	4. Ordination Council <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made up of Executive Staff and other ordained ministers, some from outside of HGBC
5. Ordination Service	5. Affirmed by the Church <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congregational vote requiring 75% majority for approval
	6. Ordination Service
	7. Pastoral Mentorship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intentional mentorship and discipleship provided by a seasoned pastor from HGBC

Pastoral Ordination Questionnaire (POQ)

For this project, with the hope to amend and strengthen the current process at HGBC, there was the amendment and implementation of a few different factors. To begin, the new process will mimic the old process in its first stage. The ordination candidate will

illustrate an interest in ordination to one of the pastors and then will be considered, based from the Executive Staff's personal experience with the candidate and the candidate's known reputation. If it seems fitting for the individual to be considered for ordination at HGBC, he will proceed to the personal examination portion, where the first amendment is seen. The old process required the OA and the TQ to be completed by the candidate, whereas the new process combines the two surveys into one and increases the content that is covered. The Pastoral Ordination Questionnaire (POQ)¹ is a deep and comprehensive view of the candidate regarding four different areas that are vital to ministry: Personal Life, Family, Doctrine, and Ministry. The survey is designed to examine the candidate as thoroughly as a survey will allow and will also push the candidate to be honest and vulnerable. Both qualities are essential throughout the remaining portion of this process.

Pastoral Ordination Training (POT)

The POQ will be given to candidates that have shown an interest in ordination at HGBC, and upon completion, will be reviewed by the Executive Staff Committee. As the POQ is reviewed by the Executive Staff Committee and it is agreed upon to continue the process, the candidate will then proceed to an additional step in the personal examination and equipping phase of the process. This phase is the largest amendment to the current process as it incorporates a necessary component of ministry preparation by current pastors within the church. The intent with the addition of this curriculum is not necessarily to provide anything new doctrinally for the candidate but to provide a lane for personal assessment and examination regarding ministerial expectations and qualifications. The curriculum will be taught by one of the pastors over a twelve-month course, focusing upon one topic per month. In addition to the teaching provided by one of the pastors, an interactive portion of the equipping processing it will require the candidate to participate

¹ See appendix 1

in required readings before each lesson and in self-examination upon the completion of each lesson. This intentional equipping will help the candidate think thoroughly about the concepts to be covered both conceptually and personally, as he considers his own ministry.

The goal behind this additional curriculum implementation is hinged on self-evaluation. In their book *Leadership in Christian Perspective*, Justin Irving and Mark Strauss discuss that self-evaluation begins with self-awareness. They explain that genuine leadership, pastoral leadership included, requires a shift from being merely a matter of doing to a matter of being.² Part of the process of pushing leaders to a place of leading out of their being involves an honest look at individuals being made in the image of God, children of God, and men called by God into gospel ministry. They discuss that for self-evaluation to begin, there must first be self-awareness. From this foundation individuals are then able to channel their self-efficacy, lead authentically, and navigate their emotional intelligence.³ Throughout this curriculum, candidates will be both humbled and strengthened as they examine their own personal limitations in light of the great calling which has been received. They will also be strengthened by precious reminders of the presence and empowering of the Holy Spirit for that seemingly impossible task at hand.

The POT will be broken down into three different sections: The Pastor's Ministry, the Pastor's Qualifications, and the Pastor's Blind Spots. The Pastor's Ministry section will focus its attention on discussing and describing the multiheaded role of the pastor. The purpose of this section is to provide the right expectations for what the pastoral role should consist of, helping the candidate achieve a proper perspective as he enters into the office. The second section will then move into the specific qualifications required for men serving in pastoral ministry. This will consist of a walkthrough of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. The goal of this section is to take the conceptual qualifications and shed

² Justin A. Irving and Mark L. Strauss, *Leadership in Christian Perspective: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Practices for Servant Leaders* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019), 35.

³ Irving and Strauss, *Leadership in Christian Perspective*, 42-25.

light on the reality that personal standards must be upheld for those serving in pastoral ministry. The last section is compiled of a few topics that are easy to neglect within pastoral ministry. In an effort to care for and shepherd others, it is easy to neglect the necessity of self-care by deepening in personal devotion and dependence upon Christ and his body. This section helps reinforce these essentials for pastoral longevity.

Pastoral Ordination Training Curriculum

The Pastor's Ministry

Month 1, "The Pastor as Servant"—Reading: Mark 10:35-42. The beginning of this course will place Christ at the heart of pastoral ministry. This is intentional for a few reasons in particular. First, the life, death, and resurrection of Christ provides reason and purpose in pastoral ministry. The fact that Jesus has claimed victory over death provides pastors hope as they seek to press against invading lost and darkness. For those who are lost and despairing, seeking to find hope and satisfaction in the world, the gospel is the rescue that is desperately needed. Second, the life of Christ provides the model by which pastors are to minister. Mark 10:35-42 makes it clear that the life of a leader, specifically those who lead and shepherd others, is to be defined by servanthood and humility. As Jesus brings this section to a close in Mark 10, he states that the purpose of his condescension is wrapped up in serving, as he sought to give his life as a ransom for sinners. Starting this course with a Christ-centered purpose and methodology is essential in getting pastoral ministry accurate.

Main Points:

1. Jesus is the Example
2. Jesus is the Substitute
3. Jesus Provides the Power

Self-Reflection:

1. Why is it essential that a right understanding of pastoring begins by looking at the example and words of Christ?

2. Observe the requests of the disciples in this passage. What was it about this request that was sinful?
3. In the pastorate, what would you consider to be the largest hurdle to servanthood and how can it be guarded against?
4. Is your life characterized by servanthood?
5. This week, how have you elevated yourself above those that have been entrusted to your care?
6. What steps can you take in your life today to ensure that you are leading by serving?

Month 2, “The Pastor as Shepherd—Reading: 1 Peter 5. Shepherding a local congregation is not merely filling the pulpit on Sunday mornings. While consistently proclaiming God’s Word is a necessary element of the position, it does not fulfill the full intention of Peter’s charge to a group of elders as he encourages them to “shepherd the flock of God” (1 Pet 5:2). Shepherding takes place during Sunday morning, but also during Monday morning rushes to the hospital and Thursday night familial disagreements. Pastoral shepherding occurs as the urgent barges in during the planned business meetings. In light of Peter’s charge, it is essential to remember that as a shepherd, the pastor leads real people that are oftentimes overwhelmed with real problems. To the degree that the shepherd knows the sheep, will he be able to rightly lead them. In this week, the discussion will land on the necessity of knowing well the flock of God to serve well the flock of God.

Main Points:

1. Pastors Shepherd People
2. Pastors Know Their Sheep

Self-Reflection:

1. Why does Peter begin chapter five this way?
2. Discuss the way that Peter appeals to the elders in the first verse. Why does he do this?
3. God consistently reinforces the imagery of sheep and shepherds throughout the Word. Why does he use this analogy so often?
4. What does practical shepherding look like in the life of a pastor?

5. Discuss a time when you acted poorly as a shepherd? How has the Lord changed your heart since this incident?
6. How can you know your sheep?
7. How has God prepared you to shepherd his people?
8. How will you seek to build and establish trust with your people so that you might shepherd and lead them?

Month 3, “The Pastor as Preacher”—Reading: *Preaching and Preachers* by Martin Lloyd-Jones (chaps. 1-7). This month will emphasize another facet of the pastoral ministry: the primacy of the pulpit. While other functions compile the list of the pastor’s responsibilities, the greatest function is seen in the public proclamation of God’s Word. Throughout this lesson, while the importance of preaching will be covered, most conversation will be bent toward two specific realities that are easily neglected. First, discussion will land on the difficulty of finding time to prepare for sermons amid the chaos encountered during any given week. In the midst of the unexpected, pastors still must find the necessary time to center themselves on the Word intentionally for preparation. This discussion will deal with time management, prioritization, and the reality that pastors must often say no to what may be good in exchange for what may be best. Second, this lesson will take some time to discuss that as a pastor is preaching a sermon, he is not just preaching the Word in an open-air setting, but he is engaging the people that God has entrusted to him. This allows the pastor to be personal, engaging, and relevant, providing ample application for his people.

Main Points:

1. Pastors are Prepared
2. Pastors are Teachable
3. Pastors are Humble
4. Pastors Communicate with Authority

Self-Reflection:

1. What would you consider to be the most important aspect of the pastoral ministry?

2. Why does Lloyd-Jones put such an emphasis on the importance of the preached Word?
3. What do you consider as the necessary ingredients in an effective sermon?
4. Sermons are best preached through preachers and not just from the mouth of a preacher. How will you ensure that you are first allowing God's message to transform you before you preach it to others?
5. How will seek to balance your schedule between meeting and personally discipling others and preparing to preach the Word of God?
6. Discuss your current time schedule habits you have in place now. Will these need to change as you prepare weekly sermons?
7. How much of your time do you expect to be devoted to sermon preparation?

Month 4, "The Pastor as Counselor"—Reading: *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands* by Paul Tripp (chaps. 1-6). Paul Tripp lays out foundational truth when it comes to counseling the hurting. This month candidates will take a look at Tripp's book in considering the function of pastor as counseling the hurting and broken (2 Cor 1). This week will begin by addressing the inevitability that pastors must suffer. For pastors to truly be able to comfort the hurting and broken within their congregations, they must also suffer so that the hope that they offer is not fictitious or assumed, but actually has been grasped personally by the pastor. The pastor and his personal suffering will be the primary point of the discussion, but the instructor will also take time to address the role of the pastor as counselor. While counseling serves as a function of the pastor, not all who desire to be counselled will be able to be counselled by the pastor personally. The instructor will also take time to discuss reasons why this will not always be the case and the need to be willing to refer congregants to outside Christian counseling centers when appropriate.

Main Points:

1. Pastors Must Suffer
2. Pastors Suffering that they Might Comfort

Self-Reflection:

1. What does Tripp mean by stating that counselors are instruments? How does this affect the value of the pastor/counselor?

2. What is the connection between the suffering of the pastor and the suffering of his people?
3. How does God shape pastors through their own personal suffering?
4. How are you to counsel with a Christ-centered hermeneutic?
5. At what point should a pastor refer an individual to professional counseling as opposed to pastoral counseling?
6. How can you lean into the attributes of God as provide godly counsel?
7. What is the Lord currently teaching you that he might use to teach others?
8. For you to be effective in counseling others, what must the Lord first do in your life?

Month 5, “The Pastor as Leader”—Reading: *The Emotionally Healthy Leader* by Pete Scazzero (chaps. 1-2, 6-9); *Gospel Eldership* by Robert Thune (chaps. 1, 2, 4)

This month the instructor will discuss the pastor serving as a leader. As in any case, before someone is able to lead others, one must first be able to lead himself. The first portion of this lesson will target the pastor’s ability to rightly lead himself in a healthy way. Peter Scazzero’s *The Emotionally Healthy Leader* will be used as a resource for this discussion, specifically as he discusses the necessity of leading out of the Inner Life, which is the result of the ordination candidate leading out of their personal union with Christ.⁴ The primary talking points will attempt to address the pastor’s need to become self-aware when it comes to his strengths, weaknesses, shortcomings, and tendencies. In addition to leading himself, the pastor must also be able to lead others, specifically those who serve alongside him in ministry. Moreover, leadership culture is established from the top down. In the case of the pastoral staff, this mostly rises and falls on the leadership of the Senior Pastor. Throughout this discussion, there will be conversation centered on the importance of personal leadership affecting those that have been entrusted to the leader’s care.

⁴ Pete Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 117.

Main Points:

1. Pastors Must Lead Themselves
2. Pastors Lead Others

Self-Reflection:

1. After reading *The Emotionally Healthy Leader*, what were your initial thoughts about your own personal leadership?
2. Would you consider yourself to be emotionally healthy as a leader? What aids in this description?
3. Why is emotional health so vital in pastors?
4. In what ways can the emotional unhealth of a pastor affect his leadership team?
5. What does it look like for a pastor to lead in an emotionally healthy way?
6. How can a pastor lead both his staff and his people in repentance and obedience?
7. In what ways are you currently leading out of insecurity and how can you correct this.

The Pastor's Character

Month 6, "The Pastor's Blamelessness"—Reading: *Biblical Eldership* by Alexander Strauch (chaps. 4, 9); *Gospel Eldership* by Robert Thune (chap. 3); 1 Timothy 3; Titus 1. This month will serve as a transition as the instructor shifts his focus from the ministry of the pastor to the character of the pastor. When it comes to pastoring, character is key. Paul makes this clear when he writes in both 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 of the necessary qualifications of the pastor. In this list of qualifications, it would be logical to think that Paul would have begun by discussing the ability of the pastor, but rather he starts with the personal character of the pastor, revealing its primacy. Therefore, the character of the pastor will be studied in detail over the next several months, taking a few character qualities each week to discuss. This month will begin with the initial quality listed by Paul in both of these lists: blamelessness. The goal is to address how the pastor's blamelessness in all areas paves the way for his personal ministry. Strauch's classic, *Biblical Eldership*, will be a guide.

Main Points:

1. The Pastor Has Holy Aspirations
2. The Pastor Has Healthy Habits
3. The Pastor Sets an Honorable Example

Self-Reflection:

1. What is the most common mistake of churches that are seeking to implement leadership and why is this a problem (Strauch, 68)?
2. Thune states that character is formed and proven over time. How does this happen (35)?
3. Discuss what it means to be above reproach? Why is this at the top of the list?
4. Which of the listed qualifications in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 do you find to be the easiest to meet in your life? Which are the most difficult?
5. How are you currently being held accountable for these qualifications? How are you seeking to put these shortcomings to death?
6. How will you seek to handle money wisely without becoming greedy or self-seeking?
7. Complete this sentence. If people knew _____ about me, they would not desire to follow me?
8. How does the gospel address your own personal shortcomings and inadequacies?

Month 7, “The Pastor’s Purity—Reading: *Biblical Eldership* by Andrew Strauch (chap. 4); *Finding Faithful Elders and Deacons* by Thabiti Anyabwile (chap. 10); 1 Timothy 3; Titus 1. Continuing in our study of the pastor’s character, the instructor will lead the discussion into a rather personal conversation as the necessity of sexual purity is discussed. This month, the instructor will dive into Paul’s listed qualification of being “the husband of one wife” and discuss what might have been the intentions in Paul’s writing as well as the personal implications for pastors (1 Tim 3:2). With most interpretations of this text bending toward Paul’s warning for sexual purity, discussion for both moral and digital purity will be the topics of consideration. Moreover, the instructor will present a charge before the candidates to be proactive with the pursuit of accountability. The candidates should feel challenged through this week and recognize

the imminence of personal moral failure, which should lead to a sobering perspective and push them toward establishing and securing accountability.

Main Points:

1. The Pastor is Faithful
2. The Pastor is Morally and Digitally Pure
3. The Pastor has Proactive Accountability

Self-Reflection:

1. Are you morally faithful to your spouse? Has there ever been a time in which you have not been morally faithful to your spouse?
2. Have you been emotionally faithful to your spouse? Has there ever been a time in which you have not been emotionally faithful to your spouse?
3. Is there any guilt that you are harboring due to past sexual sin? Has this sin been confessed to the Lord and to others?
4. When have you been most tempted to be morally unfaithful to your spouse?
5. When was the last time you looked at pornography?
6. Are you currently subscribing to any software that holds you accountable for sexual purity? If so, who is holding you accountable?
7. How are you actively guarding against sexual sin?

Month 8, “The Pastor’s Self Mastery”—Reading: *Biblical Eldership* by Andrew Strauch (chap. 4); *Finding Faithful Elders and Deacons* by Thabiti Anyabwile (chap. 11); 1 Timothy 3; Titus 1. In continuing the conversation on the importance of the pastor’s character, the instructor will spend time observing some of the lesser-discussed qualifications listed in Paul’s letter to both Timothy and Titus. This month will focus on the importance of the pastor being sober-minded, self-controlled, and respectable. Through discussion, it will be seen that these qualifications are the result of a heart and mind that has been steeped in God’s Word. The outward evidences will be the pastor thinking clearly and illustrating pastoral discernment, illustrating self-control and healthy self-denial, and a lifestyle that is respectable by those around him.

Main Points:

1. The Pastor Has Discernment
2. The Pastor Has Self-Control
3. The Pastor is Respectable
4. The Pastor is Hospitable

Self-Reflection:

1. Why is sober-mindedness essential for the pastor?
2. What happens when the pastor loses this sense of sober-mindedness?
3. What does a lack of self-control reveal about a pastor? What is the underlying issue?
4. In what areas are you most prone to lack self-control?
5. Would others, specifically those outside the church, view you as hospitable? What is your lack of hospitality a result of?
6. How can you practice hospitality this week?

Month 9, “The Pastor’s Leadership within the Home”—Reading: *Biblical Eldership* by Andrew Strauch (chap. 4); *The Christian Ministry* by Charles Bridges (pt. 3); 1 Timothy 3; Titus 1. Still finding footing in 1 Timothy 3, the instructor will shift focus to verses 4-5, where Paul addresses the home life of the pastor. He lays out clearly that the man who is to lead the house of God is first to show that he is able to lead his own home. He even raises the question that if the man is not able to rightly lead his own home, then how then can he care for the church of God? With this topic on the table, the pastor’s marriage and family will be a main point of conversation with the idea that this is the first priority of the pastor. This area oftentimes is unintentionally neglected by the pastor. In an attempt to care well for his flock, the pastor can easily overlook his own responsibility to lead his family. This discussion will address the balance between ministry and family as well as ways to proactively strengthen the home life of the pastor.

Main Points:

1. The Pastor as Husband
2. The Pastor as Father

Self-Reflection:

1. Why does Paul consider the pastor's ability to manage his own home well a qualification for church eldership?
2. What is the direct connection between leading the church and leading the home?
3. What is the greatest personal challenge for spiritually leading your wife and family?
4. How does your wife and children respond to your leadership within the home?
5. How are you actively leading/how will you actively lead your family spiritually?
6. What does family worship look like in your house?
7. How have you shown grace to your family over the past week?
8. How have you led your home ineffectively over the past week?

Month 10, "The Pastor's Evangelism"—Reading: *Gospel Eldership* by Robert Thune (chap. 9); 1 Timothy 3; Titus 1. The discussion this month will revolve around the outward effects of the inward reality of the gospel taking root in the life of the pastor. Specifically, Paul addresses the necessity of the pastor being thought of well by those outside the family of faith. The primary point of discussion will wrap around the practical implications of how this will manifest itself in the life of the pastor. Two primary areas will be addressed: the pastor's personal evangelism and the pastor's intentional missional living. Both of these should stem from his genuine desire to see lost people come to the saving knowledge of Christ. Moreover, the fruit of evangelism and missional living is grown on the tree of the knowledge of personal depravity and inability, which will lay the foundation for the need for the pastor to engage with the lost outside of the church. This type of attitude and behavior should be evident in the pastor's life and should stand as an example toward his congregation.

Main Points:

1. Pastors Must Share the Gospel
2. Pastors Must Live on Mission

Self-Reflection:

1. What does a lack of personal evangelism reveal about the pastor's heart?
2. How do you increase your desire for the lost?
3. How can you practically build the practice of evangelism into your schedule?
4. How often do you share the gospel with those outside the church?
5. Discuss your local community involvement and how you leverage that for the gospel?
6. When was the last time you shared the gospel?

The Pastor's Blind Spots

Month 11, "The Pastor's Devotion"—Reading: *The Reformed Pastor* by Richard Baxter (chap. 1); *Spiritual Disciplines* by Donald Whitney (chaps. 1-5). The course will wrap with a section that is often forgotten and unexpected for many pastors who are starting into pastoral ministry. The focus during this month will be targeted on making known many of the destructive blind spots within pastoral ministry. The first of which will be the pastor's personal disciplines. Oftentimes, in seasons of busyness and chaos for pastors, a personal devotional life can easily become dry and minimally existent. To shed light on this reality, this will be a month of practicality, as Whitney's book, *Spiritual Disciplines*, is the guide for the discussion. Specifically, the instructor will discuss the importance of personally implemented spiritual disciplines in the life of the pastor, such as Bible reading, consistent intercession, and fasting. The discussion this month will fall on this reality as well as the concept that these habits are disciplines and require faithful commitment and dedication.

Main Points:

1. Pastors Must Read
2. Pastors Must Pray

3. Pastors Must Obey
4. Pastors Must Remain Desperate

Self-Reflection:

1. What does a lack of consistent devotion reveal about the heart of a pastor?
2. What is the connection between a pastor's personal devotion and their ministry?
3. What are the current spiritual discipline habits in your life? How are they beneficial for you?
4. How do you cultivate a life of prayer personally? How will you seek to do this corporately?
5. How will you set the example of personal devotion without becoming conceited and self-promoting?
6. What have been the most valuable lessons the Lord has taught you through your personal devotion?

Month 12, “The Pastor’s Community”—Reading: *Dangerous Calling* by Paul Tripp (chaps. 1-7; *The Emotionally Healthy Leader* by Peter Scazzero (pt. 2). As this class comes to a close, the instructor will conclude with an essential topic of discussion: the need for the pastor to find himself in biblical community. This month will address the reality that pastors are not exempt from the call to biblical community, nor are they immune to consequences of its lack of presence. Just as congregants, pastors are sheep in need of a shepherd. Pastors need to be reminded of what is true, held accountable, and sharpened in their personal application of God’s Word. The instructor will practically talk about pastoral isolation, as seen in Tripp’s *Dangerous Calling*, and practically discuss ways this can be avoided. The conversation will be wrapped up with a discussion of how to develop a sense of biblical community within the staff culture at the church of employment.

Main Points:

1. Pastors Must be Accountable
2. Pastors Create Culture

Self-Reflection:

1. What was most alarming about Tripp's, *Dangerous Calling*?
2. Would you consider this to be an essential read for pastors? Why or why not?
3. Why do many pastors fail to surround themselves with accountability?
4. What aids to the perception that pastors do not need to be held accountable?
5. What type of men do you need to surround yourself with to ensure your personal holiness and leadership effectiveness?
6. In what ways have you sought for self-glory this week and what does it reveal about your heart?
7. How will you seek to cultivate a culture of honesty, accountability, and vulnerability among your staff?

Pilot Testing the Curriculum

The stated POT was pilot tested with two individuals to determine its effectiveness and to provide an opportunity for the content to be evaluated. The original plan to pilot the courses consisted of ordination candidates walking through a condensed twelve-week version of face-to-face conversations, but due to the outbreak of COVID-19, the time span was shortened and the platform for meeting transitioned to virtual meetings. The meetings took place via FaceTime or Zoom on the following dates:

- May 13, 2020
- May 20, 2020
- May 22, 2020
- May 25, 2020
- May 26, 2020
- May 29, 2020
- June 1, 2020
- June 8, 2020

Despite the necessary and immovable transitions, the individuals had the opportunity to both participate and reflect on the content that was covered.

The Candidates

Two individuals participated in the POT. Both of these men are pursuing a Master of Divinity degree from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. One of the individuals currently serves at the Harris Campus of HGBC as a Middle School Associate.

He has been employed with the church for approximately three years and at the onset of the study, was set to graduate with his degree in May 2020. Following his graduation, ordination was to soon follow. This course was to be critical in the ordination process. However, his ordination was tentatively postponed until December 2020 due to a delayed graduation date. His circumstance, despite the delayed graduation and ordination, reflects the majority of men that are both called and ordained at HGBC. Most men that are seeking ordination at HGBC have been employed with the church for some time and are working toward a biblical degree in higher education.

The other individual, though pursuing his degree from the same institution, was not employed by HGBC. During the summer of 2019 he served as a Student Ministry Intern at the Mallard Creek Campus of HGBC. After serving as an intern, he volunteered in the same ministry as both a Sunday school teacher and small group leader. While he may have no current tie with HGBC as an employee, roots of the ministry are present in his life. Furthermore, he believes that he has been called into pastoral ministry and believes that the Lord will lead him into church planting post-graduation, which is set for May 2021. His presence is helpful for the study considering that he provides a different perspective than one currently serving full time on staff in a ministry position.

The Meetings

Before the start of the process in the spring of 2020, both men were given two weeks to complete the POQ. After the survey was completed, I proceeded to walk through the POT with the candidates for a total of eight virtual meetings over the course of five weeks to discuss the stated curriculum. Obviously, it was not ideal to hold the meetings virtually and there were evident downsides, the greatest of which was the absence of face-to-face connection. However, with the intentionally small pilot group and the previous relationships with the candidates, conversation was both natural and challenging for all. In addition to walking through the stated topic during each meeting, I also led a time of reflection using the questions listed at the end of each lesson outline. The setting

of the conversations was more natural and conducive to conversation than expected; therefore, the group was able to take advantage of significant discussion.

The Post-Survey

Immediately following the completion of the POT, the candidates were required to complete a Pastoral Ordination post-survey in which they were asked direct questions, some of which required Likert scale responses and others requiring thorough response, related to the content covered and the method in which the information was covered. Additionally, the candidates were asked to consider how this process might have been amended to become more effective. Upon reviewing the candidates' surveys, the information covered during the sessions was shown to be insightful and challenging. The full results of the survey will be discussed in chapter 5.

Pastoral Accountability

A third addition to the pastoral ordination process will follow the actual ordination of the candidate and will last six months. This will be a season of intentional pastoral accountability led by one of the instructors of the POT. The implementation of this portion of the process is two-fold. First, it serves the purpose of providing ministerial guidance for the newly ordained pastor. Second, it will provide another gauge to determine how the pastor will manage the position both mentally, emotionally, and physically. The newly ordained pastor will be held accountable for a few key areas pertaining to personal devotion and practice of spiritual disciplines, leadership within his family and home, time management within the office, and personal mental health. This form of accountability will take place at least twice a month and will wrap at the end of six successful months.¹

¹ This portion of the process will be handled subjectively in the event that a newly ordained pastor accepts a position at a different church.

Implementing the Adjustments

Change in process is not something that is easily accomplished. This difficulty to make necessary adjustments is amplified by a comfort with mediocrity. However, this does not change the reality that in order to progress, change is required. When it comes to affirming men for the ministry and endorsing their character and skill set through the process of ordination, this area always needs to be evolving and changing. As culture continues to further into the normalization of immorality, there is a pressing need for churches to consistently strengthen the process by which they vet men for ministry, and HGBC is no exception to this rule. With that being said, in addressing these necessary adjustments, it is best to speak to them with a realistic perspective on the time required for change to take shape. This is especially true for the ordination process at HGBC. Therefore, it is fitting for a year-long plan for implementation to be established.

Acknowledgement of Necessary Adjustments

The completed goals of this project serve the purpose of creating an awareness that change is needed in the area of pastoral examination. This project was not completed with the intention to merely make unnecessary amendments in an already existing process. Rather, this project serves the purpose of highlighting a few key proactive areas of improvement that are needed as men are vetted for the ministry. Moreover, it could even be stated that addressing and strengthening the listed weaknesses of the ordination process could allow HGBC to carve a trail for other likeminded churches in the SBC to follow. However, considering that this would call for a change in bylaws and operating procedures, a sequence of events must take for this process to go into effect. For this proposed process to become actualized, it is necessary that the Executive, Pastoral, and Professional Staff, and the church as a whole, be in agreement on the needed changes.

Executive Staff

The first group of leaders that will have the opportunity to view the project and the given results will be the Executive Staff team, which is composed of the Senior Pastor, the Senior Associate Pastor, and both Campus Pastors. It will be their responsibility to review the project and provide feedback regarding a few key areas addressed in the project. First, they will evaluate whether the addition of the POQ, the addition of the POT, and the PA work effectively to meet the exposed weaknesses of the current process. Once this has been evaluated, they will discuss the structure and flow of the program, as the proposed changes will lengthen the process. Last, they will discuss the content and feedback regarding the POT. As they have the opportunity to review and make the necessary minor adjustments, they will agree upon a final draft to be presented to the Pastoral Staff team for review.

The timeline for this completed first stage will be December 2020. This timeline is suggested for at least two reasons. First, December 2020 allows for one of the candidates that piloted the POT to finish his Master of Divinity degree and successfully be ordained at HGBC. It will be helpful to evaluate the proposed adjustments in light of the final stages of the ordination process with this individual. Second, needed change is oftentimes a slow process, especially considering the size and scope of HGBC. December 2020 will allow for ample time for the Executive Team to review the process and agree upon a plan of execution.

Pastoral Staff

Following the agreement of the Executive Staff team, the Executive Staff Team will then unfold the adjusted and updated process for ordination to the Pastoral Staff team. This team is composed of all of the pastors on staff at HGBC from all campuses (Harris, Mallard Creek, and Latin American). It will be the responsibility of the Pastoral Staff team to review the newly adjusted process and then provide feedback regarding the structure of the process in addition to the content that will be discussed during the POT.

The Pastoral Staff team will review and critique the mentioned areas and then proceed to agree upon a process that will then be presented to the Professional Staff Committee. The estimated timeframe for the Pastoral Staff team to propose the adjustments to the Professional Staff Committee will be February 2021.

Professional Staff Committee

The Professional Staff Committee at HGBC is a multifunctional group that provides oversight to various areas regarding personnel and standard operating procedures, specifically dealing with the church's Constitution and Bylaws. This group of men is comprised of laymen in the church that carry strong business acumen. While there is the presence of both Senior and Senior Associate Pastors in the meetings, their meetings are led by laymen. It will be the responsibility of the Professional Staff Committee to review the proposal from the pastors regarding the change in process for pastoral ordination, review and critique the proposal, and then prepare a formal change to the church's Constitution and Bylaws. Per the church's Constitution and Bylaws, it is necessary for a majority vote by the church to make amendments to the bylaws (bylaw 98).² The Professional Staff team will take the formal amendment before the church for this vote to be cast. The Professional Staff Team would take this before the church in March 2021.

The Church

The final step in the process of implementing these adjustments to the ordination process at HGBG will involve the church's affirmation of the proposed changes. As stated, the Constitution and Bylaws indicates that to make adjustments to the bylaws, a majority church vote is required. However, the document also indicates that a one-month notification is required before casting any congregation votes that would alter the operating procedures of the church. With that being said, it would be necessary for the Professional Staff team to present this to the church in March 2021 before a deciding vote in April 2021

² Constitution and Bylaws, Hickory Grove Baptist Church, Page: BL-90.

is cast. Once the vote is cast, the bylaws would be changed and the one-year plan for implementation would be successfully completed.

Conclusion

As stated, organizational change is not easy to come by. For this to happen, there needs to be a recognition that change is needed in addition to the relinquishing of previously set traditions and standards for the sake of progress toward excellence. When it comes to approving and vetting men for the ministry, the need to recognize and make change is only amplified. As culture continually drifts toward immorality and secularism, the need for a stronger ministry-approving process only intensifies. The model laid out in this chapter seeks to do this specifically at HGBC. Through the suggested process, though imperfect in its form, there is the hope that a closer eye of examination will be placed upon men who will be held responsible for preaching the gospel at HGBC.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT EVALUATION

In a young minister's ordination sermon, Andrew Fuller charged the individual, "Hold forth the word of life, not only in precept, but in a holy life."¹ The words of Fuller represent the heart behind the apostle Paul's charge to Timothy to keep a close watch on his lifestyle as well as his teaching (1 Tim 4:16). Paul's brief yet divinely inspired words carry a significant weight of responsibility for the man whom God has called to faithfully serve the local church. It is imperative that not only right doctrine is taught with confidence, but that it is tethered with a private lifestyle that upholds and exemplifies that which is publicly taught. HGBC desires to have men that have closed the gap on this evident dissonance, and this project is a means by which this task can be accomplished.

Evaluation of the Purpose

The purpose of this project was to establish an objective tool for pastoral ordination that examines both the character and doctrine of the candidate being considered while also preparing him for further ministry. The intent of this project was to address an evident issue that has recently risen to the surface within the SBC, specifically pertaining to the number of pastoral failures. With the number of misappropriations taking place in the SBC circle, one is left to wonder how the church can be proactive in the prevention of failures. This project was developed as a way of addressing this issue through training and equipping pastors, but not by presenting a new formula for prevention. The apostle Paul makes it clear that the men who serve as pastors must meet a standard (1 Tim 3:1-7;

¹ Andrew Fuller, *The Complete Works of Andrew* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication, 1845), 1:478.

Titus 1:5-9). This project intended to raise the character bar to this biblical standard by equipping and inspecting men that local churches seek to ordain into gospel ministry through the means of a pastoral ordination process.

An inevitable result of this project was to provide HGBC an avenue to equip and train men for the gospel ministry. While seminary is relied upon to ensure that men are trained and given the skills necessary to read, study, and teach the Word of God with accuracy, this project supplements a seminary education by taking the biblical qualifications and character qualities required for pastoral leadership and making both the discussed qualifications and character qualities personal and applicable for those seeking to be ordained. The project was designed with intentional portions crafted for self-reflection and examination to ensure that what was discussed and covered during the POT were not just general standards, but personal expectations for those serving in pastoral leadership. This avenue of equipping allows the church to take the position of leading and training the men that will be ordained, creating a natural pipeline of leadership in addition to a culture of discipleship

A final outcome of this project is the natural result of both the examination and equipping processes. Paul Tripp discusses in *Dangerous Calling* that there is an epidemic of a lack of biblical community within the pastoral culture. He discusses his own personal experiences and sheds light on the reality that many pastors often experience, especially in smaller church settings. He further states what the Lord has taught him: “I now know that I need to commit myself to living intentionally intrusive, Christ-centered, grace-driven, redemptive community.”² He is speaking to the necessity of a gospel-centered community of accountability and discipleship that is necessary, not just for congregants but also for pastors. The hope in creating an extended time of character examination and equipping is that it births a lasting culture of discipleship and accountability that lingers

² Paul Tripp, *Dangerous Calling* (Wheaton: IL, Crossway, 2012), 84.

further than the ordination process itself, strengthens the ministry, and helps pastors stay above reproach.

Evaluation of the Goals

The first goal was to establish a twelve-month pastoral ordination curriculum to guide and prepare the ordination candidates for pastoral ministry. In this goal, the curriculum focused on areas pertinent to the expectations and personal qualifications for pastors. As listed in chapter 4, this goal was met by the development of the Pastoral Ordination Training (POT). The curriculum was broken down into three blocks, focusing on three overarching areas of pastoral ministry: The Pastor's Ministry, The Pastor's Character, and the Pastor's Blind Spots. The first section of the training was designed to make personal the responsibilities placed upon pastors. The second section spent time discussing the character requirements needed for pastors. The intention was that this section might become more personal by bringing into focus the reality that these qualifications are needed not just for pastors as a whole, but specifically for the candidates. The last section was devoted to shedding light on often overlooked and undervalued areas of the pastor's life. In addition to developing a curriculum that addressed prevalent and necessary issues, this course was also designed to be interactive through the implementation of self-reflective questions.

The second goal was to develop a strategic plan to implement an objective ordination process churchwide. This goal was successfully accomplished in two ways: by examining and amending the current ordination process and by developing a plan for implementation. First, the current process was examined and strengthened. The intention was not to replace the current process altogether but to strengthen it in the area of character examination. For this to take place, the current five-stage process was extended to a seven-stage process. The changes include an extended personal examination process and the addition of both the POT and the PM. For a detailed comparison of the current process and the proposed processes, see appendix 3.

The second phase of accomplishing goal 2 was to create a plan for implementing the suggested new pastoral ordination process. With the knowledge that an adjustment to a standard process would take several groups' approval and endorsement, the one-year timeframe was stated intentionally. Chapter 4 provides details regarding the steps necessary, but for this newly adjusted process to become a reality, it is necessary for it to have an Executive Staff push with the added endorsement of the Pastoral Staff and the Professional Staff. The final approval for this process to become a reality involves the church's affirmation which is made known through a 75 percent vote of approval. The proposed plan for implementing this provides headroom for all of these to take place.

The third goal was to pilot test the objective ordination process with one to two ordination candidates. This goal was initially planned with two individuals that are both affiliated with HGBC. One is employed as a Student Associate at HGBC, Harris Campus and the other has served as a summer intern at HGBC but is now in student ministry at another local church. Both individuals are currently in seminary at SEBTS, with one scheduled to graduate in December 2020 and the other set to graduate later in 2021. Initially, the plan was that these two individuals would walk through this course throughout the spring, culminating in the ordination of our Student Associate following his seminary graduation. Due to a change in this candidate's seminary schedule, his graduation date was delayed to December 2020, also pushing his ordination to shortly follow. In addition to this schedule adjustment, due to the onset of COVID-19, the spring face-to-face sessions were shifted to virtual trainings via Zoom and FaceTime throughout April and May. Despite the adjustment in the schedule and the required flexibility, the POT material was covered thoroughly and successfully.

Furthermore, the POT: Post Surveys revealed that the training was beneficial for the candidates. The beginning of the survey, which utilized the Likert Scale, indicates that the course provided an overall greater understanding of pastoral ministry, the necessity of character in ministry, and the need for pastoral preparation. In the open-ended section

of the survey, the candidates had an opportunity to express specific areas in which they were challenged through the process. For instance, in question 14, candidates were asked, “In what ways did this process challenge you?” Respondent 1 responded, “This process really challenged me to look in the mirror and see my own personal need for Christ and to see my sins in my life that need to be rooted out before I enter into pastoral ministry.”³ Additionally, Question 17 asked, “How have your views of ordination and pastoral ministry been altered by this process?”⁴ Respondent 1 indicated, “I have never seen ordination done like this and I believe this process would save churches a lot of hurt if they would only focus more on a potential pastor’s character before hiring. I would want whatever church I lead one day, of the Lord sees fit, to adopt this process.”⁵ To the same question, Respondent 2 stated, “It most changed when we looked at all of the different passages in the Bible that refer to the pastor. Seeing this gave a better understanding of the office.”⁶

From the evidence of the survey, the candidates were able to walk away with information gleaned and eyes more set on the reality of expectations and qualifications for pastoral ministry. Moreover, after having the conversations and trainings, I am more convinced than ever that pastoral training should be a necessity prior to ordination at HGBC.

Project Strengths

This project was a learning process on many levels. One of the greatest strengths of this project sheds light on the biblical character qualifications required for pastors and the pressing need for churches to be more proactive in their ordination processes. This

³ See appendix 5.

⁴ See appendix 5.

⁵ See appendix 5.

⁶ See appendix 5.

project helped highlight the reality that the pathway for churches to ensure the leadership capability and integrity of their pastors is by raising the bar with examination, vetting, and continued accountability. Oftentimes, the greatest source of frustration and conflict is a lack of communication and clear-carved expectations. This project sought not to create new requirements and standards, but to reinforce the standards that the Bible clearly reveals regarding men who will be responsible for leading the church.

A second strength in this process is the opportunity for leadership pipelining and discipleship for HGBC. Throughout the examination process, specifically with the POQ and the POT, the church takes the role in equipping and preparing men for ministry at HGBC while providing a means of accountability for the pastor through the PM. These byproducts are essential for proper ministry expectations, success, and longevity. The POQ and the POT also provide the church a platform to intentionally pursue the Pauline model of discipleship given in 2 Timothy 2:2 where Paul instructs Timothy, “What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” The result of pastors training pastors at HGBC will promote staff unity, shared vision, and leadership discipleship.

A third strength specifically pertains to the content covered within the POT. In preparing the content for the POT, intentionality was given to ensure that the content would be relevant, trustworthy, practical, and helpful. As stated, seminary is necessary for ordination at HGBC and can be helpful in preparing men to handle the Word accurately; however, this preparation is not enough for men to faithfully serve and shepherd. They must be faced with the firsthand realities of pastoral ministry, the expectations of the role, and even the character standard by which they will be measured. In creating this project, there was understanding that these elements were necessary for faithful ministry, but throughout the POT, the desire to rightly address these concepts was amplified. Throughout the pilot of the POT, the ordination candidates were truly

challenged to be reflective of their own leadership skills, strengths and weaknesses, and need for consistent self-examination for the sake of leadership progress.

A fourth strength of this project pertains to the ease that this project can be implemented at HGBC. A few factors would aid in making this transition possible with little friction. First, HGBC has been blessed beyond measure to have men of God who love the Lord, uphold right doctrine, and walk blamelessly. Any of these men would be fit to provide pastoral training to any new ordination candidates. Second, the project was designed to strengthen and intensify the current ordination project at HGBC. The design in no way is contrary to what has already been put in place but is an intentional update that highlights the necessity of exemplary pastoral character. The structural similarities will be helpful when presenting the new process to the necessary groups of individuals for approval and implementation.

A fifth strength of this project is the ease of reproducibility. This project intended to address, at a local level, an overarching problem within the SBC. The model set forth as a game plan for HGBC can easily be reproduced in many different settings. At its core, the project focuses on intentional pastoral discipleship, training, and character examination. This model could be picked up and placed in any church setting with minimal effort.

Project Weaknesses

While this project successfully met the goals set forth, there were obvious weaknesses within the project. One of the most obvious weaknesses in the project falls within the area of the POT. Even though the thought of a twelve-month training process seems like ample time to cover the material necessary to prepare a man to lead in pastoral ministry, it in no way provides enough time to cover all of the material needed to ensure that a man is prepared and equipped to lead as well as he can. In the midst of this weakness, however, is the aforementioned hope that this process helps to create and cultivate a process of discipleship among the pastoral staff that carries on long after the

ordination of the individual. Along the same lines, it will also be essential that this process continues to reform as different cultural issues are brought to the surface, especially pertaining to areas of struggle for pastors. While this project may be relevant and helpful today, this does not necessarily mean that it will be as helpful as possible years down the road.

Another weakness of this project is the inability to say with certainty that the men who are trained, equipped, examined, and ordained by the church are men who will, with the full tenure of their ministry, uphold the biblical standards covered. This is a hard truth for many churches that have done much in the line of examination and equipping, only to find men disqualified from the ministry. No pastoral training can ensure a church with this certainty. However, the church has a responsibility to do everything within its power to examine and equip men with the resources needed for long-tenured faithful ministry.

A third weakness of this project pertains to the timing of the POT pilot course and the completion of ordination for the individuals that walked through the course. Two factors affected the timing of this course and completion adversely. First, the onset of COVID-19 forced the course to move to virtual training. Rather than meeting in-person over the course of a few months to cover the POT content, the meetings took place virtually, utilizing both platforms of Zoom and FaceTime. This hindrance, while still effective, lacked some of the personal interaction that face-to-face conversations provide. In addition, the completion of ordination for the individual that currently works on staff at HGBC was delayed from May 2020 to December 2020, due to adjusted graduation date. Regardless of these factors, there is still the hope that regardless of when these individuals are ordained, they have been given more resources in their quiver for ministry success.

A fourth weakness of this project could be the perceived lack of attention given to doctrinal issues during the POT. As mentioned, this project highlighted the necessity of

character within pastoral ministry, thus making many of the discussions revolve around personal examination and application. Because of this, from the outside it could be perceived that this over-attention to practicality is actually a lack of focus on theology and doctrine. However, for the context of HGBC, there is the prerequisite of a seminary degree before ordination, thus ensuring that right doctrine is intact. Having a seminary education may not be a prerequisite for other churches outside of HGBC. If this is the case, it would be necessary to ensure that the POT was adjusted with an intensified doctrinal focus.

A fifth weakness involves the implementation of this project at HGBC. As mentioned, this project will require the approval of several groups before being made a reality. For this process to become a staple at HGBC, it has to pass through the hands of the Executive Staff, the Pastoral Staff, the Professional Staff, and the church as a whole. Ideally, this could be a process implemented in significantly less time, but because of the polity of HGBC, it is necessary to walk through the proper channels for approval.

Project Changes

One of the first changes that I would seek to address within this project is the length of time that the pilot course lasted. Though the material was covered in detail, it was covered in a two-month time span. This time span was cut short and altered due to the onset of COVID-19. While the pilot course being shorter than the actual length of the proposed training is sufficient, it would have been ideal to lengthen the training to a four to six-month training. Additional time would have provided more of an opportunity to walk through the material and provide space for reflection and discussion.

A second change that I would make to this project would be the addition of voices both in the creation and teaching of the content. First, while there was some feedback and help from two individuals with the compilation of the POQ and the POT, it would be beneficial to have more pastoral voices weigh in on the content covered and discussed. In fact, it would have been helpful to have a groupthink amongst the current

pastors at HGBC to provide their perspective for the POQ and the POT. Moreover, it would have even been helpful to have a few additional voices outside of HGBC to weigh in regarding the same issue. Second, it would have been helpful to have a few other seasoned pastors on staff at HGBC teach some of the content. This would have given a more well-rounded approach to the pilot course.

A third change would address some of the content covered in the POT. First, toward the beginning of the course, it would be beneficial to add to the curriculum a conversation centered on the ordination candidate discerning the call to pastoral ministry. This addition could be developed through the study of Martin Lloyd Jones' *Preaching and Preachers* and Jason K. Allen's *Discerning Your Call to Ministry*, as both the internal call and external affirmation are discussed in detail. Second, in a more unconventional manor, it would be helpful for the ordination candidates' wives to be involved and present during the month in which the pastors' leadership in the home is the topic of consideration. While the charge that Paul presents in 1 Timothy 3:4 is still for biblical leadership on the part of the husband, the wife is an integral part of the equation. The presence of the candidates' wives would help heighten the reality of the challenges being presented during the discussion.

Theological and Personal Reflections

This project highlights one of the major areas of negligence in churches today regarding ordination processes. There is a lack of standard within the SBC and the effects are evident. To uphold local church autonomy, there will probably never be a standard in place, yet this does not nullify the reality that the church should be responsible in ordaining men who fit the biblical standard. To have large-scale changes in the SBC, local churches must be the first movers on the scene; they must take examination seriously. However, the lack of process in a local church could point to a lack of concern for pastoral training and accountability. While a lack of concern for pastoral training may be the case in some churches, the most likely tendency is to grant affirmation on the grounds of assumption.

This thought process would equate a biblical degree with fitness for ministry, and this is simply not always the case. A man's character must be examined and a lack of examination in the process is a failure for which the church will bear the responsibility.

Additionally, over the last two years of studying and working on this project, the Lord has placed a burden upon my soul to see pastors serve God's church who illustrate with their lives the doctrine they profess. There seems to be a tendency, within the SBC, to lean toward ensuring doctrine and theological understanding stays at the forefront of importance, and while it is an unchanging essential, genuine character cannot be overlooked or even sacrificed in the process. This project amplified my desire to see men serve the church who truly are skilled theologically, but even more, are saturated with a love for God and a desire to see God's people grow in godliness.

Last, this project has brought much to bear on the personal implications of being called into the ministry. This project has shaped my understanding of my calling as well as my ministry going forward in at least two ways. First, in examining the responsibilities of the pastor through the mentioned texts, I have been reminded of what it truly means to pastor. It is easy to slip into the realm of being a professional pastor with the amount of responsibilities and meetings often required, but in the final analysis, pastoring God's people involves shepherding them into greater conformity to his Son through the instruction of the preached Word, the sharing of life, the carrying of burdens, the confrontation of sin, and the sharing of joy. Truly pastoring has much more to do with being on the ground with people than delegating from an office. It has been good for me to be reminded of this simple yet weighty reality.

Second, I have been challenged through the consistent interaction with 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. These passages present the necessary requirements and hard standards for pastors. As I have had the opportunity to write about these standards as well as discuss them through the pilot course, I have personally been reminded and challenged to faithfully uphold these standards in my own life. Even more specifically,

what I have found most challenging out of the listed qualifications is the primacy of leading within my home. As a father with four children and husband to a godly wife, my family is not an appendage to my ministry, they are my first priority in ministry and if they are not properly led, then I am not fit to lead God's people. This firm truth has personally been convicting and challenging.

Conclusion

At the close of this project is the realization that there are often imperfect attempts to close the gap on insufficiencies. While this project may have been one of those swipes that lacks the nuance of perfection, it has the potential to close the gap in some way, even if it is simply in creating an awareness of an issue that needs to be resolved. The hope is that through the implementation of this project, an area of weakness is exposed and addressed for the further equipping of pastors, health of the church, and glory of God. While it is a stretch to see that change in this area will take place globally within the SBC, let it first begin with HGBC.

APPENDIX 1

PASTORAL ORDINATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to aid in the process of strengthening the pastoral ordination process at Hickory Grove Baptist Church, Charlotte, N.C. This research is being conducted by Blake Maxwell for purposes of project research. In this research, you will complete the given survey to the best of your ability. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

1. PERSONAL LIFE

- a. How did you become a believer?
- b. When were you baptized?
- c. Describe your current walk with the Lord? What is the structure and frequency of your quiet time with the Lord?
- d. How have you grown in spiritual maturity over the past year?
- e. In what ways are you pursuing spiritual disciplines?
- f. Who is holding you accountable for your current devotional life?
- g. When was the last time that you shared the gospel with someone outside the church?
- h. Who are you currently discipling?
- i. Who is currently discipling you?
- j. What are the most impactful books that you have read in the last 6 months? How have you sought to apply them?
- k. What are your current sin struggles and how are you seeking to address them? Is anyone holding you accountable?
- l. When was the last time that you looked at pornography?

- m. How do you guard yourself from sexual immorality?
- n. How often do you interact with social media (posting or viewing)?
- o. What are your current money spending habits? In what areas do you need to illustrate more discipline?
- p. How much debt do you have?
- q. How do you illustrate financial self-control?
- r. What is your current frequency for giving to the local church?
- s. How often do you meditate on 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and consider the necessary qualifications for pastors?
- t. Which of these qualifications cause you the most difficulty to uphold?
- u. Which of these would you consider to be your greatest strength?
- v. Is there anyone that would consider you not above reproach?
- w. Have you ever been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor?
- x. Describe your mental state. Would you consider yourself to be mentally stable? Has there ever been a time that you would describe yourself as mentally unstable? If so, when and why? Have you been medicated because of mental instability?

2. FAMILY

- a. How did your wife become a believer?
- b. When was she baptized?
- c. What is the structure and frequency of your wife's quiet time with the Lord?
- d. How is your wife pursuing spiritual disciplines?
- e. How did you meet your wife?
- f. How long did you and your wife date before you were married?
- g. Would you consider your relationship with your wife before you were married?
- h. How does your wife feel about you being in full time ministry?
- i. What are the greatest concerns about your wife being a pastor's wife?
- j. How do you expect your wife to succeed as a pastor's wife?
- k. How will you balance your time between the church and your wife?

- l. How are you currently pursuing your wife?
- m. What do you and your wife do for enjoyment?
- n. How do you and your wife best recharge?
- o. How often do you and your wife read the Bible together?
- p. How often do you and your wife pray together?
- q. How often do you and your wife host other families in your home?
- r. Have you ever been unfaithful to your wife?
- s. Have you ever been verbally or physically abusive to your wife and/or children?
- t. If you have children, how often do you practice family worship with them?
- u. If you have children, how do you share the gospel with them?
- v. If you have children, what is your current practice of discipline with them?
- w. If you have children, how do you intentionally seek to pursue them?
- x. If you have children, how do you shepherd their hearts?

3. DOCTRINE

Tell us what you believe about the following:

- a. The Bible
- b. God
- c. Man
- d. Christ
- e. The Gospel
- f. Salvation
- g. Sanctification
- h. Glorification
- i. The Trinity
- j. The Scriptures
- k. Election
- l. Evangelism

- m. Suffering of Believers
- n. Perseverance
- o. The Church
- p. Baptism
- q. The Lord's Supper
- r. Church Membership
- s. Spiritual Gifts
- t. End Times
- u. Gender Roles
- v. Homosexuality
- w. The Sanctity of Human Life

4. MINISTRY

- a. Explain your call to the ministry.
- b. Why do you desire to be in ministry?
- c. Who encouraged you to pursue ministry?
- d. Who has cautioned you against pursuing ministry?
- e. What are your greatest concerns about pursuing ministry?
- f. What do you feel will be your greatest strengths in ministry?
- g. What are your greatest weaknesses in ministry?
- h. How do you plan to balance ministry and family?
- i. How important is emotional health in the life of a pastor?
- j. How do you plan to guard yourself from ministry burnout?
- k. Describe how you would counsel someone walking through loss.
- l. Describe how you would counsel someone considering ending their life.
- m. Describe how you would counsel someone struggling with same sex attraction.
- n. Describe how you would counsel someone that has been unfaithful to his wife.

- o. Describe how you would counsel someone that stands in opposition to something that you teach publically.
- p. How are you currently serving in ministry?
- q. What will you do if you are not ordained into pastoral ministry?
- r. Why do you want to serve at HGBC?
- s. What are your hesitations about serving at HGBC?
- t. How would you categorize the spiritual climate of HGBC?
- u. What are the three greatest needs of the people at HGBC?
- v. What are the top three struggles that you see most present in the families at HGBC?
- w. What is your long-term desire for ministry? How do you seek to reach this?

APPENDIX 2

PASTORAL ORDINATION TRAINING CURRICULUM

The Pastor's Ministry			
Month	Focus Topic	Main Points	Reading
1	The Pastor Serves	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jesus is the example. 2. Jesus is the substitute 3. Jesus is the power. 	Mark 10:35-42
2	The Pastor as Shepherd to a Flock	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pastors shepherd people 2. Pastors know their sheep 	Ra1 Peter 5
3	The Pastor as Preacher to a Congregation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pastors are Prepared 2. Pastors are Teachable 3. Pastors are Humble 4. Pastors Communicate with Clarity and Authority 	Lloyd-Jones 1-7
4	The Pastor as Counselor to the Hurting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pastors Suffer 2. Pastors Suffer that they Might Comfort 	Tripp, <i>Instruments</i>
5	The Pastor as Leader	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Pastors Must Lead Themselves 9. Pastors lead others 	Scazzero, Part 1 and 2
The Pastor's Character			
6	The Pastor's Blamelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Pastor has Holy Aspirations • The Pastor has Healthy habits • The Pastor sets an Honorable Example 	Strauch, 1 Timothy 3/Titus 1
7	The Pastor's Purity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. The Pastor is Faithful 7. The Pastor is Morally and Digitally Pure 8. The Pastor has Proactive Accountability 	Strauch, 1 Timothy 3, Finding Faithful Elders and Deacons chapter 10
8	The Pastor's Self Mastery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Pastor's Discernment • The Pastor's Self-Control • The Pastor's Respectability • The Pastor's Hospitality 	Strauch, Finding Faithful Elders and Deacons chapter 11, 1 Timothy 3/Titus

9	The Pastor' Home	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Pastor's Marriage 2. The Pastor as Husband 3. The Pastor's Children 	Strauch, Bridges, 155-165, 1 Timothy 3/Titus 1
10	The Pastor's Evangelism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Pastor's Personal Evangelism 2. The Pastor's Missional Living 	Strauch, 1 Timothy 3/Titus 1
The Pastor's Blind Spots			
11	The Pastor's Devotion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pastors Must Read 2. Pastors Must Pray 3. Pastors Must Obey 4. Pastors Must Remain Desperate 	The Reformed Pastor, Baxter; Spiritual Disciplines, Donald Whitney;
12	The Pastor's Biblical Community	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Pastor's Accountability 2. The Pastor's Staff 	Tripp, <i>Dangerous Calling</i>

APPENDIX 3

AMENDMENTS TO THE PASTORAL ORDINATION
PROCESS AT HGBC

Current Process	Proposed Process
1. Initial Interest: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial review by Executive Staff 	1. Initial Interest: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial review by Executive Staff
2. Personal Examination: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ordination Application • Theological Questionnaire • Reviewed by Executive Staff and Deacon Board 	2. Personal Examination: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pastoral Ordination Questionnaire • Reviewed by Executive Staff and Deacon Board
3. Ordination Council: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made up of Executive Staff and other ordained ministers 	3. Pastoral Ordination Training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12-month process of training and evaluation
4. Affirmed by the Church: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congregational vote requiring 75% majority for approval 	4. Ordination Council: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made up of Executive Staff and other ordained ministers, some from outside of HGBC
5. Ordination Service	5. Affirmed by the Church: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congregational vote requiring 75% majority for approval
	6. Ordination Service
	7. Pastoral Accountability: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intentional mentorship and discipleship provided by a seasoned pastor from HGBC

APPENDIX 4

PASTORAL ORDINATION TRAINING: POST SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to aid in the process of strengthening the pastoral ordination process at Hickory Grove Baptist Church, Charlotte, N.C. This research is being conducted by Blake Maxwell for purposes of project research. In this research, you will complete the given survey to the best of your ability. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Using the following scale, please indicate the answer that best displays your response to the following statements:

SD: Strongly Disagree
DS: Disagree Somewhat
D: Disagree
A: Agree
AS: Agree Somewhat
SA: Strongly Agree

1. This process was helpful for my personal understanding of pastoral ministry.
SD DS D A AS SA
2. This process has guiding my understanding of my own personal need for Christ.
SD DS D A AS SA
3. This process has increased my knowledge of the expected roles that a pastor fulfills.
SD DS D A AS SA
4. This process has helped provide a greater understanding of my own personal weaknesses.
SD DS D A AS SA

5. This process has helped provide a greater understanding of my own personal strengths.
SD DS D A AS SA
6. The process highlighted the importance of character in pastoral ministry.
SD DS D A AS SA
7. The curriculum was communicated with clarity.
SD DS D A AS SA
8. The curriculum was biblical.
SD DS D A AS SA
9. The curriculum was sufficient for preparation into pastoral ministry.
SD DS D A AS SA
10. The curriculum would have been better discussed in a large group setting.
SD DS D A AS SA
11. The curriculum contained some unnecessary content.
SD DS D A AS SA
12. The curriculum was not as thorough as it could have been.
SD DS D A AS SA
13. I would recommend other churches for adopting a process similar to this for men who are they seeking to ordain.
SD DS D A AS SA

Answer each of the following questions as thoroughly as possible.

14. In what was did this process challenge you?
15. What would you consider to be the most important part of the process?
16. Discuss how your dependence on Christ deepened as a result of this process?
17. How has your views of ordination and pastoral ministry been altered by this process?
18. In what was would you amend this process or curriculum?

APPENDIX 5

PASTORAL ORDINATION TRAINING:
POST-SURVEY RESULTS

Pastoral Ordination Training Post-Survey						
Part 1						
Question	SD	DS	D	A	AS	SA
Q1						2
Q2						2
Q3					1	1
Q4						2
Q5					1	1
Q6						2
Q7						2
Q8						2
Q9						2
Q10		1	1			
Q11	1		1			
Q12	2					
Q13						2

Part 2		
Question	Respondent 1	Respondent 2
Q14	This process really challenged me to look in the mirror and see my own personal need for Christ and to see sins in my life that need to be rooted out before I enter into pastoral ministry. This process gave me a better understanding of suffering as well.	It challenged me to look and evaluate myself to see where my dark side is. Also understanding my own leadership better.
Q15	I think the most helpful part for me was looking deeply into the qualifications for overseers. There, Paul clearly lays out the high standard set out for pastoral ministry and in doing so reminds us that we can never measure up to God's standard of holiness without Christ being in our place.	The meetings were very helpful and the discussion was fruitful
Q16	This process just reaffirmed the joy that I have in my salvation because I don't measure up to God's standard of holiness and I am not worthy to lead others in ministry so I have to depend on the righteousness of Christ and the power of His resurrection in order to pastor well.	It has made me understand deeper the weight of pastoral ministry therefore I have had to depend of Jesus more in it.
Q17	I have never seen ordination done like this and I believe this process would save churches a lot of hurt if they would only focus more on a potential pastor's character before hiring. I would want whatever church I lead one day, if the Lord sees fit, to adopt this process.	It most changed when we looked at all the different passages in the Bible that refer to the pastor. Seeing this gave a better understanding of the office
Q18	I wouldn't change a thing.	The questionnaire was great and very in depth which I believe is good because Pastors need to be well vetted. But at the same time, I do think it could be slightly refined. There were a few questions that I though repeated themselves and others that felt like they went unnecessarily in depth. But overall, I think the questionnaire was great

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ABSTRACT

A HIGH BAR: DEVELOPING A PROCESS FOR PASTORAL ORDINATION AT HICKORY GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH IN CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

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This project is aimed at creating a process for pastoral ordination at Hickory Grove Baptist Church in Charlotte, North Carolina. Chapter 1 provides the foundational context for Hickory Grove as well as the rationale and stated goals of the project. Chapter 2 provides biblical qualifications for pastors and discusses the church's responsibility in selecting pastors that are above reproach in character. Chapter 3 addresses the issue of pastoral misappropriations by connecting it with the lack of observation within many Baptist church ordination processes. Chapter 4 provides the details of the project. Chapter 5 provides an evaluation of the project and its intended goals. Overall this project is intended to raise the cultural and conventional standard for pastors by providing a means in which a pastor's character is observed through the formal process of ordination.

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