

A NOBLE TASK

Pastors Prepared to Serve the Church

St. Paul wrote three letters, called the Pastoral Epistles, to two fellow pastors, Timothy and Titus, helping equip them for service to the church and informing them of how others should be chosen to join them in the office. Through the years, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has taken very seriously the qualities Paul laid out for men in the pastoral office, establishing two seminaries as the settings to foster pastoral formation. Consider what Paul says a man ready to be a pastor should look like: I Timothy 3:1-7.

Paul says pastoral service is “a noble task” (3:1). What are various reasons people might see it as noble? What are the problems with some of these? Look back at 2:7 where Paul talks about his own call by God to be a preacher. What is the “*this*” when Paul writes, “for this” he was appointed (2:5-7)? Aha! There’s the reason the pastoral calling is a noble task!

The office Paul is writing about here is translated as “overseer” or “bishop” (3:1). Hmm. That sounds troublesome. Why? Which descriptions of the faithful overseer/bishop/pastor in 3:2-7 reassure us that we’re not talking about somebody “bossin’ people around” or in it for himself?

Now look more closely at those qualities. They’re really of two kinds. List the ones that are essentially personal qualities of the man (God-given qualities, of course). Which qualities are instead abilities or skills (again, developed in the man by God)?

Which of the personal qualities strike you as especially important, noteworthy, precious, assuring, helpful? (If you wish, compare Paul’s similar list in Titus 1:5-9) How does a man fit these descriptions?

What is meant by “able to teach” (3:2)? How does Paul amplify this quality to Titus (Titus 1:9)?

Which of these qualities—both the personal ones and the abilities—are developed at the seminaries of our church? How? Are there other ways to develop them? What’s our church’s thinking on this these days? Glad you asked! . . .