

Fourteen Qualifications for Pastors/Elders/Overseers¹

Introduction: **1 Timothy 3:1-7** contains fourteen qualifications for church leaders (a similar list is found in **Titus 1:6-8**).

Universal Applications:

- 1) Don't assume this does not apply to you if you don't aspire to be a church leader. Every brother's goal should be to embody the character qualities listed here.
- 2) These are the character qualities single sisters should look for in a man. This is manly version of Proverbs 31!

******Most of the qualifications fall into the category of character. However, two concern ability. What two abilities are required in an overseer (3:1-7)?** The two abilities are the ability to teach (**3:2**), and the ability to manage well (**3:4-5**).

Paul opened with the words, "this saying is trustworthy" (3:1). What saying trustworthy? Is the trustworthy saying about the desire to serve as overseer or about the task of overseer? The focus here is not on the desire, but on the ministry. Church leadership is noble task.

This is the second of three times in this letter that Paul declared a saying to be trustworthy (1:15, 3:1, 4:9). Why do you suppose that Paul felt the need to make this declaration about leadership (3:1)? Paul must have wanted to remind Timothy to appreciate the sacrifices involved in church leadership. If you are in leadership in business or politics, at least there is the potential to get a lot of money for your trouble. Not so in N.T. days; each church met in a home and was small enough that most overseers were necessarily bi-vocational, creating pressure from a demanding ministry load of an overseer. In the early church, to serving as an overseer meant sacrifice. Furthermore, the church faced active persecution from both Jews and pagans (creating a burden for the people's well-being, and also leaders were often especially targeted). Adding to the pressure, false teachers were in abundance.²

1. In 3:1, when Paul wrote of "anyone" aspiring to be an overseer, how do we know it doesn't include women? See 3:2, 2 Timothy 2:12, 1 Corinthians 14:33-35. One of the requirements is that the overseer be the husband of one wife—a hard feat for a sister (**3:2**). Another requirement for overseer is the ability to teach (**3:2**); Scripture prohibits women from teaching or having authority over men (**2Ti 2:12**). Finally, the very word overseer implies a management ministry that places him in authority (which is prohibited to women in **2Ti 2:12**).

¹ This lesson will probably take three sessions.

² William Hendriksen, "Thessalonians, Timothy and Titus", *New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 118.

Is the desire³ to be an overseer one of the requirements to be an overseer? In 3:1, Paul was making a statement of fact, not laying down a prerequisite. A man may be hesitant to take on the responsibility of the office, but would be willing to do so anyway if it were asked of him or required by necessity. On the other hand, a man should not have to be pressured into being an elder:

ESV 1 Peter 5:1-2 ...I exhort the elders ... shepherd the flock of God ... not under compulsion, but willingly ...

Based on 3:1, what is true of the ministry of overseer from 3:1? It is 1) noble and 2) it is a task.

2. What can we deduce about a church leader's duties from the title "overseer" (3:1)? It clearly involves management.

- **"overseer" (3:1):** From *episkopé* (#1984, "episcopal"); *epi* means "over", and *skopos* means "to look, see" (basis for "scope, optic"). Thus, it is a person who oversees something; a manager (**Joke:** a female overseer would not a manager, she'd be a womanger).

In Homer's *Iliad*, the *episkopos* was the guard of the city, the protector of the people.

In Classical Greek, *episkopos* was used in reference to the gods as guardians of truth. It was also a title for an administrator in the Greek legal system.⁴

Thus, one root concept of *episkopos* is "overseer, guardian"; one who keeps watch over the needs of people.⁵

Thayer defined an overseer as someone who is "charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done are done rightly."⁶ For example, it is the leaders' duty to be sure church meetings are edifying. Their duty also includes shepherding the flock, training up new leaders, teaching the Word, making disciples, ensuring that evangelism is taking place, and equipping people for ministry.

3. How is an "overseer" (3:1) different from an elder or pastor? See Titus 1:5-9; Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Peter 5:1-2. In Scripture, the terms overseer (KJV "bishop"), elder, and arguably also pastor, are used interchangeably. There was no hierarchy of authority within the local church leadership team. No bishop was over the pastors, no pastor over the elders. There was no pyramid.

³ "Aspires" (3:1) is from *orego*, "to stretch out, to reach after." "Desires" (3:1) is from *epithumeo*; *epi* denotes increase when use in composition—thus, here, *epi* is an intensifier; *thumos* means "heat, passion" ("thermos"); thus, an intense passion.

⁴ Richard Henderson, "First Timothy" (Lecture notes, Mid-America Baptist Seminary, Fall, 1982).

⁵ Lothar Coenen, "Bishop, Presbyter, Elder", *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Colin Brown, ed., (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), Vol. 1, 188.

⁶ Joseph Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), 243.

The tile “**elder**” brings out the fact that church leaders should embody maturity and wisdom. It is a state of being. From this term flow the other two terms, which are more like action words.

The word “**pastor**” translates the Greek word for shepherd and brings out the leader’s role in guiding, feeding and protecting God’s flock.

The word “**overseer**” (3:1) highlights out the leader’s job of managing, administrating, being sure things in the church are doing according to God’s will.

What does “noble” mean (3:1)? From *kalos*, “good, right, fine, excellent.”⁷

- “**task**” (3:1): From *ergon* (2041), “work, employment, labor.” Serving as an overseer is hard work, a labor of love. Despite how the ESV renders this verse, there is no underlying Greek word for “office.” It is ministry more than it is a position.

Summary: The ministry of overseer **1)** involves management, **2)** is noble and **3)** it is a a lot of work. This is a trustworthy saying.

The Fourteen Qualifications

In 1 Timothy 3:2, what is the significance of the word “must”? It indicates that these requirements are not optional. The Greek word *dei* (1163) is behind the word “must” and means “it is necessary, binding.” Though the requirements may paint an overall picture rather than a precise grocery list (a Monet more than a Rembrandt), it is still critical not to relax the standards. Too much is a stake. Many of these qualifications are overlapping, like links on a chain.

1. Above Reproach (3:2)

What is the difference between “above reproach” (1Ti 3:2) and sinless? The NKJV renders this as “blameless.” To be above reproach does not mean a leader has to be perfect. Everybody sins. Church leaders, however, are to generally have their lives in order and be men of mature character.

4. What is a “reproach” (3:2)? A “reproach” is an expression of disapproval, a criticism. It is from *anepileptos* (423); *an* = “not”, *epi* = “upon” and *lambano* = “to take”; hence, “unreproachable” or “not able to be taken hold of”.⁸ (Image a greased pig contest!). It refers to someone above any *reasonable* criticism, someone upon whom there is no handle for legitimate accusation, one who cannot be laid hold upon.⁹ It refers to spotless character, to a man who is of good report and who has a good reputation.

⁷ Mounce, billmounce.com/Greek-dictionary/kalos. Accessed January 29, 2024.

⁸ Fritz Rienecker, *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 622.

⁹ Kenneth Wuest, *Word Studies from the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1973), Vol. II, 52.

ESV **Job 1:1** There was a man ... whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.

Big Picture: “This call to be above reproach really sums up the thrust of all the other qualifications that follow.”¹⁰ In other words, what it means to be above reproach is explained by the rest of the qualifications. **Titus 1** similarly begins with a statement that that an elder must be “above reproach” (*anegklétos*, #410), then repeats this qualification again:

ESV **Titus 1:5-7** ... appoint elders in every town as I directed you—if anyone is above reproach ... For an overseer, as God’s steward, must be above reproach.

2. The Husband of One Wife (3:2)

5. One aspect of being above reproach is to be the husband of one wife. What does it mean to be “the husband of one wife” (3:2)? An examination of the Greek is helpful: *mias gunaikos andra*, literally, a “one-woman man.” There is no dedicated Greek word for “wife.” When “wife” is meant, the word “woman” (*gunikas*) is typically used in conjunction with the definite article (“the”). However, when used with without the definite article, as here in **3:2**, *gunikas* is often rendered “woman.” Using the word “woman” without the definite article (“the”) also can denote essence or nature. Thus, an overseer is to be a one-woman kind of man. Thus, the issue here is moral purity, not marital status. There are men with only one wife who are infamous womanizers. The same is not true of a one-woman type of man. This phrase implies loyalty and faithfulness.

Suppose a man was a shameless womanizer before his conversion, but after salvation he lived in faithful union with his wife. Should a man’s pre-conversion sins be held against him so that he is barred from eldership? Regenerate behavior cannot be expected from unregenerate people. To do so in this case would be unreasonable.

Application: A church leader’s goal should be to cultivate godly marriages among those he shepherds (**Eph 5:22-32**). *How can a leader possibly do this if his own marriage is in shambles?*¹¹

Does this mean that a divorced man cannot be an elder? The word “divorce” is not the text here. The fact that a man is divorced may not disqualify him in and of itself. The requirement that he be a “one woman man” refers to his present character, not his actions from the past. Divorce is not the issue here—faithfulness is the issue.

¹⁰ Orrick, Payne, Fullerton, *Encountering God Through Expository Preaching* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2017), 7.

¹¹ Orick, *Expository*, 8.

Strauch: “divorce often (but not always) reveals hidden character traits that would disqualify a man from church leadership. A divorced man may have been self-willed, quick-tempered, pugnacious, harsh, or not gentle toward his wife even though he may not have initiated the divorce.”¹²

Why did Paul not likely have had polygamy in mind (3:2)? When Paul wrote this, polygamy was not a problem in the Roman world, due to the widespread pagan practice of affairs outside marriage. Also, concubines were regularly maintained for sexual pleasure (as an informal but permanent union outside of marriage).

Does the phrase “one woman man” bar single men (i.e., never married) from leadership? Not in and of itself. The requirement is that the man, single or married, not be a womanizer. Any argument for the prohibition of a single (never married) man being an elder would grow from a later qualification. The *ESV Study Bible* notes that, “Paul is speaking of the ordinary cases and is not absolutely requiring marriage or children (cf. v.4) but is giving a picture of the typical approved overseer as a faithful husband and father.”¹³

3. Sober-Minded (3:2)

Another facet of being above reproach is to be sober-minded.

6. The Greek word for “sober-minded” (3:2) literally means not drunk (*népalios*, #3524, “sober”).¹⁴ The opposite of drunk is sober. Yet, the ESV renders this “sober-minded” rather than simply “sober.” What is the difference? See 3:3. The consumption of literal wine is dealt with in the very next verse 3:3 (“not a drunkard”). The figurative meaning is to have good judgment, and to be well-balanced. A man who makes a lot of bad life choices is not ready to be an elder. A man who experiences extreme mood swings is not ready to be an elder.

Imagine the scene: A drunk man driving a car down the road, swerving from one side to the other, running red lights, versus a sober person driving a car down the road in a straight line. Some people, though they have not been drinking, are characterized by fuzzy thinking, erratic actions, extremes, lack of focus, instability, or poor judgment. Such a man is not qualified to be an elder. An overseer must be “tuned in.”

To be “sober-minded” is to not be given to pride, authoritarianism, or indiscretion.¹⁵ He has authority, but he is not to be authoritarian. He will make judgements, but he is not to be judgmental. He should be a man whose opinion is valued, but he is not to be opinionated. Thus, the overseer is to be levelheaded, well balanced, stable, and freed of excesses. Going back to the drunk driver example, the sober-minded man is able to hold it between the ditches. If this man were a ship, it would be a matter of “steady as she goes” (consistency and stability in challenging circumstances).

¹² Alex Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership* (Littleton: Lewis & Roth, 1988), 197.

¹³ Dennis & Grudem, *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2329

¹⁴ Bill Mounce, billmounce.com/greek-dictionary/nephaleos. Accessed 09/30/2023.

¹⁵ Strauch, *Eldership*, 196.

4. Self-Controlled (3:2)

Part of being above reproach is to have self-control.

7. What situations can you imagine where it would be important for an overseer to be “self-controlled” (3:2)? In N.T. times, it was the norm for church leaders to be bi-vocational. With so little free time, it was important that a bi-vo pastor be a self-starter, and be able to work unsupervised. A lack of self-control often becomes evident in his teaching: “incomprehensible preaching is not an indication of too much study; it is an indication of too little study and prayerful meditation.”¹⁶

Hudson Taylor. “My greatest temptation is to lose my temper over the slackness and inefficiency so disappointing in those on whom I depend. It is no use to lose my temper—only kindness. But oh, it is such a trial.”¹⁷

Hudson’s complaint shows both why it is important for a church leader not to be slack or inefficient, but also why it is important for him to be in control of his temper!

The Greek is *sophrōn* (4998); from the root *sozo* (“to save”) and *phren* (“thinking, mind”).¹⁸ Thus, literally, “saved thinking.” It describes someone who is reasonable, sensible, of a sound mind; Out of this, in general, comes the idea of self-controlled.

ESV Proverbs 25:28 A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.

The NASV has “prudent.” The dictionary defines prudent as “marked by wisdom” or “shrewd in the management of practical affairs”.¹⁹

“The ministry is no place for the man whose life is a continual confusion of unaccomplished plans and unorganized activity.”²⁰

5. Respectable (3:2)

Comedian Rodney Dangerfield was known for saying, “I don’t get no respect.” To be above reproach includes being “respectable” (3:2).

8. How would you describe someone who is “respectable” (3:2)? Respectable people are polite, authentic, determined, empathetic, helpful, confident, open minded, honest, level headed, humble, optimistic, and decent (moral).²¹

¹⁶ Orick, *Expository*, 12.

¹⁷ Strauch, *Eldership*, 176.

¹⁸ Siegfried Wibbing, “Discipline”, *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Colin Brown, ed., (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), Vol. 1, 501.

¹⁹ “Prudent”, Merriam-Webster.com. Accessed December 1, 2019.

²⁰ Kent, Homer, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1982), 127.

²¹ Marcel Deer, “14 classic traits of people who are respected by everyone they know”, hackspirit.com. Accessed January 1, 2024.

In English, “respectable” means “decent ... in character or behavior.” **Example:** You typically won’t see a man working at a bank who is covered in tattoos, with a nose ring and long stringy hair. Banks hire clean-cut, respectable-looking people. People historically considered to be respectable include George Washington, Queen Elizabeth, Abraham Lincoln, and Winston Churchill.

The Greek is *kosmios* (#2887, basis for “cosmos, cosmetic”), “orderly, proper.” An overseer’s life is to be well-ordered. He is to have his “act” together. Mounce thus further defines it as “honorable” (we address judges as “your honor”).²² It is the opposite of dishonorable (some soldiers get a dishonorable discharge for bad conduct). An elder must be a man who is worthy of honor, who is worthy of respect.

6. Hospitable (3:2)

An overseer must be above reproach in the area of hospitality. What does it mean to be “hospitable” (3:2)? Our word hospitable is from a Latin root that initially meant both guest and host. The Greek is *philoxenos* (#5382); *philos* means “affection” and *xenos* means “stranger”; thus, “one who is fond of strangers.” In today’s English, to be hospitable means to be friendly and welcoming to guests. “It involves extending warmth, kindness, and generosity towards guests, visitors, or even strangers, creating an environment that fosters genuine human connection and a sense of belonging. True hospitality extends beyond the confines of professional settings....”²³

The elder is to be the type of person who has a home that is open to others, and who has people over for fellowship, counseling, training, discipleship, meals, prayer meetings, Bible studies, etc., or to who hosts itinerant church workers.

9. What is the purpose of an overseer being “hospitable” (3:2)? It sets an example for the flock. Christianity is not to be a cold, academic exercise of impersonal pew sitting. One brother shared that he was an active member of a church for ten years without ever setting foot in another church member’s home. Genuine Christianity is to be very warm and relational. The early church was especially home based.

7. Ability to Teach (3:2)

This is not a character quality, but rather is a skill, and gives a glimpse into the job description of an overseer: teaching.

“Ability”

How can you tell when a man lacks the ability to teach (3:2)? Those who lack the ability to teach are poor communicators. This might be because they put people to sleep (they’re boring). Andrew Carnegie, on public speaking: “If you don’t strike oil in twenty minutes, stop boring.”²⁴ Their presentations often lack energy, clear points,

²² Bill Mounce, “*kosmios*”, billmounce.com. Accessed 10/22/2023.

²³ “Hospitality Meaning: What Being Hospitable Is and What It Isn’t”, 360Training.com. Accessed 11/19/2023.

²⁴ Anvari.org/fortune/Miscellaneous Collections. Accessed February 11, 2024.

illustrations, and clear application. Perhaps they mutter, or have run-on sentences. Even if they excitedly flail their arms around, they are incomprehensible, and hard to follow.

Example: The movie *The King's Speech* is all about efforts to help King George VI overcome a terrible speech impediment. George VI might have been qualified to be the King of England, but he was not qualified to be a church leader.

Talking and teaching are not the same thing. What does it mean to be able to teach (3:2)? Georgia Tech is a research institute staffed with brilliant scholars, but these same geniuses are stereo-typically terrible teachers. Teaching is not simply presenting information; it is the ability to cause others to learn. When some people “teach,” it is like drinking water from a fire hose: too much information!

Defined: “... teaching is the ability to communicate and apply the truth of Scripture with clarity, coherence, and fruitfulness. Those who have this ability handle the Scripture with fidelity, and others are edified when they do so.”²⁵

Alexander Strauch stated that the ability to teach entails three basic elements: “a knowledge of Scripture, the readiness to teach, and the capacity to communicate.”²⁶

1) A Knowledge of Scripture (Information): He must know the Bible well. Joel Osteen has the capacity to communicate, but little knowledge of Scripture. Doctrine is important. A man who doesn't know doctrine is not qualified to serve as an overseer.

P.T. Forsyth: “One man who truly knows his Bible is worth more to the church's real strength than a crowd of workers who do not.”²⁷

2) Readiness to Teach (Opportunity): He must have the time free to study. Spending 8 to 16 hours preparing for a single message is not uncommon. Many men, due to work and family duties, simply have no time to prepare to teach on a regular basis: “incomprehensible preaching is not an indication of too much study; it is an indication of too little study and prayerful meditation.”²⁸

3) Capacity of Communicate (Ability): Many men have not mastered the skill of communication. A church leader must have good delivery skills. If a person does not have the skills necessary to be a good teacher, he is not qualified to be a leader. He may be holy, intelligent, and highly trained theologically, but ineffective speaker is disqualified to be an overseer. Delivery matters.²⁹

²⁵ Thabiti Anyabwile, “Finding Reliable Men: Able to Teach”, thegospelcoalition.org. Accessed 02/10/2024.

²⁶ Strauch, *Eldership*, 197.

²⁷ Scottish pastor and theologian, 1848-1921. Quoted in Strauch, *Eldership*, 198.

²⁸ Orick, *Expository*, 12.

²⁹ Orick, *Expository*, 115.

How is the *ability* to teach (1Ti 3:2) different from the supernatural spiritual *gift* of teaching (Ro 12:7)? Those without supernatural gifting have to work a little harder in learning how to effectively present material, and may not be as motivated to teach. The requirement in 1 Timothy 3 is simply that the elder be “able” to teach. Those elders actually gifted to teach may be referred to in Ephesians 4:11 and 1 Timothy 5:17ff.³⁰

Note: A man could be gifted to teach and yet not be an elder. Conversely, a man could be an elder without being supernaturally gifted as a teacher.

“Teach”

The text does not say able to “preach.” It says teach. What’s the difference? In the Bible itself, preaching is associated with evangelism, and happened apart from church meetings. Teaching is the word used in the Bible to describe what went on in church meetings. In general usage today, preaching is associated with rhetoric and oratory, and is very much a performance. It is a one-way communication. Teaching, on the other hand, tends to be more low-key and associated with causing learning, can be interrupted, and is more likely to be dialogical.

10. Why is it important for an overseer to be “able to teach” (1Ti 3:2)? See Acts 2:42, 2 Timothy 2:24-25, Titus 1:9-11, 2:1.

1) Teaching was very important in the life of the early church, and so should be to us also:

ESV **Acts 2:42** ... they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching ...

Martin Luther: When asked how he accomplished what he did during the Reformation, Martin Luther replied, “I simply taught, preached, [and] wrote God’s Word; otherwise, I did nothing.... The word did it all.”³¹

Comparison: Teaching is to the church what gasoline is to an engine. Humanly speaking, it is what makes everything goes.

2) Teaching is critical for disciple making:

ESV **Matthew 28:19-20a** ... make disciples of all nations ... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

ESV **Titus 1:9** He must ... be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

Insight: It is critical that an elder know doctrine, otherwise he is not qualified to be an elder.

³⁰ Some suggest that this would be better rendered by “teachable” since all the qualifications up to this point have been character qualities rather than skills. However, the word for “teachable” (*didaktos*) is not used here. Instead, *didaktikos* is used, which clearly means “apt to teach” (also found in 2Ti 2:24).

³¹ Orick, *Expository*, 34.

ESV **Titus 2:1** ... teach what accords with sound doctrine.

Heterodoxy: If an elder is ignorant of doctrine, or holds to a doctrinal falsehood, the whole church is liable to be led astray into error. Today people wrongly advocate for such errors as Torah-compliance, baptismal regeneration, the prosperity gospel, hyper-preterism, a protestant purgatory, the inspiration of the KJV, works salvation, Unitarianism, women pastors, theological liberalism, liberation theology, etc.

To be avoided is a “just Jesus” reductionist approach to theology. The seemingly spiritual mantra “doctrine divides but Christ unites” is overly simplistic. *Which Christ?* The Christ of the Mormons or the Jehovah’s Witnesses or the Unitarians? One leader bragged that in his super-relational church, “I don’t know their beliefs and they don’t ask me about mine.” This is a recipe for disaster.

ESV **Matthew 10:24** A disciple is not above his teacher ...

Orthodoxy: “Sound doctrine” would include a sincere belief in classic Christian orthodoxy: The Trinity, the virgin birth, Jesus’ atoning work on the cross, His bodily resurrection from the dead, His future bodily return, etc.

It should also include acceptance of the full inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, complementarian roles for men and women, etc. More can be learned about these topics from the Chicago Statement on Inerrancy, the Danvers Statement on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, and the Nashville Statement on Sexuality.

Depending on the local church, serving as elder would also include holding to believer’s baptism, new covenant theology, and the doctrines of grace.

If an elder evolves away from any of the essentials, he should remove himself from leadership.

ESV **Proverbs 29:12** If a ruler listens to falsehood, all his officials will be wicked.

ESV **Matthew 15:14** If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.

3) Sound teaching is necessary to false teachings. Heresy is not a matter of it, but when.

ESV **Acts 20:30** ... from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples ...

NAS **1 Timothy 1:3** ... instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines,

ESV **2 Timothy 2:24-26a** ... the Lord's servant must ... able to teach ... correcting his opponents with gentleness.

4) Teaching and training is how leaders guide, feed and equip God's flock. Part of an elder's authority is derived from his ability to persuade with the truth.

Joke: The next verse (3:3) contains a series of things that an overseer is "not" supposed to be. In short, any church leader has got to be "not-head": Not drunk, not violent, not quarrelsome.

8. Not A Drunkard (3:3)

- **"not a drunkard" (3:3):** The English definition of a drunkard is one who is habitually drunk. The Greek here is *mé paroinon*; *mé* = "not"; *para* = "beside"; *oinos* = "wine." An elder must not linger long beside a bottle of wine. A dynamic translation might be, "must not abuse alcohol." NASV: "not addicted to wine."

11. Why is it important that a church leader not be a drunkard (3:3)? 1) It is not above reproach. It is scandalous. 2) It is sinful. 3) If an elder has a drinking problem, the church will not be managed well (dealing with church problems can certainly drive a man to drink!).

ESV **Proverbs 31:4-5** ... it is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to take strong drink, lest they drink and forget what has been decreed and pervert the rights of all the afflicted.

What is the difference between the requirement that he not be a drunkard, and total abstinence? The issue here is temperance, not abstinence.

9. Not Violent but Gentle (3:3)

Yet another angle to being above reproach is to be gentle rather than violent.

12. Why do you not want a violent man in church leadership (3:3)? Dealing with people (even church people) can bring out the worst in anybody. You do not want a guy to be an elder who is given to punching people in the nose!

- **"violent" (3:3):** "Violent" is from *pléktés* (4131), "a striker, one who is apt to violence." It is the basis for the musical term "plectrum" (the pick used to strike a string, as in plectrum banjo).

Applied to Elders: "A violent man uses his strength to bully people into doing what he wants. We may not be tempted to hurt people physically, but we may be tempted to use our intellectual abilities or even our theological expertise to overpower people by mental force ... we must meet pressures with a trust in God that avoids anger, drunkenness, and violence...."³²

³²Orick, *Expository*, 10.

- **“Gentle” (3:3):** In English it means not harsh, stern or violent.³³ Mounce defines the Greek (*epieikés*; 1933) as reasonable, mild, patient.³⁴ It is used outside the New Testament of someone who had the legal right and resources to bring down harsh judgment, but is fair. It is in contrast to those who demand that their own rights be upheld at all costs.³⁵

NAS Proverbs 15:1 A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

Example: An example of this type of gentleness is Paul’s gentle reasoning with Philemon to persuade him take back the run-away slave Onesimus (gentle persuasion).

10. Not Quarrelsome (3:3)

To be above reproach includes to not be quarrelsome.

- **“not quarrelsome” (3:3):** There used to be a wrestler called “Macho Man.” The Greek for “quarrelsome” is *amachos* (269); *a* = “not”; *maché* = “fight, combat, battle” (basis for the English “macho”); thus, “not quarrelsome, not given to combat.” KJV: “not a brawler.” The elder must be able to keep his temper under control. He must not be the type of man who is always insisting on his rights. Uncontentious may be the idea.

13. What will happen if a quarrelsome man is placed into leadership (3:3)? Church meetings will not be edifying, he will sow discord, unity will be strained, there may be outbursts of anger, and he will needlessly stir up controversy.

NAS Proverbs 29:22 An angry man stirs up strife, and a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression.

A quarrelsome man is displaying a great lack of judgement, and will likely be unkind, impatient, and not be gentle in how he deals with others.

ESV 2 Timothy 2:24-26 ... the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome (*machomai*) but kind to everyone ... patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness.

11. Not a Lover of Money (3:3)

It is not above reproach to be a lover of money. The parallel passage says “not ... greedy for gain” (Titus 1:7).

14. Why is it important that an overseer to (#11) not be a “lover of money” (3:3)?
See *Matthew 6:24, John 12:4-6, Acts 4:34-35, 11:29-30, 1 Corinthians 9:12, 1 Timothy 6:5-10, 1 Peter 5:2.*

³³ “Gentle”, Merriam-Webster.com. Accessed December 1, 2019.

³⁴ Bill Mounce, “epieikes”, billmounce.com/greek-dictionary. Accessed December 04, 2023.

³⁵ Wolfgang Bauder, “Humility, Weakness”, *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Colin Brown, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), Vol. 2, 256.

- a. To be a lover of money is **a sign of spiritual immaturity**.

ESV **1 Timothy 6:8** ... if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.

ESV **Matthew 6:24b** You cannot serve God and money.

ESV **1 Timothy 6:5ff** [warns of] ... people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.

ESV **1 Timothy 6:9-10** ... 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 ...

- b. In N.T. times, most church leaders were bi-vocational. Greed in business by a bi-vocational church leader would be well known in a community and could be a **bad witness**. Paul at times refused to ask for support so that no one could question his motives:

ESV **1 Corinthians 9:12** ... we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.

Consider This: Early churches were small enough to meet in homes, and were very family-like. Churches today should be as far away from a business model as possible.

- c. Being fully supported in ministry is typically not a lucrative way to make a living. If a church leader were not content with less income than he might otherwise earn in secular employment, he might be **tempted to envy**:

Example: One American believer quit his corporate job to minister to Vietnamese refugees who had settled in the U.S. As they became Christians and began to prosper in American society, some of them soon began to live the lifestyle he had given up to serve them (driving new cars and living in nice houses). The missionary admitted to feelings of jealousy and resentment.

ESV **Proverbs 30:8-9** ... give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, "Who is the LORD?" or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.

Worst yet, he might be **tempted to steal**:

ESV **John 12:4-6** ... Judas Iscariot ... said, "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it.

Judas was not the last “disciple” to betray the Lord for silver. They say you can’t take it with you. Evangelist Billy Sunday quipped, “If we could take it with us, it would melt some of us are going!”³⁶

Church leaders handled the church’s money, and so **needed to be trustworthy**:

ESV **Acts 4:34-35** ... owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

ESV **Acts 11:29-30** ... the disciples [in Antioch] determined ... to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. And they did so, sending it to the elders ...

d. If an elder were a lover of money, **the temptation would be to distort the truth** if it could result in lost donations. Peter explicitly required that elders not be in it for the money:

ESV **1 Peter 5:2** shepherd the flock of God ... not for shameful gain, but eagerly ...

12. Management Ability (3:4-5)

******What is the answer to Paul’s question in 3:4-5?** See *Matthew 25:21*. A man who cannot manage his own home cannot manage the church. If he is an over-bearing tyrant at home, so too will he be with the church. If he is tuned out at home, so too will he be with the church. If he is disorganized at home, so too will he be at church. If his children are poorly trained, the church will be poorly trained. If he does not lead his wife spiritually, he won’t truly lead the church spiritually either.

A church does not simply run itself. An overseer is a manager. A church leader is called an “overseer” for a reason; someone has to oversee the church, to guide things, to plan ahead, to coach the meetings, to motivate, to comfort, to serve as a sort of father figure, to disciple, to train, to shepherd, to watch the finances, to be sure all aspects of the gathering are edifying (music, lighting, the feel of the surroundings, noise levels, security, etc.). Ideally, some management duties will be delegated to the deacons, but someone had to manage the deacons. Someone has to have his hand on the rudder, or the church will just drift.

- **“manage” (3:4)**: From *proistemi*; the composite words mean to “stand before” (like an orchestra conductor). Thus, to preside, to govern, to direct, to lead.³⁷
- **“household” (3:4)**: From *oikos* (“economics”) literally “house.” Managing a household involves both people and property. **Examples**: finances, property maintenance, family leadership, and child training. If a man has financial troubles, he never gets around to maintenance on his car, he can’t find time to fix the roof leak or paint the house, his

³⁶ Todd Linn, “The Smart Monty”, PreachingTruth.org. Accessed January 7, 2024.

³⁷ Bill Mounce, “proistemi”, billmounce.com/greek-dictionary/proistemi. Accessed 01/14/2024.

wife is frustrated from lack of direction, or his kids run around like wild banshees, he clearly is not an effective manager.

What important word did Paul use in 3:4 to describe how an overseer controls his children? His management style should embody the word “dignity” (*semnotés*). An elder must have mastered the art of not only of keeping his children submissive, but with all dignity.

What does it mean to be dignified (3:4)? To be dignified carries the idea of being composed, stately, noble. Queen Elizabeth was dignified. Frankly, some parenting styles lack dignity. Instead, there are threats, red faces, frustration, outbursts of anger, raised voices, over-reactions, etc.

15. What does it look like when children are not submissive (3:4)? Many parents teach their children that, “Obedience is doing what I’m told to do, when I’m told to do it, without complaining.” Children not in submission do not do what they are told to do, do not have attentive ears (they don’t listen), they dither about obeying, and they talk back to their parents, have a bad attitude and whine and complain about tasks they don’t like, etc.

Test: The home is the management testing ground. The results will be evidenced in the submission of his children.

ESV **Matthew 25:21b** You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much.

16. Is having children who are believers a requirement for eldership? See Titus 1:6. There is nothing here about his children being believers. However:

ESV **Titus 1:6** ... his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.

1. The word “children” (*teknon*) suggests offspring still living at home and under their father’s authority; no matter the correct translation of **Titus 1:6**, it arguably would not apply to those who have left home.³⁸
2. “Believers” (**Titus 1:6**) is from *pistis*, and can legitimately mean either “believers” or it simply trustworthy. Thus, the KJV renders **Titus 1:6** as “having faithful children.”
3. The main issue in both **1 Timothy 3** and **Titus 1** is that his children behave appropriately and are not rebellious. The contrast is not between believing versus unbelieving children, but between obedient versus disobedient children. **Titus 1:6b** better explains **1:6a** if “faithful” is the correct translation, but follows awkwardly if “believers” is correct (debauched believers?).
4. **Alexander Strauch** says, “Even the best Christian fathers cannot guarantee that all their children will really believe. To say this passage means believing Christian children places an impossible standard upon a father.”³⁹ Not even all of Jesus’ disciples were believers.

³⁸ Dennis, *ESV Study*, 2348.

³⁹ Strauch, *Eldership*, 174.

13. Not a Recent Convert (3:6)

****According to 1 Timothy 3:6, why don't you want a new Christian to be in leadership (#13)? A new convert may become puffed up with conceit and fall into condemnation.

- “recent convert” (3:6): From *neophutos* (#3504, basis for “neophyte”); *neo* means “new” (as in neo-con) and *phutos* means “plant.”
- “conceit” (3:6): From *tuphoō* (5187), and means “to wrap in smoke, to cover with a mist.” Thus figuratively, to puff up with pride; clouds of conceit, to be blinded with pride, to have a swelled head, an inflated ego.⁴⁰ The parallel list in **Titus 1** states that he must not be “arrogant.”

17. What are some signs that a church leader is puffed up (3:6)? “Hypersensitivity about your preaching is an indication of arrogance. If you cannot handle having your sermons critiqued and questioned, get out of the ministry ... Impatience is also often a sign of arrogance ... Humble men are able to absorb people’s misunderstandings, false accusations, and constant (sometimes inane) questions ... the impatience that grows out of arrogance will alienate people and ruin a preaching ministry”⁴¹ (underlining mine).

Maturity requires time and experience. When Paul wrote this, the Ephesian church had been in existence twelve years, time enough for elders to have developed.⁴² It only takes a few months to grow a squash plant, but decades to grow an oak tree.

18. What is the condemnation of the devil (3:6)? Does this mean the devil will condemn him, or that he will get the same condemnation that the devil got? See Proverbs 16:18, Ezekiel 28:12b-17. To be condemned means to be sentenced to a particular punishment. Satan was condemned by God because of pride:

ESV **Ezekiel 28:12b-17** You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God ... You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, till unrighteousness was found in you ... Your heart was proud because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor.

ESV **Proverbs 16:18** Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

14. Well Thought of by Outsiders (3:7)

****19. Why must an overseer be “well thought by outsiders” (3:7)? Having a bad reputation with outsiders is an open disgrace.

⁴⁰ Thayer, *Lexicon*, #5187

⁴¹ Orick, *Expository*, 9.

⁴² Kent, *Pastoral*, 130.

Perhaps the situation here is that a man's past sins are so well known, that even if he is converted and a changed man, he should not serve as elder. His reputation precedes him. **Example:** The FBI will not hire anyone who is a convicted felon.

Thus, even unbelievers play a role in the selection of elders. "The *vox populi* ... is in some sort a *vox Dei*."⁴³

Insight: New Testament overseers were "home grown." That is, they were well known both in the church and the community before becoming overseers. Most had secular jobs. Unlike what is common today, church leaders were not professional pastors who were called from afar by a pulpit committee and generally unknown to the church.

The devil has a lot of interest in church leaders. What plan does the devil have for church elders (3:6-7)? Satan is alive and well on planet earth and seeking opportunities to hurt the church. He actively sets snares for church leaders. There is a spiritual war raging all around us. Look how the mainline churches have been destroyed by liberalism and feminism. **Do you imagine that Satan has overlooked your church?**

The devil got dishonorable mention a second time (3:7). What is the devil's snare (3:7)? A snare (*pagis*) is a trap. **Example:** Foreign governments use beautiful women spies to ensnare their targets. The devil sets snares for people. This particular snare appears to be disgrace coming from a poor reputation with outsiders.

So What?

Consideration: These qualifications contain much overlap, and are more of an impressionistic Monet painting than a Rembrandt painting (like an exact photograph).

Interesting: Where does 3:1-7 mention anything about seminary? It does not mention seminary. Too often, a church will appoint someone as a leader in large part because he has a theological degree, without careful regard for his character and management skills. The best way to learn to oversee the church is from on-the-job training as a husband and father. However, completing seminary is an indicator of competence. In the military, a college degree is a fast track to leadership.

Read: Entire list, 3:1-7. *After reading over the list, are you amazed that anybody qualifies? Does this seem overwhelming to you?* God would not have given these requirements unless the Holy Spirit was able to mature men for this ministry.

ESV Acts 20:28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers ...

For the most part, these are character qualifications. The church must have known this a man long enough to judge his character.

⁴³ Kent, *Pastoral*, 131.

That's one reason that Timothy was cautioned:

ESV **1 Timothy 5:22** Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands ...

20. In general, what type of man should a church look for to be an elder, based on 1 Timothy 3? You should look for a man who reminds you of Jesus! Church leaders must be character qualified, able to teach, and able to manager. They are to be the standard of what a mature believer is to be like. They are to be “above reproach.”

****Ask this question before having someone read the passage.

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